



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **Farmers are having huge impact on public perception, LEAF Open Farm Sunday figures reveal**

**Farmers who invite the public onto their farms are having a lasting positive impact, with nearly 90% of visitors in 2018 saying it has changed the way they think about farming.**

This is 12% up on last year, according to a survey of visitors to LEAF Open Farm Sunday (LOFS) events in 2018, collected by LEAF, the charity which promotes sustainable food and farming and manages the campaign.

Ninety-two percent of people said they appreciated more the work farmers do, after visiting a farm.

Eighty-six percent said they felt more connected to the farmers who produced their food, and 78% said they were now more proactively looking to buy British food.

In 2018, 26% of farmers who took part in LOFS did so for the first time – the highest number to date.

“These figures show just how powerful it is when farmers open their farms to the public,” said Annabel Shackleton, LEAF OFS Manager.

“There is a high level of interest in food production but unfortunately we have seen a lot of misinformation about farming in the media.

“When farmers engage with the public, people can see for themselves the care and attention to detail that goes into growing quality, nutritious crops and the high levels of animal welfare. LEAF Open Farm Sunday is positively changing public perceptions of our industry. That is why we are calling on more farmers to come together in 2019; to open their farms on the 9th of June - together we can show people across the UK what our industry achieves and why British farming is so important.

“This is going to be increasingly important if we leave the EU – British farming will need the full support of the public, added Ms Shackleton.

The theme for LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2019 is “*get closer to farming*” focusing on the people involved – the farming families, the teams of technical experts across the UK involved in producing our food, managing the countryside and our natural resources.

“It is going to be increasingly important to have consumers on our side if we exit the EU - British farming will need the full support of the public, added Mrs Shackleton.

“No matter how big or small an event, every farmer engaging with the public counts, said Ms Shackleton.

**Getting farming into minds**

Farming is more at the forefront of people's minds after visiting a farm, according to the survey feedback.

One visitor in 2018 said:

"It has opened up many conversations with the younger people in our family, who now appreciate where their food and drinks come from."

Another said:

"We now look for standards of meat produced and where meat in sandwiches has come from - we buy more free range and from farmers and markets where there is no 'middleman'. We support local farmers by buying local milk."

While another said:

"I often talk to my young girls about our day at the farm and whilst driving through the countryside we are able to understand more about wildlife corridors, and the work that the farmers do within the fields."

### **View from a farmer**

Farmer Teresa Pickworth, who along with her husband, Carl, farms a 380-acre arable farm in North Warwickshire, is about to run her third LOFS event next year. From the start, Teresa aimed to attract a large number of visitors welcoming 1,053 visitors in her first year and 2,500 the year after.

"Every farmer should consider taking part in LEAF Open Farm Sunday to show how diverse farming is and how much skill is required to farm," said Ms Pickworth.

"We have gained so much from Open Farm Sunday. We used it as a marketing exercise to see if our diversification plan for a tea room and educational walks would work, which proved to be a real success.

"We've learnt how to engage with the public and our local community. Children love identifying the good/bad bugs and adults are surprised to learn how much care goes into the use of chemicals and how they are used to a minimum alongside other methods such as crop rotation, ground work and good bugs."

Since LEAF OFS started 13 years ago, almost 2,000 farmers have hosted events and welcomed more than 2.2 million onto their farms - with 293,650 visiting in 2018.

### **How farmers can sign up and get support**

1. Register for LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2019 at [openfarmsunday@leafuk.org](mailto:openfarmsunday@leafuk.org) Once registered you will be sent a copy of the LOFS handbook, which walks you through planning an event and gives tips, activity ideas, and essential guidance on health and safety.
2. Check out our YouTube Live events, which will provide mentoring from previous hosts and an online communications toolkit offering tried-and-tested ways to engage positively with the public.
3. Keep an eye on Twitter - host farmers will be taking over the LEAF OFS account to share their experience, top tips and views from the farm. Use the hashtag #FarmShoutOut to help celebrate farmers who engage well with the public.
4. If you want to speak with someone about your event, call the LOFS team on 024 7641 3911 or email: [openfarmsunday@leafuk.org](mailto:openfarmsunday@leafuk.org)

## **NEW to LOFS or still not sure about taking part, order a FREE information pack**

To help farmers considering hosting their first LOFS event on 9th June, there is a new information pack which gives farmers a better understanding of how they can take part and guidance on taking the first steps to organizing an event. The pack can be downloaded from the website [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org) or ordered direct from LEAF 024 76413911.

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**For further information and images please contact Rebecca at Jane Craigie Marketing on [rebecca@janecraigie.com](mailto:rebecca@janecraigie.com) or 07792 467730.**

### **Editor's notes:**

- For further LEAF OFS survey figures, please contact Annabel Shackleton on 024 7641 3911, 07912 463151 or [annabel.shackleton@leafuk.org](mailto:annabel.shackleton@leafuk.org)
- LEAF 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](#))
- LEAF Open Farm Sunday offers a chance for all farmers to open their gates and welcome people onto their farms to discover the world of farming. Events can be as simple as a farm walk for a small group to fully fledged events for over 1000 people. LOFS offers advice and support for all types of event.
- LEAF Open Farm Sunday will return on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Registrations are open at [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org)
- Sponsors of LEAF Open Farm Sunday include: Arla Foods, Asda, BASF plc, Co-op, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, The National Farmers' Union, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose and the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board.