

## Fertiliser facts at your fingertips

Have you ever been asked why fertilisers are used on your farm or perhaps been concerned yourself about the amount of energy it takes to produce them and the impact that has on climate change? Help is at hand. GrowHow UK has produced two easily accessible publications and set up a dedicated area on its website to answer all those questions.

The first publication is a 12 page, A5 colour booklet called *Food, Farming and Fertilisers*. It examines the role of fertiliser in the context of the critical global issues of food security, climate change and environmental protection. The booklet provides a wealth of information and is written in plain English, avoiding as much jargon as possible. It provides answers to a range of questions from a simple 'what are fertilisers?' to the more complex issue of the impact of fertiliser use on climate change.

A number of unexpected facts emerge. These include the fact that a crop of wheat grown with the optimum amount of fertiliser will capture six times more energy from the sun through photosynthesis and 12 times more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than is required to produce, transport and apply the fertiliser.

Looking at food security and environmental sustainability the leaflet quotes the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation which says that global demand for cereals will rise by 50% by 2030. There are only two ways to satisfy this demand, expand the area farmed or increase yields. Environmentally, expanding the farmed area is a non-starter. It would seriously damage global biodiversity. At the same time cutting down forests and ploughing natural grasslands would release huge quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere contributing to global warming. In fact it has been calculated that changes in land use such as the conversion of rain forests into farmland already account for 12% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

*Food, Farming and Fertilisers* can be downloaded at [www.growhow.co.uk/fertiliserfacts](http://www.growhow.co.uk/fertiliserfacts) or, if you would prefer a printed copy, please email: [info@growhow.co.uk](mailto:info@growhow.co.uk)

## It's amazing

The second publication, *Amazing Fertiliser Facts* has been published in conjunction with LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) to support Open Farm Sunday and help farmers tell the fertiliser story on their farm.

The pack includes an information sheet for farmers and the handout for visitors pictured left which lists eight amazing fertiliser facts. For example, did you know that without fertilisers the world would only be able to feed about half of its people and then only with very basic overwhelmingly vegetarian diets? It would also need around 7 billion more cattle to provide the manure to maintain soil fertility. Feeding all those extra cattle would mean clearing nearly all our remaining forests to grow cattle fodder.

*Amazing Fertiliser Facts* can be downloaded, free from [www.growhow.co.uk/fertiliserfacts](http://www.growhow.co.uk/fertiliserfacts)  
Printed copies of the visitor handout are also available and can be ordered via the website.

## Supporting Open Farm Sunday

As well as supplying LEAF with the useful Amazing Fertiliser Facts sheet (see overleaf), GrowHow staff were out in force to support Open Farm Sunday on 7 June.

Despite the heavy downpours in some parts of the country, lots of people braved the weather, pulled on their wellies and waterproofs and got out onto farms to see for themselves what farming is all about and how their food is grown. More than 425 farms of every shape, size and type got involved. Some simply hosted a small farm tour for people living in their village. Others drew crowds into the thousands with tractor and trailer rides, farmers' markets and activities for children, among the attractions.

### Captions:

The Gothard family, left, ready to greet their visitors at Slough Court, near Taunton. The family milk 250 cows and make their own ice cream. "There was a good turnout of some 350 people over the day," explains Mike Sheppard, who represented GrowHow at the event.

Storm clouds gather at Little Braxted Hall Estate in Essex, right, where GrowHow's Tom Land was among the helpers. "Whilst visitors did brave the weather it was impossible to get any decent photos," says Tom.

## Fertiliser facts go down well with schools too

The new fertiliser facts information has also proved popular as an educational tool.

"For schools there was just so little information available to explain even the basics, let alone anything to tackle the bigger global issues such as climate change and feeding the world's growing population" says GrowHow's Nicola Cornish.

The new GrowHow information goes some way to filling the gap and has been well received by FACE (Farming and Countryside Education). FACE took a GrowHow display unit and a supply of booklets and leaflets with them to the Royal Show educational area in July. Almost 7000 school children enjoyed the Education Village at the event so it was a great opportunity to explain the pivotal role fertilisers.

GrowHow is also pleased to have been a sponsor of the NFU's recently published Why Farming Matters teaching packs for primary and secondary schools. Nicola continues, "We believe that making sure pupils and teacher can access good quality unbiased information about farming is essential."