

Growing Impact Together – Chef on a Farm



1. Summary of the project/idea

Chef on a Farm began as a pilot in 2011 -12 as a joint project with **FACE** and **The Royal Academy of Culinary Arts**. Both organisations shared a concern about the lack of children's knowledge and understanding about where food comes from. They also believed that if children actually met farmers and saw where produce is grown and reared that this may develop more positive attitudes towards food and help them explore healthier eating. Farms were identified and used as a base for learning skills in cooking and preparing meals with fresh ingredients. Farmers were carefully selected and briefed; and the farm facilities were checked to ensure suitable spaces for cooking and eating.

The day included a visit around the farm accompanied by the farmer plus other farm based educational activities (simple surveys of flora and fauna, seeing how the farm was coupling food production with sensitivity to the natural environment).

Children also spent time with a professional chef learning about tastes and then preparing a meal from scratch and eating together to create a special lunch experience.

Regional NFU provided a small fund to subsidise the transport costs of getting to the farm, and for the farmer to provide the produce free of charge.

Oliver Cartwright, NFU West Midlands communications adviser, said: *"the NFU was delighted to play a part supporting FACE's work with the Academy of Culinary Arts as it brought groups of excited and eager-to-learn pupils to farms across the region. The events helped children find out about the provenance of ingredients, meet farm animals and explore what happens behind the hedgerow to produce great tasting, quality food and drink.Our farmers and growers are always supportive of FACE and wanted to see the project continue for a further year as it was a real success story. We did not have to think twice about supporting it again as it is vital that more teachers get their pupils out of the classroom to find out what farms and the countryside can offer."*

2. Impact

During the pilot session 8 classes (children aged 7-11, Key Stage 2) from 8 schools went to 8 farms across Staffordshire and Shropshire: 270 children.

Since then a further 150 children have benefited from the scheme and, thanks to funding from the **All Saints Educational Trust**, almost 700 children will take part in 2014.

This is a quality project, well received by teachers, children and all organisations involved.

Teachers, children and farmers were all very enthusiastic about the day:

'the day was well organised by FACE'
'this is the best school trip we've ever been on'
'excellent experience broadening understanding of farm life and how food is produced'
'the children loved working with the chef'



3. Advantages of the approach taken

- Sharing of expertise: RACA have access to professional chefs experienced at working with school groups whilst FACE has close links with farmers trained to host school visits.
- Shared organisation of the project.
- Fulfilment of objectives of several organisations involved.
- Appeal to funders of collaborative working.



4. Lessons Learned

- A cross section of farms were used including conventional and organic, that produced between them, all the major commodities. The project worked well on all farm types and could be used to raise the profile of British and local produce.
- The project has wide appeal as it covers farm to fork in a very practical way.
- The project is resource intensive and needs sufficient funding to make it successful.
- Schools love the project and are keen to be involved in future years – will they pay for it?