

8th June 2014

LEAF organisers declare Open Farm Sunday 2014 the best one yet

Farmers and their helpers were celebrating this weekend as the response to Open Farm Sunday was overwhelmingly positive. National organisers, LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), have reported that a record number of visitors attended an Open Farm Sunday event on Sunday 8 June. While final figures are still being obtained, LEAF estimates that visitor numbers for 2014 will hit the 205,000 mark - exceeding the record breaking attendance of 2013.

The combination of public support for farming, publicity for Open Farm Sunday, and bright sunshine across most of Britain meant that many experienced host farmers recorded record numbers of visitors. Meanwhile, farmers who opened their gates for the first time, which accounted for three in ten Open Farm Sunday events, have reported very positive feedback from their visitors.

This year, in total 375 farms across England, Scotland and Wales opened their gates from the most southerly farm on the Lizard in Cornwall to the Orkney Islands and everywhere in between. The celebrations didn't stop there as visitors and farmers alike took to Twitter and Facebook to share their comments and pictures from the day.

Annabel Shackleton, Open Farm Sunday manager at LEAF is delighted with feedback from both farmers and consumers: "This year has truly been a celebration of British farming and food! It's fantastic that people have once again come out in their thousands to show their support for farmers. It was great to see so many families enjoying a day out in the countryside and learning about farming and food production. To see the faces of children and their parents light up when they hold a chick, see the size of a cow, climb onto a tractor and walk through fields, is so rewarding."

"We would like to say a huge thank you to the 6,000 farmers and their helpers who took part this year to make this the best Open Farm Sunday yet. Once again farmers have done the industry proud – showcasing the best of British Farming. I would also like to extend our

gratitude to all our sponsors who helped make it all possible and provided resources for farmers, in-store promotions and on-farm support. Next year will be the 10th anniversary of Open Farm Sunday so put the 7th June 2015 in your diary now so we can make the celebrations even bigger!”

Agriculture Minister George Eustice, who visited Tuesley Farm in Godalming said: “Our farmers are responsible for producing so much great British food that we all enjoy on a daily basis, and we should celebrate the vital role they play at the heart of communities up and down the country. Open Farm Sunday is a great opportunity for people to learn more about where their food comes from, and to demonstrate to young people why a career in agriculture can be so rewarding.”

Many visitors took to social media to say thank you for the hard work that farmers had put into their events with comments including:

“We thoroughly enjoyed our experience and learnt such a lot. Thank you to all involved.”

“A really great afternoon. Friendly, well organised, loads of interesting information, not to mention pond dipping, wild flower count, good food & live music. All had a great time. See you again. Thank you farmers, will be even more sure to Buy British.”

“We had an amazing time at Open Farm Sunday - an amazing effort with everything you could wish to see and more, with added sunshine to make it a great day all round. Great to see other farmers locally assisting to make it special and accessible to lots more people. Thank you, same time next year?”

Alongside Open Farm Sunday, a number of farms are opening up for Open Farm School Days – running from the 2nd to 13th June. Hundreds of school children will be visiting farms up and down the country to learn more about where their food comes from.

Annabel Shackleton added, “Encouraging children to learn more about their food, where it comes from and how it’s produced is absolutely vital. Open Farm School Days strengthen the

message, and impact, of Open Farm Sunday and reach out to the next generation of consumers.”

Open Farm Sunday received strong backing from national and regional media with hundreds of articles in local press supplemented by mentions on BBC1’s Saturday Kitchen, ITV’s Good Morning Britain and a recurring storyline in Radio 4’s The Archers. LEAF farmer Duncan Farrington also explained all about technology on the farm on BBC Radio 2’s Simon Mayo show. Research issued ahead of Open Farm Sunday looking at consumer knowledge, time spent outdoors, farm technology and parents’ weekend relaxation were featured in the Sun, the i, the Metro, Daily Telegraph, Saturday Mirror, Daily Express, Daily Star and on Mail Online and MSN Food. Open Farm Sunday was also featured as a “must do” event in the Saturday and Sunday Express magazines, Sunday People’s Love Sunday supplement, Times Weekend and Sunday Mirror’s Notebook, as well as in a number of magazines including BBC Countryfile, Gurgle, Landlove, Choice, Yours and Great British Food.

Next year’s Open Farm Sunday will take place on the 7th June 2015. For more information visit: www.farmsunday.org or follow @openfarmsunday on Twitter.

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For further information contact:

David Gough or Baldeep Chana
Open Farm Sunday Press Office
T: 01189 475956
E: openfarmsunday@ceres-pr.co.uk

Editor’s note:

- LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is the leading organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming. It 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 has organised Open Farm Sunday since it began in 2006. (Registered charity no: 1045781)
- The ninth annual Open Farm Sunday on 8th June 2014 provides a great opportunity for people to truly get to know how their food is produced and how the countryside around them is cared for.

- The third national farm Pollinator Survey, supported by the British Ecological Society, NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust will once again be carried out on selected Open Farm Sunday farms. Visitors will be asked to count the number and type of insects they see in different habitats, which will help scientists understand more about this vital process.
- Alongside Open Farm Sunday, farms across Britain will also be hosting Open Farm School Days. Running from the 2nd to 13th June, they will provide thousands of school children with the opportunity to visit a farm to learn more about where their food comes from and how it is produced.
- Sponsors for Open Farm Sunday 2014 include: **Asda, BASF, Country Life butter, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Kellogg's, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Syngenta, Tesco, The Co-operative, Waitrose, plus Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (from its BPEX, DairyCo, Eblex, HDC and HGCA divisions) and Hellmann's.**
- Keep up to date with LEAF's activities via twitter www.twitter.com/LEAF_Farming and our regular blogs at leafmarque.wordpress.com.