

NFU Open Farms,
1863 Wellington St.,
Battersea, ON
K0H 1H0

Dear Farmer:

We are writing invite you to participate in the Second Annual National Farmers Union **Open Farms** event taking place Sunday, September 18, 2011, from 10 am to 4 pm. This event will further serve the NFU's goal of supporting local farms and promoting local food. With more than 30 farms participating last year, the event was such a success that we have been encouraged to do it again.

The National Farmers Union Local 316 is the major funder and sponsor of the event, with funding also being generously provided by Farm Credit Canada and the Co-operators Insurance Company.

Event Details

NFU Open Farms is a self-directed tour of the farming areas stretching from Picton to the Gananoque area. Our mission statement is to provide the public with an opportunity to: visit food producers within a 100 km radius of Kingston; learn about local food production; and meet with the farmers who grow our food. The event is free to visitors.

We are looking for farmers interested in increasing awareness of their products, promoting sales and celebrating the bounty of the harvest. **The farms must produce food for the local market in order to participate.**

We have interest from farms throughout the area which is easily sectioned into smaller regions, including Picton, Napanee, Odessa, Maberly & Westport, Sydenham, Storrington Township, the City of Kingston and the Gananoque area. Producers in each region would benefit from working together to promote their area, taking advantage of the marketing potential within their own neighbourhoods. For example, in 2010 in the Storrington Township region, local farms co-ordinated to supply a local restaurant with produce and meat in order for them to provide a "10km Plate" special for the weekend.

Clusters of farms are likely to have more visitors than those that stand alone. Therefore, we encourage you to have your neighbouring farms get involved. This was definitely experienced last year in the Storrington Township area where farms saw between 100-300 visitors. Some visitors attempted to tour every farm and travelled from Maberly to Picton and points in between! Though most toured by car, some came by bus, and some even by bicycle.

NFU Open Farms is modeled after other similar events. To learn more about the potential benefits, visit Durham County's www.gatesopen.ca and Britain's www.farmsunday.org/ofs/home.eb.

Marketing & Promotion

Last year, the majority of our funding was used to construct an attractive website that listed participating farms, included profiles and photographs of the farmers and provided a map showing each farm's location. We will update and make improvements to the mapping in order to make it more user-friendly. See the site at www.openfarms.ca.

In advance of the event, flyers will be handed out at markets, at the farm gate and other strategic locations, with the details of the day and direction to the website. Posters will also be distributed through retail and restaurant locations and a comprehensive publicity campaign will be conducted using local papers, radio and Facebook. We will also count on our partners to aid in spreading the word to their own contacts through their mailing lists, promotional material, etc.

Costs to Participate

New participants will be required to purchase a roadside sign indicating an NFU Open Farms Tour location in advance of the event. The cost of the sign is \$25 per sign and will be able to be re-used in future years. Last year's participants can change the date by using black electrical tape, or paint, to change "19" to "18". Farmers may want to consider extra signage to make it easier to be found on the day. Each farm will be responsible for their own costs associated with whatever promotion they do on their own farm.

Liability Insurance and Provisions for Visitor Safety

Each farmer must check with their insurer regarding liability and may or may not need to purchase a rider for the day. Each farm will be required to provide the organizing committee with proof of insurance, including submitting the name of their insurer and policy number.

Having checked with similar tours (art studio) we have decided not to purchase group insurance this year.

If food samples are involved, it will be up to the individual farm to meet the requirements for serving food to the public as established by the local health unit.

Each farmer is expected to ensure safety for visitors, by taking precautions regarding equipment, livestock and other hazards (eg. posting and restricting access to hazards and providing adequate supervision.)

Displays

Keep in mind that the public has become detached from their food and even the simplest displays are sure to provide an educational opportunity. On our own farm, we will offer a tour of our garden and explain our organic pest control methods. The beekeeper that supplies our hives will be on hand to show his wares and demonstrate his craft. We may offer a tomato tasting, and will certainly have produce available for sale. Other farms intend to demonstrate equipment (eg. potato harvesters), some will offer wagon rides, others will showcase their animals. Some will have corn mazes and pumpkin or apple picking. Rest assured, the public will enjoy the opportunity to tour the countryside in the height of harvest to see what our farms are producing! If you do nothing "extra" on the day, your farm will miss out on an opportunity to make a favourable, memorable impression which could in turn affect the entire event. Please consider planning something special and allow time to plan and execute the details.

Next Steps

To indicate your intention to participate, please sign the attached form and return it via e-mail or regular mail by Aug 5th. Please be aware that this committee is run by volunteers that are very busy with their own farms; we appreciate strict attention to deadlines.

Thank you for your interest. If you have any questions, please contact me through e-mail at sharonfreeman46@gmail.com . My mailing address is 1863 Wellington St., Battersea, ON K0H 1H0.

Sincerely,

Sharon Freeman
Chair, NFU Open Farms

613-353-6889

Please see next page for the confirmation form.

**Confirmation Form for Farmer Participation
in the 2011 NFU Open Farms**

Please sign the following and return this form by regular mail by August 5th to: Sharon Freeman,
1863 Wellington St., Battersea, ON K0H 1H0

___ My farm will participate in the NFU Open Farms tour, September 18, 2011.

Name:

Farm Name:

Mailing Address:

Phone #:

E-mail Address:

Farm Insurer:

Policy Number:

Farm Description:

Directions to Farm:

Plans for Open Farms:

I declare that I have adequate insurance coverage for participation in NFU Open Farms, and that I will take measures to provide a safe environment for visitors to my farm. I understand that Local 316 of the National Farmers Union and the NFU Open Farms organizing committee assume no risk or liability in organizing this Event.

Signature_____ date_____

If you have any photographs (up to 4 or 5) that we could use on the web site, please send to:
Christine@fruition.ca.