

**Press Release**

[for immediate release]

**Tom Martin reveals commonwealth conference inspired him to create Farmer Time**

Farmer Tom Martin - founder of the hugely successful Farmer Time project - has revealed how he would never have launched the initiative if it hadn’t been for the “jump start, leg up and inspiration” he received at a commonwealth agricultural conference eight years ago.

Back in 2016 Cambridgeshire arable and regenerative farmer Tom Martin attended the Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth (RASC) Conference in Singapore; an experience he hailed as “highly life changing”. The following year, in 2017, he launched 'Farmer Time' (formerly called FaceTime a Farmer) which pairs farmers with school classes.

Tom was supported financially by the East of England Agricultural Society to attend the conference, which is being hosted in Edinburgh this year.

“I took so much from that conference,” says Tom. “Without the jump start, leg up and inspiration of the RASC conference there would be no Farmer Time.

“It’s a gathering of like-minded people who are passionate about agriculture from all over the world, bringing with them all their energy and learning.

“As a result of attending I count as friends fascinating and motivating people from all over the world.”

Tickets have gone on sale for the 30th RASC Conference, an organisation which was founded in 1957 by the late Duke of Edinburgh Prince Phillip. He served as President of the society for half a century before handing over the reins to Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal.

54 different countries including Australia, New Zealand, Kenya, Uganda, Canada, India and Jamaica will have around 150 representatives at the Edinburgh-based conference between Thursday 20th to Thursday 27th June 2024. The event is traditionally held every two years and draws the bulk of its delegates from agricultural show societies across the world.

“I can’t recommend highly enough attending the RASC,” adds Tom. “It’s on our doorstep in Edinburgh this year so get yourself a ticket.

“Local agricultural societies can be really helpful when it comes to funding places. Attending is a must for anyone with a passion to progress and learn. Connect with the RASC, reach out and be energised.”

While Tom attended the Singapore conference as a Next Generation delegate, for the under 40s, he says he puts great value on the lifelong connections he has made with people of all ages.

“Senior delegates have a huge amount of experience and a massive number of connections. We all interacted together and it’s amazing to meet people with wisdom who you can reach out to for advice and help. I really can’t recommend highly enough going to the RASC conference.”

The Farmer Time programme has spread internationally, to countries including Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. It involves thousands of school children video calling their paired farmer every fortnight to link curriculum learning with life on the farm.

“This wouldn’t have been possible without that inspiration - the seed and spark - that I got at that RASC conference,” concludes Tom, whose Village Farm is the headquarters for Farmer Time.

The Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland has been instrumental in securing this year’s conference in Edinburgh. It will have the theme *Growing a Commonwealth* and gatherspeakers, sessions, and topics from across the Commonwealth at Edinburgh’s Gogarburn Conference Centre. A Gala Dinner will be hosted in the members’ pavilion of the Royal Highland Showground and for those who arrive in Scotland before the actual conference, there will be farm visits and guided tours, along with the chance to attend the Royal Highland Show.

Apart from the exchange of ideas on the secure and sustainable use of the world’s natural resources, the RASC’s mission is to promote the development of agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and the rural environment. In addition to improving farming standards and the rural economy, the conference aims to improve awareness among the general public and consumers about agriculture and rural concerns. Another aim is to encourage and support farming and the rural economy’s message.

For further information including tickets and sponsorship opportunities, please visit <https://www.therasc.com/>

**[End]**

For further information or to arrange an interview please contact:

* Sarah Todd – [sarah@janecraigie.com](mailto:sarah@janecraigie.com)
* Rebecca Dawes – [rebecca@janecraigie.com](mailto:rebecca@janecraigie.com)

**Notes to editors:**

[*Roll of Honour: RASC Conferences*](https://www.outbrain.com/what-is/default/en)

1967 Toronto, Canada   
1968 Nairobi, Kenya   
1971 Edinburgh, Scotland   
1973 Christchurch, New Zealand   
1975 Aberystwyth, Wales   
1977 Part 1 - Regina, Western Canada, Part 2 - Ocho Rios, Jamaica   
1979 Perth, Western Australia

1981 Bath, England   
1983 Lusaka, Zambia    
1985 Melbourne, Australia   
1989 Nairobi, Kenya   
1990 Peterborough, England   
1992 Calgary, Western Canada   
1994 Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago   
1996 Chester, England   
1998 Darwin, Australia

2001 Durban, South Africa   
2002 Belfast, Northern Ireland   
2004 Albury, Australia   
2006 Calgary, Western Canada   
2008 Christchurch, New Zealand   
2010 Edinburgh, Scotland   
2012 Zambia, Africa   
2014 Brisbane, Australia   
2016 Singapore, Malaysia   
2018 Edmonton, Canada