

# BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS BETWEEN FARMERS AND PEOPLE

Some people spend their lives in service of others - working in the background, dispensing responsibilities that have great implications - and they don't ask for much: perhaps, just a thank you, or a smile and an acknowledgement of their service. That is how the farmer lives. He toils under the burning sun, day after day, year after year, feeding the world, integral to the social fabric, and yet, out of sight. He's a part of your every meal, and yet never a part of your dinner table conversation. It's about time that changed.

## The 'Be a #FarmDost' initiative

It aims to bring the invisible farming community back into our social consciousness. To inspire people - urban, rural, young, old - to experience what a farmer does, in a small way. What it is like to feel the thrill of the warm earth between one's fingers. The joy of nurturing a seed until it springs to life. The humility of knowing that the earth will reward the efforts put in. And finally to feel the bliss of harvesting a crop. It aims to celebrate the farmer in the public sphere and create an environment of admiration and respect towards the farming community. The hope is that, in the process of cultivating a small patch of land, people will empathise with the farmer who feeds the nation, by cultivating land.

## What they do?

On the face of it, TAFE - Tractors and Farm Equipment, are the second largest manufacturer of tractors in India and the third largest worldwide, with a presence in over 75 countries, manufacturing iconic tractor brands. They go well beyond farming and into community building. Their commitment to the farming community is so entrenched within its DNA that, in 1983, they established JFarm - an adaptive agri-research centre, playing



TR Kesavan, COO, product strategy and corporate relations, TAFE (2nd from right), Sunitha Subramaniyan, Sr DGM, corporate communications (2nd from left) and guests representing the farming community of Chennai at the launch



Onlookers at the launch of the initiative



The launch of the initiative at a mall in the city



Encouraging visitors to take part in the campaign

a proactive role in increasing farm yields, viability and sustainability empowering farmers with new technologies in propagating, planting and protecting a variety of crops. JFarm has helped farmers increase their yields.

## Who they are?

Since 1960, TAFE's mission has been singular - to help farming communities around the world prosper, thereby helping in cultivating the world. To be the first choice of the farming community, they realised that they had to place the farmer at the heart of their strategy. From this insight grew one of the most enduring and invigorating collaborations between manufacturer and user, simply because, before they set out to cultivate the world, they cultivated the man of the soil - listening to him and learning his challenges.

They utilised the years of market expertise that they have accumulated and endeavour to improve agriculture at the grassroots, in order to ensure that sustainable farming becomes a common practice world over.

## What exactly is 'cultivating the world'?

It is not just a slogan or a tagline. Being so closely involved with farmers for more than 55 years, they wanted to bring the farmer to the forefront, while educating the people about the work they do. The only way to truly cultivate the world is to get everyone involved, by breaking down walls and barriers that prevent farmers from being able to communicate with the rest of the population. The 'Be a #FarmDost' initiative is but an extension of the same. With your help, TAFE's resources and the determination of farmers, they believe that they can take this message forward and hopefully bring the farmer to the forefront and get the credit that he rightfully deserves.

## How does one become a FarmDost?

Take a tray. Fill it with earth. Plant something in it. Nurture it, care for it, watch it grow and relish the pride that comes while doing so. Seek out a few farmers and sit down with them for a glimpse into their world. Finally share your story. Post their stories and pictures on the #FarmDost social media

platforms. Post pictures and videos of the plant you're growing at home as well. The initiative is an inclusive one because anybody who wishes to participate, can - age, social standing, financial standing, gender, geography - are not barriers.

The launch of the 'Be a #FarmDost' initiative earlier this month, was a mall campaign in Chennai to raise awareness and invite people to participate. A massive stall was set up in a popular mall, where a patch of farm was recreated, complete with a tractor. Visitors were engaged with games that further ingrained the idea behind the initiative. A seed kit was distributed amongst the mall goers. The kit contained sachets with spinach seeds that they could grow at home. Along with which, they received an instruction manual that demonstrated how simple it was to grow these crops at home, if done right. The seed kit was their initiation into becoming a #FarmDost.

## How about those who could not attend the event?

The company is actively engaging

with FarmDosts across our social media platforms. They are on the search for real life human interest stories, of rural India, of farms and farmers. Of people who have moved away from full-time careers to take up farming. They would be invited to talk about their motivations, their dreams and the importance of their new vocation - to themselves and to the country.

## I'm interested. Can I participate too?

If you find you are, thinking about where to start, what and how to do, unable to procure seeds or seeking any other advice, write to them on their Facebook page [facebook.com/FarmDost](http://facebook.com/FarmDost) for assis-

tance. Spread the word about the initiative to friends, family, colleagues. The farmers are looking for Dosts.

## Is the activity restricted to India?

Not at all. Anyone is welcome to participate, no matter where they reside. All they have to do, however, to impact the number of FarmDosts that have gathered in this community, is share their efforts on our social media pages and spread the word further. Support and respect is not restricted or altered by the nation it arrives from. Welcome to the 'Be a #FarmDost' initiative.