

Farmer Time Case Study

Cut Flowers Case Study



The Farmer

J.A. Collison & Sons is a family run business in Norfolk, supplying seasonal cut flowers to Sainsbury's. Each year they produce in excess of 32 million stems of cut flowers, most of these stems are packed on farm ready for dispatch directly into the retail supply chain.

Ian Collison decided to take part in the Farmer Time initiative after hearing about the project at the Sainsbury's Farming Conference 2018. Sainsbury's are key customers for the farm's cut flowers and as they are also a partner in the Farmer Time project with LEAF Education, he was keen to become involved.



The School

Washingborough Academy is a Primary School in Lincolnshire. Head Teacher, Jason O'Rourke, contacted LEAF Education to sign up every class in his school to the Farmer Time initiative. The Washingborough Academy curriculum is based on valuing the individual, the community and the environment. In addition to this, the school community are fantastic ambassadors for Food Education and Healthy Living, they are currently a case study for the government's child obesity plan, therefore Farmer Time fits perfectly!

Rebecca Hearmon, teacher at Penfold Nursery at Washingborough Academy, is an enthusiastic participant in the project and although her pupils' partnership with Ian is still in the early stages, she is thrilled already to see the fascination and enjoyment of their virtual interaction with him.

The Sessions

To prepare, Ian and Rebecca spoke before their first session to ensure Ian knew what the children were currently learning about. This initial conversation also allowed



them to think ahead to future FaceTime sessions and the different concepts that Ian could focus on to facilitate learning opportunities. One such idea will include sending the children some tulip bulbs so they can grow their own flowers in the classroom. During the first FaceTime session, Ian showed the children, via FaceTime, around the farm and told the children what happens in each location on the farm. This included learning about tulip life cycles and showing the children what the plants needed to grow.

Rebecca commented that the children were fascinated with the size of the greenhouses and that the tulips were growing in trays and not soil. The children were then introduced to Ian's dog, Marbles, a key part of any Farmer Time session! Finally, Ian gave the children the opportunity to suggest different things they would like to see on his farm so in their next session they are going to learn about the vehicles he uses on the farm.

Impact

Ian is used to hosting school groups and visitors on the farm and is always impressed by children's interest and ability to ask very good questions. He believes Farmer Time is a, "fantastic initiative to bring the farm into the classroom."

Ian sums up the impact of the project perfectly by stating, "What better way to communicate with the next generation of consumers than to go live into their classroom. Children are so used to tech these days that FaceTime is very natural for them and it offers a window on to a world that most of them would never see otherwise. We hear a lot in the media about the disconnect between children and the outdoor world, but the natural curiosity and inquisitiveness of children means that initiatives such as this can be a crucial first step in reconnecting children with horticulture and agriculture. As an industry we need to engage them as the consumers and the employees of tomorrow."

Rebecca enforces Ian's enthusiasm, "This project is having a big impact on the children as it is allowing them to see the whole process of growing flowers from bulb to shop. Initially when asked where flowers come from, the children would reply 'the shop.' They are so enthusiastic when speaking to Farmer Ian and he is very proactive with the children, answering their questions at their age level."

Further information about this initiative and how your school or farm can become involved can be found at www.farmertime.org

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Thank you to J.A. Collison & Sons and Washingborough Primary Academy

