



Who inspires you?

That's the question I found myself asking following the recent NFU Conference.

While it seems some time ago now that many of us descended upon the ICC in Birmingham to hear about the latest and greatest farming innovation and developments, the impact remains for me.

What I feel stood out the most was the education segment, led by chief education manager, Joshua Payne.

After a short intro about the Farmvention project — part of the NFU's education programme to connect children with food and farming — four dinky 'special guests' from Ronald Ross Primary School in London, appeared on stage, gleaning a resounding 'awwww' from the majority of the audience.

I couldn't help but feel so in awe of their sheer bravery as they stood front and centre on the ICC stage, proudly telling us all about their inventions.

Perhaps of particular interest to the machinery fanatics amongst us, was the overall winner of the "Design a Tractor of the Future" category, Afeefa Haroon, who told us about becoming an "instant celebrity" at school after being

crowned the champion, and winning £600 worth of robotics for her inner-city school.

With agriculture not commonly taught in schools, especially not in London, I was gobsmacked to find out that Afeefa's award-winning invention was an eco-friendly drone zip line that protects soil structure by sowing, maintaining and picking the crop from above — removing the need for heavy machinery.

At just eight years old, Afeefa had the foresight to recognise key agricultural issues and design something that could very well be a plausible solution.

Even NFU president, Minette Batters, said the level of detail, ingenuity and resourcefulness in each design was truly staggering, and the pupils' scientific and technological knowledge really shone through as they talked about their projects.

I was mesmerised, and it got me thinking about our sources of inspiration and where this might come from in the future.

There's been a seismic shift in agriculture of late, with machinery and technology becoming more sophisticated than ever before, and it's my view that we could benefit hugely from encouraging involvement and ideas from outside the industry.

The work the NFU is doing to promote this to the next generation is truly wonderful, but perhaps slightly overlooked, so I hope it's something we can all get behind more. Who knows, maybe in the years to come we'll see Afeefa's drone zip line taking centre stage at LAMMA. When we encourage innovative thinking, whether that's to engage younger minds

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much"

Helen Keller

or bring in new ideas from other sectors, the possibilities really are endless.

Finally, a word on the Coronavirus pandemic that's evolved around us over recent weeks. I just wanted to issue a gentle reminder to look after yourself and others, if you're able to.

Farm work can be a lonely thing at the best of times, so with widescale self-isolation in full force across the country, do keep checking in on those who could be vulnerable at the moment.

I for one am truly thankful for technology that helps us all keep in touch and feel

connected in some very uncertain times.

It's been a tough few months, but I hope in time, we're able to look back knowing we've all been through the worst of it.

Originally hailing from Devon, Charlotte Cunningham is now based in Warwicks and when not busy filling the pages of CPM, can be found exploring the countryside with two crazy spaniels in tow (though obviously not at the moment, with UK lockdown in place).

charlie@cpm-magazine.co.uk
[@charcunningham](https://twitter.com/charcunningham)

Innovation showcase

With the sad news that many key technical events and agricultural shows will be cancelled over the coming months in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we at CPM wanted to find a way of still being able to showcase all of the latest research and new tech being brought to the market. And so, we've decided to present the CPM "Innovation Showcase".

Across the next few issues, we'll be looking to profile some of the latest and greatest innovation that was set to make its way onto

showgrounds this summer — covering everything from Cereals to local agriculture shows — so do get in touch if you know of something that ought to be shouted about.

2020 will be one that stays in the minds of many for years to come, but in a rather grey time, we're hoping to inspire positive change and celebrate all the technical advances that bring colour to British farming and make it one of the most essential industries.