

Tuesday 26th September 2017

HRH Countess of Wessex attends farming teenage debate

HRH Countess of Wessex was amongst the attendees at the LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) Education and Public Engagement Conference last week. LEAF's Honorary President joined growers, retailers and industry representatives to explore practical and effective solutions to help reconnect teenagers with farming.

The event, which took place at The Auditorium, Sainsbury's, London, and had the theme '**Feeding Fertile Minds: Engaging teenagers with farming, food and the environment**', brought together a range of experts including researchers, policy makers, educationalists, social media experts, farmers and youth organisations. This was LEAF's second annual public engagement conference, and the first since LEAF merged with FACE (Farming and Countryside Education).



Pictured L-R: Caroline Drummond, Chief Executive, LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming); HRH Countess of Wessex; Beth Hart, Head of Agriculture and Sourcing, Sainsbury's Ltd.

Delegates at the conference heard how it was important to start engaging people with farming and food production as early as possible, with LEAF Demonstration farmer, John Renner telling the conference we need to sow the seeds when children are young. For teenagers, it is vital that they are involved with shaping their future food systems rather than being simply informed, with Iris Schönherr from The New Citizenship Project calling on the industry to switch from a ‘consumer’ to a ‘citizen’ mindset.

Teenagers had their own voice at the conference, with some of those involved in Welcome Collection’s RawMinds project speaking about the impact it had on their lives and on their views of farming. They highlighted the need for any farming initiatives working with teenagers to include social media and for young people to be actively involved in helping to shape projects. The conference also addressed the importance of food as a key channel to reach teenagers, with Jane Mackay from YouthSight, describing food as the ‘new rock and roll’ and how it is a fundamental part of their identity and lifestyle.

Carl Edwards, LEAF Director, Education and Public Engagement said: “As the world has become increasingly digitalised, young people in particular are moving further away from experiencing and understanding the farming and the natural world. Reversing this generational decline can offer significant social and economic benefits to everyone, not just the farming industry. LEAF and FACE are ready to take the lead to ensure we embed knowledge and understanding of farming, food and the environment into everyday life and teenagers are a key priority audience. What’s very clear is that we need to find out what they think of our industry, allow them to teach us as well and consult more closely with them. We also need to make sure that we have got credible resources that meet demands of current educational needs – something we are already addressing through the online resource portal Countryside Classroom.”

For a full commentary from the day as well as speaker presentations visit:

http://www.leafuk.org/leaf/latestnews/events/Education_and_Public_Engagement_Conference_2017.eb

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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 more sustainable farming. IFM uses the best of modern technology and traditional methods to deliver prosperous farming that enriches the environment and engages local communities.
- **The LEAF Marque** is an assurance system recognising more sustainably farmed products. It is based on the sustainable farming principles of Integrated Farm Management (IFM), which covers areas such as soil and water management, pollution control, crop health, animal welfare, community engagement, energy efficiency and landscape and nature conservation. LEAF Marque businesses are independently assessed and certified against the principles of IFM.
- **LEAF Demonstration Farms** are commercial farms which show the beneficial practices of IFM to a broad range of audiences, through organised visits. They communicate an understanding of IFM in order to encourage uptake by farmers, support from the industry and political awareness of sustainable food and farming. The network of LEAF Demonstration Farms includes a range of farm businesses across England and Scotland. They work alongside the LEAF Innovation Centres.
- LEAF manages **Open Farm Sunday**, the farming industry's annual open day when farmers open their gates and welcome people onto their farms to discover the world of farming. Next year's LEAF Open Farm Sunday will take place on 10th June 2018.
- Alongside Open Farm Sunday, farms across Britain also host **Open Farm School Days** which run 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.

FACE Editors' Notes:

- **FACE (Farming and Countryside Education)** is the leading educational charity working with schools to help children and young people understand the connection between farming and their daily lives. FACE creates high quality educational experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, that change perspectives and deepen understanding of the food we eat, the people who produce it and the choices we all make as citizens. As a result, FACE contributes to children flourishing, UK agriculture thriving, and the health of the planet. Teacher and farmer training are at the heart of FACE's work, alongside creation of educational resources and advice
- FACE manages a number of industry and educational initiatives, including:
 - **Access to Farms** A group of organisations committed to enabling safe and healthy farm visits. The group produces the industry's Code of Practice (Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions)
 - **CEVAS (Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme)** – a qualification for farm educators and care farmers, to develop professional approaches to health and safety, using the farm as an educational environment, and working with schools and other client groups.

- **Countryside Classroom** – a 36-partner consortium with the single largest collection of teaching resources, outdoor venues and experts dedicated to food, farming and the countryside.