

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

## **LEAF Marque delivering added value to members**

### **New independent research released at Cereals 2017**

The results of independent research into the added value of LEAF Marque certification were released today. The study, commissioned by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) and carried out by CCRI (The Countryside and Community Research Institute), reveals that LEAF Marque certification can offer significant financial, environmental and social benefits for farm businesses both in the UK and overseas.

The study showed that for many businesses the value of participating in the LEAF Marque assurance system reached beyond their initial motivations for joining, which were predominantly financial, and helped them develop their businesses in ways they had not previously considered.

This independent study has been carried out exclusively with LEAF Marque certified businesses; it builds on previous work the CCRI carried out in 2010 which looked more broadly at the benefits to farmers of LEAF membership. Key findings of the report, which was released at this year's Cereals Event, include:

- **Improved market opportunities**
  - 97% of those surveyed reported that LEAF Marque certification had helped secure access to new market opportunities, with 23% reporting receiving a price premium for their LEAF Marque certified product. LEAF Marque certification was also reported to help farms qualify for other income streams, such as agri-environmental schemes.
- **Improved financials**
  - 36% of participants reported significant extra income as a result of being LEAF Marque certified. Focusing on LEAF's Integrated Farm Management principles, which underpins the LEAF Marque Standard, was also shown to make operations more efficient in areas such as energy, soil, biodiversity, water and

crop health. In energy efficiency, for example, more than half of participants reported making savings of between £10,000 and £17,000 per year.

- **Improved biodiversity**

- 66% of farmers who took part in the study reported increased biodiversity with many noting marked improvements in observed farmland birds, insects and mammals.

- **Improved community engagement**

- 71% reported improved relationships with the public from being LEAF Marque certified, through hosting farm visits, maintaining footpaths and having a strong social media presence. An improved engagement with the wider agricultural sector was also reported by 47% of participants. Participants were unanimous in their support for the way LEAF promotes public engagement with many seeing this as of strategic importance for their business.

The study also supports LEAF's ongoing commitment to adhere to ISEAL's (International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling) Codes of Good Practice. As a Full Member of the ISEAL Alliance, LEAF is committed to systematically monitoring, researching and reporting on the outcomes of the LEAF Marque assurance system. LEAF's monitoring and evaluation programme helps inform stakeholders and drive change and improvement.

Speaking on LEAF's formal response to the study, Kathryn Green, LEAF Sustainability Manager said: "These are very encouraging results which clearly show that LEAF Marque certification is delivering tangible economic, environmental and social benefits to farm businesses. All the participants in the study found value in being LEAF Marque certified. The attention to detail required in implementing LEAF's Integrated Farm Management principles, which underpin the LEAF Marque Standard, is empowering farmers to make positive changes towards more sustainable farming.

"The provision of robust, independent studies of this type allow us to evaluate the impact of LEAF Marque certification and ensure that it continues to deliver meaningful benefits to growers and consumers alike. The results of this research clearly indicate we are heading in

the right direction. We will build on the findings and look to extend the reach and impact of LEAF Marque certification across the globe. We are brilliantly placed to inspire and empower farmers on their journey to more sustainable farming and look forward to continuing to help them do it.”

The full report '*The effect and impact of LEAF Marque in the delivery of more sustainable farming: a study to understand the added value to farmers*' can be downloaded at [www.leafuk.org](http://www.leafuk.org) together with the report summary, LEAF's response and key highlights.

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**If you would like to discuss the report in more detail, please visit LEAF at Cereals, Stand Number: 792 or contact:**

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**LEAF Editors' Notes:**

- **LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming)** is the leading organisation delivering more 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 more sustainable farming. IFM uses the best of modern technology and traditional methods to deliver prosperous farming that enriches the environment and engages local communities.
- **The LEAF Marque** is an environmental assurance system recognising more sustainably farmed products. It is based on the sustainable farming principles of Integrated Farm Management (IFM), which covers areas such as soil and water management, pollution control, crop health, animal welfare, community engagement, energy efficiency and landscape and nature conservation. LEAF Marque businesses are independently assessed and certified against the principles of IFM.
- **LEAF Demonstration Farms** are commercial farms which show the beneficial practices of IFM to a broad range of audiences, through organised visits. They communicate an understanding of IFM in order to encourage uptake by farmers, support from the industry and political awareness of sustainable food and farming. The network of LEAF Demonstration Farms includes a range of farm businesses across England and Scotland. They work alongside the LEAF Innovation Centres.
- **Methodology:** 37 farmers were interviewed for study by CCRI, including 12 who are featured in case studies. A broad range of business types took part, from family farms to estates and horticultural enterprises. A 'mixed methods' methodology was used, relying on three bodies of



interrelated data obtained from a questionnaire, analysis of narrative from participants and case studies which focused on specific farm enterprises in the UK, Spain and Senegal .

- The **Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI)**, is a unique partnership between the [University of Gloucestershire](#), the [Royal Agricultural University](#) and [Hartpury College](#). It is the largest specialist rural research centre in the UK, having expertise in all aspects of research in policy and planning for the countryside and the environment of the UK, Europe and further afield.