

Open Farm Sunday 2016 – Public engagement reaches new high

- Visitors to Open Farm Sunday once again exceeded over a quarter of a million
- 85% increase in Open Farm Sunday Facebook followers
- #OFS16 trended on Twitter on Open Farm Sunday

Public engagement with farming is at an all-time high, following this weekend's Open Farm Sunday (5th June), say organisers LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming). It is estimated that once again, over 250,000 people flocked to discover the world of farming on Sunday. Nearly 400 farms welcomed visitors of all ages, who also engaged heavily with the campaign via social media, both in the run up to the day and throughout the weekend.

The continued growth of this annual campaign, which celebrates all that is great about British farming, is due to the dedication of the farmers that open, everyone that helps at events, Open Farm Sunday's sponsors, and the widespread support of the food and farming industry. Annabel Shackleton, Open Farm Sunday Manager at LEAF, said: "Once again, the food and farming industry successfully united to showcase British farming to the public. It is thanks to this fantastic collaboration



continues to be recognised as the industry's flagship event. We called on farmers to open up and share their story and are delighted that so many chose to open their gates. On behalf of LEAF, I would like to thank everyone who made this day such a success and we look forward to working with you all next year."

Open Farm Sunday 2017 will take place on 11th June 2017. Sponsors of Open Farm Sunday 2016 included: Arla Foods, Asda, BASF plc, Co-op, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Jordans, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose plus the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, with direct support from the following AHDB sectors: Beef and Lamb, Cereals and Oilseeds, Dairy, Horticulture, and Pork.

Visitors to Open Farm Sunday were quick to show their thanks to the farmers involved with many taking to social media to share their gratitude:

"This will be our 4th year. Different farm each time. It's lovely to be able to go inside all the farms that we pass every day on our way to school and work."



“Had a great time. A lovely family day out, all staff were very welcoming and very friendly. Lots of activities for children too.”

“It was our first time at open farm and our first time strawberry picking. A great family day out, thank you!”

“We learned so much about how the farm works, thank you.”

“Still up there as one of our favourite family days out”

“Great fun and educational day at Open farm Sunday. We loved the animals, tractor ride and learning all about the farm, thank you so much for a great day. We will be back again next year for more fun and facts about the farm.”

“Well done & thanks to every farmer who opened their gates today for Open Farm Sunday. You’re doing a huge job to connect farming & food.”

“Had a great time at Open Farm Sunday. ‘Tractor’ is my daughter’s favourite new word.”

“Great day today – 12 of us went ranging from 11 months to 63yrs... Top day”

Ahead of Open Farm Sunday, LEAF produced a series of new collateral which included animated videos that brought to life all that farming delivers – from food to energy, clothing, cosmetics and much more besides – as well as a series of videos with hints, tips and information for hosting an event. Campaign videos were viewed over 15k times on YouTube, whilst the Open Farm Sunday Facebook page increased its followers by 85% and had a reach of 115k in the 28 days prior to Open Farm Sunday. The Open Farm Sunday Twitter also increased its reach with nearly 530k impressions since the start of March – a 15% increase on the same time period last year. On Sunday morning, #OFS16 was the second largest trending topic on Twitter.

Annabel Shackleton added: “This year we wanted to show the public how much farmers deliver – not just the food we eat but all the many other ways they contribute to our daily lives, and we have certainly achieved this. We invested in content for our digital channels to help ensure that the Open Farm Sunday message spreads beyond the day itself. On the day, many farms were able to utilise new resources and activities which helped strengthen the connection between farming and science.”

Amongst the visitors to farms on Open Farm Sunday was the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Elizabeth Truss. Ms Truss, who joined Caroline Drummond, chief executive of



LEAF on a tour of Cornerways Nursery, near Kings Lynn said: ‘I am delighted to be supporting Open Farm Sunday. This great initiative not only promotes the excellent work done by farmers and producers from across the UK but also provides an insight into the highly innovative and enterprising world that modern day farming has become.’”



An extensive on and offline communications campaign helped put Open Farm Sunday on the public’s radar. Open Farm Sunday was featured in a range of national publications including The Sun, Sunday Mirror, Daily Mail, Express, Olive, Gurgle, Delicious, and Closer magazine. Features also ran in Good Things, Landlove and Countryside Magazines and online at Great British Food and Country Living. For the 5th year running Open Farm Sunday has been included in the Money Saving Experts newsletter, with Martin Lewis highlighting the event on ITV’s Good Morning Britain and This Morning shows, helping generate a record number of visits to the Open Farm Sunday website. Open Farm Sunday featured on The Archers, and was also mentioned on Radio 2’s breakfast, afternoon and drive time shows, as well as on Radio 4’s Farming Today. Integral to the Open Farm Sunday campaign is the coverage in regional press and once again this has been extensive with hundreds of pieces running to promote local farms.

As well as Open Farm Sunday, LEAF also organises Open Farm School Days, where farms are open for school visits throughout June - www.farmsunday.org/schools

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Editor's note:

- Open Farm Sunday is managed by **LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming)**. LEAF 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. (LEAF is a registered [charity no: 1045781](#))
- The twelfth annual Open Farm Sunday will take place on 11th June 2017. It is the farming industry's annual open day. A day for farmers to open their gates and welcomes people onto their farms to discover the world of farming.
- Alongside Open Farm Sunday, farms across Britain also host Open Farm School Days which runs throughout June. They 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 of Open Farm Sunday 2016 were: Arla Foods, Asda, BASF plc, Co-op, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Jordans, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose plus the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, with direct support from the following AHDB sectors: Beef and Lamb, Cereals and Oilseeds, Dairy, Horticulture, and Pork.
- Keep up to date with LEAF's activities via twitter www.twitter.com/LEAF_Farming and www.twitter.com/OpenFarmSunday and our regular blogs at leafmarque.wordpress.com.

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