



Module 2 – Preparing for your farm experience

Learning first-hand from a farmer is an inspiring experience for pupils. Good preparation will ensure that each visit to a farm reaches the stated educational goals. In this module, farmers as well as teachers will learn skills for planning successful farm-visits.



What is the goal of this module?

Unit 1. Get familiar with and check all the important aspects concerning a biofarm visit with pupils and young people - for farmers as well as for teachers.

Unit 2. To obtain skills and tools for detailed preparation and planning of attractive and successful farm-visits, reaching the stated educational objectives.

Unit 3. Be aware of potential risks and get a framework for visitor safety management.

After finishing this module I will have learnt....

1. to check important aspects concerning a biofarm-visit for pupils and young adults.
2. to plan and structure a biofarm-visit in a proper, age-related way - including duration, activities, pre- and post-visit activities in the classroom.
3. to avoid health and safety risks for farm visitors.

Unit 1 – Pre-visit planning

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. identify what makes visits on my farm unique for children
2. ensure farm and school expectations are the same
3. prepare children / young people for their farm visit

Introduction into the topic:

Learning first-hand from a farmer is an important formative experience, improving knowledge and building interest in the consumption of healthy and fresh produce. Detailed preparation will ensure that each visit to a farm successfully reaches the stated educational goals. In this unit you will identify the important aspects of working out a plan for your organic farm visits.



Chapter 1 – Opportunities and challenges of school visits for the farm

Before inviting pupils to your farm, think about your expectations, your possibilities and facilities. Consider what will make visits to your farm different from competing attractions. In the following checklist, you'll find some questions, that might help.

Checklist: [Planning your farm visits - questions for farmers](#)



Chapter 2 – Opportunities and challenges of farm visits for the school group

Milking cows, making butter or cheese, baking bread, picking fruits, weaving or felting sheep-wool, feeding, watering and stroking animals, mucking the stable, cultivating and harvesting grains potatoes and vegetable, making hay, classifying plants, feeling the soil, stripping the bark from trees... there are so many possibilities for hands on activities for children on a bio-farm. All these learning experiences can – if well planned and organized - be an optimal complement to cognitive learning at school. Besides that, the collective and emotional experiences on farms stimulate pupils and enable social connection among the class. As a teacher, you should think about your expectations.

In the following checklist, you'll find some questions, that might help.



Checklist: [Planning of farm visits - questions for teachers](#)



Checklist: [In-class preparation and In-class-reflection](#)

Chapter 3 – Pre-visit planning

Before a farm-visit is carried out, teachers and farmers usually discuss and plan the visit through a telephone call or a face-to-face visit. This is known as a pre-visit. Things discussed will include the date of the visit, duration, detaactivities, group size and costs. It is recommended good practice for a farmer and teacher to arrange and carry out a pre-visit.

The questions in the following checklist cover the key considerations.



Checklist: [Pre-visit planning](#)



Chapter 4 – Pre-visit pro-forma

When a school contacts the farm for a visit, get back to them as soon as possible to book the date. Send a booking form outlining what is available, and any charges, then confirm with a timetable so teachers know what to expect. You can find relevant information/notes that should be mentioned in this confirmation in our checklist "confirmation form for schools/teachers".

It is annoying if you prepare everything and the group is not coming. And it would be frustrating for children and teachers if they are looking forward to the visit and the farmer forgot it. So better call the teacher some days before the visit to confirm that the visit is still going ahead.

Checklist: [Confirmation form for schools/teacher](#)





Unit 2 – Planning and structuring a farm visit

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. plan and structure programmes for farm visits
2. plan pre- and post-visit activities for schools
3. link activities to the school curriculum

Introduction to the unit:

Once your objectives have been set, you can start to plan the finer details of the farm visit. There is a lot to think about. This unit gives support to prepare the programme of the farm visit, including specifics of the target-group, the length and activities, all necessary materials as well as pro- and post-visit activities for the classroom.



Chapter 1 – Planning and structuring the event

Before starting your farm-visit programme, prepare a checklist of everything you will need to do in advance and what you need to take on the day. The following planning checklist will ensure that nothing is missed. The priority of this chapter is in planning a proper operation and organisational framework of the whole visit – from saying welcome to saying good bye.

It is often advisable to talk to friends and colleagues about your ideas, as some of them might have experience or know people who have been on a farm visit in the past. When the plan your farm visit is in place, also think about what you will need to take with you on the day. (e.g. educational material, signs, snack, lunch...).

Checklist: [Planning the concrete procedure](#)



Other learning tools:

Further material for planning a visit on a bio-farm you can find here:

Bio-Infos im Überblick (Texte für Kinder): www.oekolandbau.de/kinder/was-heisst-bio

Experimente, Bau- und Bastelanleitungen, Malvorlagen, ... für Kinder: www.oekolandbau.de/kinder/selber-machen

Worauf es ankommt: Fakten zum Thema biologischer Landbau:

www.oekolandbau.de/fileadmin/redaktion/bestellformular/pdf/060303.pdf

Chapter 2 – Information pack for schools

Provide teachers with an information pack about your farm, your educational facilities and the activities you can offer (e.g. a map and a few facts and figures that the teacher can use in advance).



Checklist: [Template farm-description](#)





Chapter 3 – Pre- and post-visit activities for schools and farms

Teachers have to prepare children for their visit to the organic farm. Also, after the visit the children should reflect their experiences. A guide for pro- and post-visit activities for children and teachers is shown in the checklists “pro-visit activities for schools” and “post-visit activities for schools”.



Checklist: [Pro-visit activities for schools](#)

Checklist: [Post-visit activities for schools](#)

Once the visitors have left, the farmer and the teacher should take a few minutes to jot down any new ideas he/she have had, or things they would do differently next time. There is always room for improvements. Therefore it's also good to ask the teachers for a short written feedback on the content and the activities.

In the following checklist, you can find some questions, that might help to reflect the farm visit.



Checklist: [Feedback for farmers](#)

Unit 3 – Health and safety on the farm

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. identify hazards and risks for visitors to organic farms
2. introduce risk control measures that are sufficient to safeguard visitors, but do not lessen the experience
3. set out rules of conduct for children and other visitors

Introduction to the topic:

Farmers and teachers want their visitors to return home safe, happy and satisfied with their experiences. Therefore, it is important to protect them from unnecessary and / or unreasonable risks. This chapter provides you with the skills to be able to identify hazards and risks, whilst also introducing a framework for planning your approach to visitor safety.



Chapter 1 – Identify hazards and risks

On a farm visit, visitors could be exposed to hazards and risks that they may not understand. In order to ensure a safe visit, it is necessary that farmers, teachers and children are aware of these hazards, in order to minimise the risk to them and others.

- **Risk** expresses the likelihood of harm from a particular hazard (for example: how likely is it that you might slip in a patch of mud?).
- A **hazard** is something with a potential to cause harm (the patch of mud).
- Hazards only present a risk when there is **human interaction** (someone slipping in the patch of mud).
- A **risk assessment** involves identifying the hazards present then evaluating the extent of the risks involved, taking into account any precautions already in place (identifying the patch of mud as a potential problem; noting that it will be walked past; and then ensuring that everyone wears boots with good grips).



Identifying possible hazards on a farm

What hazards are the visitors likely to face? What kinds of behavior will increase the risk? How can these risks be controlled? The farmer should be reviewing hazards on an on-going basis and employing risk-assessment techniques. The teacher should, if possible, make a pre-visit check on the location's risks and point out any hazards that she/he feels need management.



Checklist: Identifying possible hazards on a farm

Chapter 2 – How to avoid risks on farm visits?

Consider, if safer systems of work/play/activity are adopted? (e.g. by establish a procedure or set of rules, providing information and skills through training).

You will find general tips to avoiding risky situations in the following checklist “Guidance to avoid risky situations”.

Remember, the farmer and teachers should supervise all children during the visit, especially during hand washing in order to make sure that each child washes their hands thoroughly. Site staff may be able to help with this supervision. Allow plenty of time for hand washing before eating or leaving the site so that the children do not have to rush.



Checklist: Avoid risky situations



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Chapter 3 – Animal related risks

There are special precautions that should be adhered to when handling animals. For children visiting animals is often one of the most attractive part of the farm visit. When visiting animals, ensure that children are well briefed and ensure that they interact with animals in a calm and respectful way. It also helps to choose good-natured animals for the farm visit. Never leave children unsupervised with animals.

All animals will naturally carry a range of micro-organisms, some of which cause no illness in the animal but can be transmitted to humans. Animals can also cause allergies and infections. For these reasons, instruct the visitors in the principles of good hygiene:

- No eating in an area where animals are kept.
- Always wash hands after touching animals.
- Never feed animals with anything not provided by the farm.
- Do not kiss animals.
- Never taste animal foods.



Course: pixabay

Chapter 4 – Risks related to handling foodstuff

Hygiene is very important when dealing with foodstuffs on the farm. This can relate to the production of foods such as if the farmer produces cheese, butter or bread. It can also relate to the consumption of food during lunch breaks.

You can find some special precautions relating to the handling of foodstuff and catering on the farm in the checklist



below:

Checklist: Handling with foodstuff

If you provide eating areas, locate facilities away from areas where animals are, or where wind blown contaminated material might be present. Preferably locate the eating areas at the end of any farm trail, walk or tour.

- Ensure that visitors have to pass through or by washing facilities before entering eating areas.
- Ensure visitors are advised, e.g. by adequate signage, to wash their hands before eating.
- Exclude animals including captive birds from eating areas. These could contaminate eating areas with faeces. Consider wing clipping or double gates into eating areas and adequate fencing to exclude them.
- Where eating areas are adjacent to animal contact areas, prevent animal contact, e.g. by providing double fencing. This should be positioned at a distance that will prevent visitors reaching through to touch the animals and to prevent animals reaching over or through the fence to contact people.
- Provide adequate waste bins and clear discarded food from eating areas to discourage wild birds and rodents from feeding and contaminating the area.



Chapter 5 – Insurance coverage of visitors

Farmers should make sure, that their public liability insurance is in place and that it covers school visits to the farm, as well as all damage to third parties.



Source: Pixabay

Tips and further information:

The social insurance for farmers offers consultation about risk sources and risk management:

<https://www.svb.at/portal27/svbportal/content?contentid=10007.718074&portal:componentId=gtn27187a72-d7bf-49fb-9bc9-4e5314dcf992&viewmode=content>

Chapter 6 – Rules for the day

To ensure the safety of visitors, it is important to set some rules for the visit to the farm. At the start of the visit, discuss these ground rules with the pupils and explain why they have to be followed.

1. **I am in charge on the farm.** It is important that you (the visitors) carefully follow my instructions. I tell you, what you are allowed to do. If I say “stop”, it is important that you stop. This is because I know my farm well and I am aware of possible risks on the farm.
2. **When one person is talking, the others should be listen.** When I tell you something important, I will raise my hand. Then you have to be quiet and listen. This is very important, because we are outdoors, we are a large group and it can sometimes be difficult to hear each other.
3. **Only quiet children are allowed to go to near the animals.** The animals are not used to loud screaming and fast motions. They are sensitive and could easily get stressed by loud noises.
4. **We stay as a group.** On every farm, there are places that could be dangerous. I want you all to go home safely and that's why we should all stay together as a group.
5. **Things we don't want on the farm visit:** sweets, electronic games equipment, littering.



source: Pixabay

Additional advice

Further advice on E. coli O157 including a video on hand washing is available at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/farmsafe/ecoli.htm>



Other advice is available from a number of other government websites including:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>

www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health><http://www.defra.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health)

Guidance for managing risks events such as agricultural shows is available at <http://www.asao.co.uk/>