



Module 3 – Undertaking your farm experience

In this module, we will examine what a school visit to an organic farm should look like. We will also look at the best way to communicate with young people, in order to ensure that they get the most from their visits.



The farm guide must have an eye on the age and the perceptive faculty of the group, he must know what activities are possible in which season and he needs to know what the main theme of the farm visit in connection with the school curriculum.

In addition to simple farm visits, which are organized as semi- or full-day events (see unit 1), complex teaching projects are described in unit 3. Unit 2 in addition is a kind of “tool box” with a big variety of large and small ideas. These ideas have to be adapted to the situation on the specific farm or the age group you work with, but they should illustrate how learning on a farm or learning something about organic agriculture can be organized in an active way using all the senses and the hands of actively.

The examples in this module focus on organic farming and show ways how to communicate the benefits of this sustainable land use system to the future generation.

What is the goal of this module?

- Unit 1. Setting a structure for the different stations of your farm visit (perspective of the farm guide)
- Unit 2. Hands on activities for the farm visit, grouped by themes
- Unit 3. Complex projects and long-term projects

After finishing the module, I will know....

1. how to structure a farm visit
2. which practical activities you can do on a farm
3. how to combine the farm visit with school activities and the lesson plan

Unit 1 – Structure of a farm visit

In this Unit I will learn how to...

1. combine the stations of a farm visit in a logical order? How to create my script for my farm visit
2. know example scripts
3. know methods for a successful welcoming and a useful feedback

Introduction

In Unit 1 you will learn to structure a farm visit in a way, that your group understands the organic farm circle. Furthermore, you will get little „example scripts“, which structure your day at the farm. For the structure plan it is important to match up the individual learning stations, so that the structure of the guided tour makes sense for the visitors. To get an appropriate tension, you have to keep a perfect balance between the two elements of listening on the one hand and practicing on the other hand for the visitors. To keep your group motivated and interested you always should think about an appropriate speech related to the age of the visitors and the individual knowledge.



Chapter 1 – How to match up the individual stations of a



farm visit in a logical way? How to create my script for the farm visit?

To plan the structure and the individual stations of a farm visit in a useful way, you, as a farm companion, have to collect the most important facts. The most important facts are:

- age of the group
- number of visitors
- type of school
- planned time of the farm visit
- desired topics based on the lesson plan
- individual limitations of the visitors (allergies, fear of animals, physical or mentally limitations)

These facts limitate the main topic and the complexity of your actions. What do you do with making bread to the topic wheat, if three of the children cannot eat gluten. But you should account the time of the year, because this can affect the list of activities. For example, a visit in a wheat field is good for spring (discover growing period with the wheat book), summer (compare wheat ears / harvest), but not for winter (there you can make bread).

On an organic farming the farm circle has a central meaning. The plants deliver the food for the animals and the animals deliver their fertilizer for the plants. These connections can be physically discovered from children and youth, when they go through the severally stations with the farm companion and when they can be active themselves.



You have all the important facts and you decided upon a theme? Now the next step is to create a screenplay. A screenplay can help the farm companions and the teachers to comprehend the inner logic und to assign every station different concrete activities.

The screenplay contains:

- all planned activities
- with specific date and location
- all materials which are used for the severally stations
- the learning goals that are fulfilled on the severally stations
- next to the activities you can only do with good weather you have to keep alternatives for bad weather in mind

Example script:

Add. Inf. Worksheet 1 script for the topic „organic farming on the example: lupin“

Add. Inf. Checklist Nr. 1 what do you have to keep in mind

Chapter 2 – example scripts

Every farm is unique in terms of its climate, landscape, production cycles, soil structure etc. It is therefore, important that each farm recognises and develops its own unique opportunities for learning.

The stations of the visit to the farm should ideally be coordinated in a way that the participants understand the red thread of the tour. It should be designed furthermore in a way that elements where the participants are listening and those elements where the participants can be active are combined with each other.

A screenplay allows the farm guides, as well as teachers, to put together the stations and the activities at the stations and to check the internal logic.

In the additional information sheets, you find examples of screen-plays with different age groups on different organic farm kinds.

Script example:



Add. Inf. Worksheet 2 climate change and the role of the organic farming

Add. Inf. Worksheet 3 script of organic vegetable and seasonal plant

Add. Inf. Presentation1 kindergarten event

Chapter 3 – methods for a successful welcoming and feedback

The frame of a farm visit is the welcoming and the ending. The event should start with a possibility for the group to arrive on the farm without hectic. First impressions can be collected, an introduction can be given and expectations can be told. Furthermore the structure of the day can be explained. Then the exploration of the farm can begin.

At the end you should take time for questions. With an ending feedback round every farm companions has the ability to develop. In this chapter they learn suitable methods to make their farm visit better.

Welcoming

welcoming the visitors:

At the beginning you should introduce yourself and your farm. Get the trust of the visitors, take care of a loose atmosphere (for example „my son is in the same class as you are.“) and excite the class for your farm (for example a new born calf). Name the different facilities on the farm and explain the children and youth where to put their clothes and what they need for the farm visit (for example pencil, paper etc.). Show them the toilets the children and youth can use.

get to know the group/ the learning goals:

Who already was on an organic farm? Who knows what is special about the organic farming? What do you want to learn today? These questions helps the children to realise the goals and the motivation of a farm visit. They will listen and participate more attentively and focus more of the topic. If you have a very small group or if you have a very complex project, you should speak to the children by their name. For this you can take masking tape and pencils for name shields.

the day structure:

Give your group a short overview, what things are planned for the day. Name the rules of the farm und explain why these rules are so important. A farm is no playground and the production animals are no domestic animals. Make clear that there are no compromises.

Add. Inf. Checklist Nr. 2 rules for the farm

Feedback and the final round - methods for the feedback

With a structured ending the children can repeat their adventures and impressions. With different feedback methods the farm companion gets the possibility to reflect the farm guide. In the worksheet below you will find a short overview about the most common feedback methods and the positive things of every method.



Add. Inf. Worksheet Nr.4 methods for feedback

Unit 2 – Practical activities

Within this unit, you will find worksheets for a number of practical activities that you can deliver during a group visit.



In this unit I will learn how to:

- identify specific activities that can be delivered during a group visit.

Chapter 1 – Animals

In this main topic are a lot of topics, which can be used the whole year, because the animal farming fits to all times of the year.

Before you start with the group you should consider, which information about the animals could be interesting for the single and individual group (for example Add. Inf. Worksheet 5_Information about chicken). Before you start you should clarify with your group what is important for the individual animal group (for example be quiet at the pig's stall, make small steps in the chicken's stall). Give the group enough time to observe the animals. Sometimes in the beginning the children fears the touch with the animals. The fear has to be banned in small steps.



Add.Inf. Activity 1 Year1 Animals including humans

Add.Inf. Activity 2 All living things and their habitats

Chapter 2 – Agriculture, vegetable and fruits

There is a big amount of topics, which can be used for a farm guide so there is also a big variety in the content. When you choose one educational proposition you should have a look at your farm structure. The more variable the plants are, the more topics you can choose. But keep in mind that not the amount of offers is the most important thing, but the quality of the event.



Add.Inf. Activity 3 Plants

Add.Inf. Activity 4 Plants

Add.Inf. Activity 5 All about pumpkin

Chapter 3 – agricultural products (milk, bread...)

Besides the farm exploring, where the group gets to know the farm and its structure, there is also a variety of activities, which are possible with agricultural products. Everything produced and worked up on the farm can have an active part in the farm exploring. This could be for example the production of butter, the tasting from products produced on the farm or the baking of bread with fresh ingredients from the farm. Creativity has no boundaries.

Activities:

Add.Inf. Activity 6 From grain to bread

Chapter 4 – Nature protection

Of course, the special features of the organic farming are not only the variety of the farms. Moreover, an important aspect is the nature protection, which importance gets higher about the time. There are a lot of possibilities to do something with this topic on a farm visit. But in this case the age of the group should be considered, so that the visitors are not overwhelmed with the information.

Add.Inf. Activity 7 exploring our soil



Chapter 5 – Other

Add.Inf. Hands On activity1 Soap making

Add.Inf. Hands on activity2 exploring soil Logo

Unit 3 – Complex farm visits and Long-term projects

On the one hand there are short farm visits, which are organized as half- or whole day-activities. On the other hand, there are so-called long-term -school projects, which have the goal to make the effect of the farm visit more sustainable. Therefore, some groups visit the farm several times a year to connect with the topic in an emotional way or a whole school visits the organic farm and creates a market at school to deepen the learned things.

It is also useful to have a preparation at school before the farm visit and a post processing at school after the farm visit. Because then learning in and out of school is connected very well. In this unit there are some examples for complex and connected farm visits. These farm visits are a connection to the lessons in school and can be presented on project days at school.

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. make the farm visit more sustainable
2. set up an emotional bond of the children to the topic
3. structure complex different farm visits

Introduction

In this unit you will get to know complex farm visits on examples and how they can be connected with school lessons and project days at school.

Chapter 1 – Four-season-project for primary schools

A farm visit is an interesting experience, but it is also only a snapshot. The farm visit has nothing to do with the following development in the year. Therefore the year accompanying offers were developed (for example the topic „from the sowing to the harvest“). With the several farm visits of the year the different biological correlations and developing steps are experienced.

The example is a four-season-project for a primary school, which visits an all-round mixed farm.



Add.Inf. example1 four-season-project

Chapter 2 – Three-steps-lessons, farm visit & project day at school (for secondary schools)

In some schools, for example in Germany, the learning place “farm” is an inherent part of the school program. There the classes have farm visits several times a year and are included in daily work on a farm. These sort of cooperation is often accompanied and supported by an association.

In contrast to the half- or whole day-activities the three-steps-lessons enables the children to deal with the topic in an intensive and comprehensive way. Practically three to five days are recommended for the project three-steps-lessons. In this way new experiences can be practiced, structures on the farm can be deepen and an emotional bond to the nature can be build up.



Especially in Waldorf schools (but also in public schools) there you have the farming practicum in the 9th or 10th class. There the children are 7 to 14 days with sleep over at a farm and they work together with the farmers.



Add.Inf. example2 3-steps-lessons

Add.Inf. example3 Agricultural Training for Students from Waldorf Schools

Chapter 3 – Concept of a farmer's market

Add.Inf. example4 concept of a farmers market

Key actions

1. When planning your activities, always consider the age and perceptions of the visitors.
2. Establish the rules for the visit and discuss the rules with the children at the beginning of the tour.
3. Structure your tour so that the group can recognize the red line.
4. A friendly welcome and final feedback session should provide the framework for your leadership.
5. The most important thing in your offer should always be the quality of the event. The variety of possible topics only plays a subordinate role.