**Dairy Facts Discussion Starters.**

***Use the bulleted points to develop a discussion with the children /young people. If you are going to visit a dairy farm, make a note of anything you need to ask the farmer about the specific farm you are visiting.***

* There really is no such thing as the average dairy farm - there are farms of all shapes and sizes in the UK, from small herds to farms with more than 1,000 cows, and different farming systems including organic and conventional, grazed and housed. The average herd is around 115 cows in the UK.
* Ask a friend to draw a dairy cow and the chances are they would paint it black and white. The Holstein-Friesian breed - which is black and white - is the most common and represents 90% of the British herd. Other breeds that can be seen include the Ayrshire, Jersey and Guernsey.
* Around 5 billion litres of milk are sold in Britain each year and we consume an average of 1.6 litres each a week.  On top of that, 6 billion litres go into dairy products such as cheese, butter and dried milk powder, which is a vital component of many other food products. All in all, we buy enough dairy products every year to fill nearly 4,500 Olympic-size swimming pools.
* Sales of organic milk represent 3.1% of the overall liquid milk market,
* Cloning is the creation of an organism that is an exact genetic copy of another. There are no cloned cows in Britain.
* Sexed semen can help dairy farmers make sure more female calves are born. Depending on market prices bull calves with dairy genetics might be unprofitable. How are farmers dealing with this issue?
* Methane is produced in the first stomach of the cow which we call the rumen. In there we find billions of microorganisms that ferment the food that goes in. As a consequence, the cow produces methane, which she burps out. This is part of the natural digestive process and it's something that cows have evolved over hundreds of thousands of years.
* Cows have 4 stomachs. This enables them to digest cellulose in grass. If you tried to eat grass, it’s just too tough for your body to digest. Ruminants ‘chewing the cud’ enables them to make use of the UK’s plentiful grassland (approximately 70% of all farmed land).
* It is estimated that there are around 50,000 farmers and farm workers employed on dairy farms in the UK.
* Cows need a healthy, balanced diet in order to produce milk, so dairy farmers work with nutritionists to create special diet plans for them. Most dairy cows eat grass in summer and silage (preserved grass or maize) and cereals, protein feeds, vitamins and minerals in winter. Grass does not grow during this period due to the cold weather and most cows, like us, would rather be inside with plenty of food.
* Each dairy cow eats between 25 and 50 kg of feed per day and needs a constant and regular supply of fresh water to drink. The amount of feed a cow eats depends on the breed, age and stage of lactation and this is why many farmers use expert advisors to develop the correct diet.