



MEDIA RELEASE

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Leading expert urges for the farming industry to be engaged in the obesity debate

A leading expert in sustainable farming is calling for farmers to be consulted more when looking at ways to develop healthier food and tackle the obesity crisis.

Speaking at the Nuffield Frank Arden Memorial conference on 24 April, Caroline Drummond, MBE and Chief Executive of LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), presented findings from her 12 month study into the role farmers can play in improving the nutritional value of food.

She outlined three key areas for consideration:

Biofortification

There are significant opportunities to improve the nutritional profile of foods through farming and plant breeding techniques. This includes breeding species of plants which are naturally higher in certain vitamins or nutrients, and using fertilisers and soil in ways to help improve the nutritional content of food. This is still an emerging field for farmers but one which can be taken greater advantage of, with support from the food industry and policy makers.

Biodiversity

There are 20,000 edible species of plants but only around 7,000 are used in agriculture with just 20 crops dominating global cultivation. There is a big opportunity to diversify and produce a wider variety of crops, focusing on the key nutrients that each can deliver.

Link more with the public

Engaging with the public is key to helping people understand how their food is produced and to developing a deeper connection and healthier relationship with it. Initiatives such as Open Farm Sunday, which is supported by retailers and food manufacturers, offers an excellent opportunity to create more engagement with food and encourage people to make healthier choices.

Commenting on her key findings, Caroline Drummond said: “Often farmers who produce the raw ingredients for food production are left out of discussions and policy making when considering how to address obesity and its associated diseases. However my research has shown that farmers have an important role to play in helping the food industry to deliver more nutrient rich food and encourage the public to make healthier eating choices. We need to work more closely together to deliver sustainable diets which can both feed and nourish the population.”

Caroline Drummond was awarded the Frank Arden Nuffield Scholarship to review how farming can learn from science to increase the nutritional value of food produced. As part of her studies, Caroline reviewed the latest scientific research and thinking; travelling extensively, from Toronto to Taipei, to meet with leading researchers and organisations from around the world. These included The World Vegetable Centre in Taiwan, the Restaurant of the Future at Wageningen University in the Netherlands and The Institute of Food Research, Campden BRI and The John Innes Centre in the UK.

Caroline Drummond was joined at the Frank Arden Memorial Conference by fellow speaker and Nuffield Scholar David Northcroft, Category & Varietal Development Manager for Waitrose. The conference was chaired by Countryfile presenter Tom Heap, with additional speakers in the fields of nutrition, farming and food security such as Professor Susan Jebb, Professor of Diet and Population Health at Oxford University; Professor Tim Benton, UK Champion for Global Food Security and Professor of Population Ecology, and Professor Tim Brocklehurst, Head of IFR Food and Health Network.

The research papers from both Caroline Drummond and David Northcroft will be available on <http://nuffieldinternational.org/reports/>.

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LEAF Editors' Notes:

- LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is the leading organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming. LEAF works with farmers, the food industry, scientists and consumers to inspire and enable sustainable farming that is prosperous, enriches the environment and engages local communities.
- LEAF promotes Integrated Farm Management (IFM), a whole farm business approach that delivers sustainable farming.
- The LEAF Marque is an assurance system recognising sustainably farmed products. It is based on LEAF's Integrated Farm Management (IFM) principles. Farms in 40 countries worldwide are producing to the LEAF Marque standard.
- All LEAF Marque certified farms are independently inspected to ensure they meet stringent criteria to demonstrate that food is being produced to high environmental standards. These criteria include soil management and fertility, crop health and protection, pollution control and by-products, energy and efficiency, wildlife and landscape management and animal husbandry and the environment.
- For more information about LEAF please visit: www.leafuk.org, email: enquiries@leafuk.org
tel: 02476 413911. (Registered charity no: 1045781)

FRANK ARDEN MEMORIAL AWARD

This special award is generously sponsored by the family of the late Frank Arden Memorial who established a special fund for the study of key issues influencing the success of British farming.

The Award is open to UK residents working in the fields of food, farming or forestry. There is no age limit. The bursary provided allows for reasonable research and travel expenses, both in the UK and abroad. The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust is indebted to the Crown Estate and Frank Parkinson Agricultural Trust for their generous support for this project.

Frank Arden CBE (1915-1979) was a legend in his own life time. He established a farming business in North Lincolnshire regarded as a showpiece for progress in agriculture. Throughout his career he continually sought new challenges and was always adaptable in his approach to meet market demands.

His vision and enterprise were rooted in extensive travel and the ability to embrace new technology. The Frank Arden Memorial Award was instigated by his family to continue to share his principals and passion for agriculture with others in the industry by funding key studies that address topics of importance to the UK agricultural industry.

NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS TRUST

Nuffield Farming Scholarships invite enthusiastic individuals to explore topics of their own choice in agriculture, land management, horticulture or the food chain. They are dedicated to developing leadership in farming and the rural industries, and are recognised for the opportunities they provide to identify new knowledge and to apply it to practical and profitable industry outputs.

Funded by the agriculture and food industry, charities and trusts with agricultural objectives and past Scholars themselves, the Trust presents around 20 awards each year.

Founded in 1943, the Nuffield name and emblem (a bull riding a bicycle) both derive from the original benefactor, the late Lord Nuffield (William Morris). The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust (NFST) was subsequently established in 1947. The NFST is registered as a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity, following its incorporation in July 2003.