



MEDIA RELEASE

LEAF urges farmers to consider opportunities presented by wet weather

Following recent severe wet weather, which has left hundreds of acres of farmland covered by floodwater, LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is urging farmers to take a longer term view and consider some practical steps they can be taking now, to ensure more sustainable water management going forward.

The sustainable farming organisation says that whilst the devastation caused by recent weather cannot be underestimated and in many cases is completely unavoidable, farmers with areas of flooding can be assessing their farms now. They can identify areas most prone to flooding, review management practices and consider various soil and water management techniques to improve wetter areas of the farm.

Caroline Drummond, MBE, Chief Executive of LEAF said: “Farmers are a resilient bunch. But the weather during recent months has really tested them. Unfortunately, the heavy rainfall we have experienced this winter is becoming a more frequent occurrence. It is vital, therefore, that farmers are given the right support to help them prepare for such events and enhance their ability to manage, and raise awareness of areas most prone to flood risk. In this way, we will continue to reduce the risk of future flood events, and improve farmers’ ability to manage and recover from future flooding events when they do occur. Key to all this is LEAF’s Integrated Farm Management.”

LEAF’s free Simply Sustainable Water guide, available online at www.leafuk.org, contains useful checklists and a simple scoring system so farmers can assess how well they are currently managing their water and identify areas for improvement. Coupled with the Simply Sustainable Soils guide, also available online, farmers can be well equipped to improve problem areas of land.

Simple steps to assess water drainage on your farm:

- Walk the fields and waterways (where possible) in extreme conditions as some issues only show up during extreme weather

- Maintain existing drains to ensure they are free flowing and outflows into ditches are not blocked
- Manage drainage ditch clearance to ensure optimum water quality levels and to encourage wildlife, in co-operation with neighbours and in line with stewardship agreements
- Consider establishing field scrapes or reed beds
- Monitor water quality at field drain outlets
- Develop field drainage maps and keep them up to date with any changes, such as new drains or outlets
- Avoid draining environmentally valuable wetland areas and meadows. Wet woodland, wet grassland and wet meadows are very valuable habitats, rich in biodiversity.

The Simply Sustainable Water and Simply Sustainable Soils guides are available online at www.leafuk.org where further information about LEAF and Integrated Farm Management (IFM) can also be found.

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For more information, an interview or images, please contact:

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LEAF Editors' Notes:

- LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is the leading organisation delivering sustainable food and farming. LEAF works with farmers, the food industry, scientists and consumers to inspire and enable sustainable farming that is prosperous, enriches the environment and engages local communities
- LEAF promotes Integrated Farm Management (IFM), a whole farm business approach that delivers sustainable farming.
- For more information about LEAF please visit: www.leafuk.org, email: enquiries@leafuk.org
tel: 02476 413911. (Registered charity no: 1045781)