

Getting Ready for Visitors to Your Farm



- **Expect a mix of visitors.** Some farms have few visitors, while others have many. Some guests may be visiting a farm for the first time, while others may have experience in farming, gardening, food production, or related fields. Welcome everyone and be ready to meet them where they are.
- **Start with a question.** Ask visitors what brought them to your farm or what they're interested in learning. Their answers can help you tailor the conversation to their interests and experience. If you have a larger group, you can ask visitors to raise their hands or have a group discussion. If you have a smaller group, you might have 1:1 conversations with guests.
- **Invite questions.** Encourage visitors to ask about your farm, your products, or agriculture in general. Every question is an opportunity to build understanding and make a connection.
- **Share what you know.** Talk about what you grow or raise, why you farm, what a typical day looks like, and what you appreciate most about your farm.
- **Highlight what visitors can see.** Explain what you're doing that day, why it's important, and how it fits into the season. Point out equipment, crops, animals, or other features that help tell your farm's story.
- **Share how people can support your farm.** Let visitors know how and where they can buy your products, visit again, or stay connected throughout the year.

Tips for meaningful conversations and sharing your story

- Personal stories, experiences, and conversations are memorable ways to connect with your Open Farm Day guests.
- Visitors do not know your farm as well as you do, and their questions may be different from the farming topics you think about each day. Conversations can help visitors learn about the values and priorities that guide your farm.
- Simple, open-ended questions can lead to meaningful discussions and help you respond to each visitor's interests.

Examples of open-ended questions to help start a conversation with your visitors:

- “What would you like to know about farming?”
- “Why did you decide to visit us today?”
- “Have you visited our farm/a farm before?”
- “Tell me what you already know about farming?”

Example Questions Visitors May Ask

Review these questions before visitors arrive to help you get ready for different conversations. Write down your answers and practice them so you feel comfortable talking with visitors. You can also make a large message board with a few questions and answers to use as a visual aid and to share important information with your guests.

About the farm

- What does your farm grow or raise?
- How long has your farm been in operation?
- Who works on the farm, and why do you farm?

Day to day, season to season

- What does a typical day look like in each season?
- How do you plan from one season to the next?
- When things don't go as planned, how do you adjust?
- What are some examples of things that can affect your work?
- What are your favorite experiences?

Growing food, flowers, fiber & other crops

- What are the steps to turn your crops or livestock into a finished product, and how long is that process from beginning to end?
- How are animals cared for, and is it the same all year?
- How do you keep plants and animals healthy?

Stewardship and quality

- How do you care for the land, soil, and water?
- How do the choices you make to care for your crops, animals, and land influence the quality of your finished products?

Supporting the farm

- How can people support you year-round?
- Do you offer a farm stand, CSA, online ordering, or wholesale?
- How can visitors use or prepare your products at home?
- How can visitors stay connected?

Important messages for every visitor

- Maine has a variety of farming! Each farm is different.
- Farming is skilled, year-round work that looks different depending on the farm and season.
- Most of Maine's farms are small businesses that support jobs, access to local foods, crops, and other local farm products, plus cherished scenery and habitats.
- Everyone is encouraged to learn more about agriculture! Visit farms, talk with farmers, and get involved with agricultural awareness efforts for people of all ages.