THANKING THE FARMER
THE INVISIBLE HERO

Inspirational speaker Subhaja once said, “My grandfather used to say that once in your lifetime 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 into their shoes, even if only 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 excitement of harvesting a crop—however small it may be. We want them to understand that the effort that goes into farming, empathize with the farmer and recognize their contribution in feeding the country and the world at large. We hope that this would lead to family bonding time—whether 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 communications team of TAFE and is also reaching 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 through media and platforms. The aim is to communicate and bring like-minded people together who care to react or contribute and keep them engaged through insightful farming-related activities. The FarmDost Facebook page has crossed 106,000 ‘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 link back to the FarmDost movement.

Shedding light on the initiative and the contest called ‘ThankYouFarmers’, Sandhya Balasubramaniyan, senior BDM—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 of5 seed packets, 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/seedling, germinating, 7th day, 10th 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 farmers in an innovative or creative way that doesn’t involve any monetary transaction. The participants must click pictures with the farmers and write about their experience and how they thanked the farmer. Those 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 Sandhya.

The school awards also include Champions of Champions Award for overall participation and the Best FarmDost School Award and ‘Thank You Farmers School Award for the top three schools in each city. The top three entries for each contest 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 queries, visit: Website: FarmDost.com/facebook.com/FarmDost

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

Teachers and students begin their journey of cultivation by sowing seeds

Students sow seeds from the kit

Students during the activity

Students with their kit

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