

5th March 2015

LEAF calls on Scotland's farming and food industry to back Open Farm Sunday

- **LEAF joins forces with farmers, industry representatives and MSPs at Holyrood reception**
- **Call for more Scottish farmers to take part in Open Farm Sunday 2015**
- **LEAF reveals its 10 year vision for Open Farm Sunday in Scotland**

LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) yesterday joined leading representatives from across the Scottish farming and food industry to encourage more farmers to engage with consumers by getting involved with Open Farm Sunday. Last night's reception, held at Holyrood, Edinburgh, recognised the positive contribution Scottish farmers have made as part of LEAF's Open Farm Sunday over the last nine years, in changing public perception and understanding of the farming industry. The evening featured talks from Alex Fergusson MSP, Caroline Drummond MBE, LEAF Chief Executive, Dr David Roberts, SRUC and LEAF Scotland Chairman, as well as Open Farm Sunday host farmer Michael Clarke of Williamwood Farm, Dumfries.

2015 is Scotland's Focus Year of Food and Drink and Open Farm Sunday, held this year on Sunday 7th June, will form an important part of the calendar of events. Since 2009, 55,000 visitors have attended Open Farm Sunday events in Scotland with 63 farms taking part to date. Last year, 20 farms across Scotland, from Dumfries to Orkney, opened for Open Farm Sunday. LEAF is calling on more farmers to take part on 7th June 2015, so that even more Scottish families can experience farming at first hand and discover the story behind their food.

Caroline Drummond, LEAF's Chief Executive set out LEAF's 10 year vision for Open Farm Sunday and explained why it is so important for Scotland: "Scottish farmers have so much to offer. Agriculture is not just a major part of Scottish history and tradition, but an important contributor to today's economy. Our vision for Open Farm Sunday is to create an opportunity for everyone to visit a farm and discover the vital work of Scottish farmers in growing our food and enhancing the countryside, so that consumers fully value farming and the food they eat. We are therefore calling on farmers across Scotland to open and showcase the fantastic work they do – both as food producers and custodians of the countryside."

LEAF are keen to advise farmers in Scotland that taking part in Open Farm Sunday does not necessarily mean holding a large event. Caroline Drummond added: "Each Open Farm Sunday event is unique and the individual farmer can decide what size event to hold – this could be a simple private walk for a handful of visitors. Community engagement is a core part of sustainable farming and this can be achieved on a very local level."

Farmers in Scotland are supported by Open Farm Sunday Scotland Co-ordinator, Rebecca Dawes who also works for the Scottish Association of Young Farmer's Clubs. The Dawes family, based in Kinross, are regular Open Farm Sunday hosts. "Open Farm Sunday had a tremendous year in 2014, doubling the number of host farms in Scotland and raising awareness for the campaign. In this our tenth year, we want to make Open Farm Sunday 2015 the biggest yet and ask all those who work in the farming and food sector to get involved either by hosting an event, supporting a neighbour or promoting the campaign. As a host myself, I find the chance to connect with the general public a real privilege and am always proud to help promote British Farming."

The success of Open Farm Sunday has been achieved through collaboration with sponsors, industry organisations and the hundreds of dedicated farmers and their helpers who put on such great events. In Scotland, LEAF is delighted to work with a range of organisations including NFU Scotland, Quality Meat Scotland, RHET (The Royal Highland Education Trust) and the Scottish Association of Young Farmer's Clubs.

Sponsors of Open Farm Sunday 2015 include: Aldi, Asda, BASF plc, Defra, Farmcare, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Kellogg's, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Syngenta, The Tesco Eat Happy Project, Waitrose, plus the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (from its BPEX, DairyCo, HGCA and HDC divisions).

Since LEAF set up the initiative in 2006, over 1.25 million people have visited a farm on Open Farm Sunday. It provides a unique and inspiring opportunity for families to meet with farmers, find out how their food is produced and reconnect with the countryside. LEAF is also delighted to be working in partnership with RHET to extend its developing Open Farm School Days initiative which runs across Britain throughout June 2015. RHET provides farm visits all year free of charge to Scotland's school children.

Registration for Open Farm Sunday and Open Farm School Days is now open at www.farmsunday.org. LEAF provide free support and resources for farmers who register.

For more information visit: www.farmsunday.org or follow @openfarmsunday and @LEAF_OFS on Twitter.

Rebecca Dawes can be contacted on: 0131 3332445 / 07792 467730 or rebecca@sayfc.org

2006: First Open Farm Sunday took place: 300 farms, 30K visitors

2014: 9th Open Farm Sunday: 375 farms, 207K visitors and double the number of host farmers in Scotland

1 in 5 visitors have never visited a farm before

1,000 farmers have been involved since it began

1.25 million people have visited an Open Farm Sunday event to date, 55k in Scotland since 2009 alone.

-Ends-

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Editor's note:

- LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is a 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 members in 33 countries worldwide. LEAF has organised Open Farm Sunday since it began in 2006. (Registered charity no: [1045781](#))
- The tenth annual Open Farm Sunday will take place on 7th June 2015. Open Farm Sunday provides a great opportunity for people to visit a farm to truly get to know how their food is produced and how the countryside around them is cared for.
- Alongside Open Farm Sunday, farms across Britain also host Open Farm School Days which will run throughout 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 of Open Farm Sunday 2015 include: **Aldi, Asda, BASF plc, Defra, Farmcare, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Kellogg's, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Syngenta, The Tesco Eat Happy Project, Waitrose plus the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (from its BPEX, DairyCo, HGCA and HDC divisions).**

- Keep up to date with LEAF's activities via twitter www.twitter.com/LEAF_Farming and our regular blogs at leafmarque.wordpress.com.
- LEAF's Vision for Open Farm Sunday:
By 2025 we will have created a platform through Open Farm Sunday and Open Farm School Days that will:
 1. **Create** an opportunity for everybody to have visited a farm
 2. **Educate** everyone about where their food comes from and how it is produced
 3. **Promote** the vital work of farmers in growing our food and enhancing the countryside
 4. **Build** an even stronger connection between farmers and consumers
 5. **Empower** the whole farming and food industry to engage with their customers
 6. **Showcase** the diversity and quality of farming and the skills of the people who work in it
 7. **Inform** everybody about the importance of sustainable food production
 8. **Nurture** an appreciation of the countryside
 9. **Value** the work farmers do and the food they produce
 10. **Celebrate** the diversity of the farming industry and all that it produces

Through all this we want everyone to have the chance to...

- Experience the sights, smells and sounds of a farm
- Discover for themselves what farming is all about
- Talk to a farmer and meet the people involved in the story behind their food
- Get up close and personal to nature
- See crops growing at first hand
- Look at the machinery and technology used
- Experience sustainable farming in action