

THANKING THE FARMER – THE INVISIBLE HERO



Students can't contain their joy after having received the #FarmDost kit

Inspirational speaker Brenda Schoepp once said, "My grandfather used to say that once in your life you need a doctor, a lawyer, a policeman, and a preacher; but every day, three times a day, you need a farmer." In an attempt to make people understand the life of a farmer, Tractors and Farm Equipment Limited (TAFE), the world's third largest tractor manufacturer, has launched the 'Be a #FarmDost' initiative.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE
The initiative attempts to raise empathy for the farmer by encouraging people to step in their shoes, even if for a small while. The idea stems from the thought that if people realize the effort it takes to cultivate a single crop, in one square foot of land, they would truly realize what the average farmer has to go through, day in and day out. The initiative is reaching out to the urban and semi-urban children through exciting contests. "We want children to feel the bliss of harvesting a crop — however small it may be. We want them to understand the effort that goes into farming, empathize with the farmer and recognize their contribution in feeding the country and the world at large. We also hope that this would lead to family bonding time — with parents, grandparents, siblings and friends — and together they could spread the message. As a society we don't really give enough back to farming or acknowledge the farmer, like we recognize other professionals. It's time we changed that," says TAFE COO, TR Kesavan.

The initiative is being spearheaded by the corporate com-

munications team of TAFE and it has reached out to 50,000 children in Chennai, Coimbatore, Trichy and Madurai with the hope to bring back the farmer into our social consciousness. The 'Be a #FarmDost' initiative is primarily an online viral campaign that will interact with its community of FarmDosts across media and platforms. The aim is to communicate and bring like-minded people together who relate to the cause and keep them engaged through insightful farming related activities. The FarmDost Facebook page has crossed 100,000 'Likes' and is seeing a steady stream of fans.

INVOLVING SCHOOL STUDENTS

The initiative will be engaging with the society on various levels. The campaign was launched in April 2015 at Chennai and Coimbatore, in June 2015 the school activation commenced and by the end of 2015 an agri-innovation challenge will be thrown open to college students. The activities are developed such that they lead back to the #FarmDost movement.

Shedding light on the initiative and the contest called #ThankyouFarmers, Sunitha Subramanian, senior DGM –

corporate communications said, "Every student is given a packet when they confirm their participation in the campaign. The packet contains two seed packets, a friendship agreement, a sticker, a pack of cocopeat and an instruction manual. Every participant must use the seeds provided in the packet to grow plants and also share pictures of all six stages of the plant's growth on FarmDost.com. The six stages include planting/seeding, germinating, 7th day, 14th day, 21st day and 28th day. The participant whose pictures get the highest number of Facebook 'Likes' and 'Shares' (for all the six pictures put together) on the FarmDost Facebook page will win the Best#FarmDost Student Award for the city." The top three entries will be selected for the Best#FarmDost Student Award. For the #ThankyouFarmers contest, the participant must meet at least three farmers to understand their life and farming. At the end of the interaction they are to thank the farmer in an innovative or creative which doesn't involve any monetary transaction. The participant must click pictures with the farmers and write about their experience and how they



With more and more schools embracing the 'Be a #FarmDost' initiative, TAFE's quest to bring the farmer to the forefront gathers speed



Teachers and students begin their journey of cultivation by sowing seeds



Students with their kits

thanked the farmer. These entries should be uploaded on the website, which will be judged and the top three entries from each city will be awarded. "Some of the participating students have made greeting cards for the farmers to thank them. When the farmers received this lovely gesture, they were overwhelmed. It was such a heart-warming experience," says Subramanian.

The school awards also include Champion of Champions Award for overall participation and the

Best#FarmDost School Award and #ThankYou Farmers School Award for the top three schools per city respectively. The top three schools for the contests will be awarded on the basis of highest participation percentage of students for the respective city. So, get into your farming shoes and send in your entries to be a part of these exciting contests.

For any queries, visit:
Website: FarmDost.com
Facebook page:
[Facebook.com/FarmDost](https://www.facebook.com/FarmDost)



Seeds being sown during one of the school activities

