



LEAF Impacts Public System Report

Version 4



January 2017

LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is a charity whose objectives are to promote and improve agriculture, horticulture and other types of farming and raise standards of practice in farm management for the public benefit in particular, but the promotion and advancement of the education of farmers and the general public concerning methods of farm management which conserve and enhance the fabric and wildlife of the countryside.

LEAF Marque is an environmental assurance system recognising more sustainably* farmed products. It is run by LEAF and based on LEAF's Integrated Farm Management (IFM) principles. All LEAF Marque certified farms are independently inspected.

Integrated Farm Management

Integrated Farm Management (IFM) is a whole farm business approach that delivers sustainable* farming. IFM uses the best of modern technology and traditional methods to deliver prosperous farming that enriches the environment and engages local communities.

*"LEAF's sustainable farming - is an approach that works to deliver a site-specific farming system that supports the integration of and needs of the environment, farm economic viability and society over the long term".

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LINKING ENVIRONMENT AND FARMING

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Introduction

LEAF's Mission - to inspire and enable sustainable farming that is prosperous, enriches the environment and engages local communities.

The value and benefits of effective monitoring and evaluation are widely recognised within LEAF and serves to focus LEAF's work to ensure we are positioned to deliver our objectives effectively and efficiently. LEAF also recognises that monitoring and evaluation is a continuous process and one that seeks to deliver continued improvement and best practice on an ongoing basis.

Since 1991 LEAF has provided resources and guidance for producers to help improve the sustainability of their farm businesses through Integrated Farm Management. This included the LEAF Audit, now updated to the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review, a self-assessment management tool supporting the implementation of IFM on farm.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Mission

The LEAF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mission is to increase the understanding of the environmental, social, political, organisational and other impacts of LEAF's activities. The continuous M&E programme augments the scientific basis, benefits, value and the impartiality, transparency and inclusiveness of LEAF's activities.

This document is a public report that describes LEAF's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system. It is intended to ensure transparency and demonstrate compliance with the ISEAL Impacts Code.

Please see more information about LEAF on the LEAF [website](#).

1. Scope and Boundaries of LEAF's M&E System

The LEAF Marque Standard is a leading environmental assurance system recognising sustainably farmed products. Therefore, the scope and boundaries of the system are defined around environmental impacts as its major focus. The LEAF Marque Standard is an established global environmental standard which covers the following geographies in 37 (LEAF data 2015) countries: the UK and Europe, North and South America, Middle East, S E Asia and Australasia. Over time, LEAF has been able to collect data from its producers / members from its supporting strategies used in the delivery of LEAF's Integrated Farm Management (IFM). These include the LEAF Marque Standard system; the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review (a self-assessment sustainability management tool) and LEAF Marque training. LEAF collects data on an annual basis and, where possible, tries to understand trends over time using its most recent and historic data. In the future, LEAF will develop further opportunities to collect more data to measure its impact. Since 2013, LEAF has produced Impact Reports to chart its members' delivery of sustainable farming. They also show the progression of the indicator development.

The 2017 Global Impacts Report will include some additional data from new data questions in the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review. The LEAF Marque Standard will be revised enabling new measures of impact to be communicated about Integrated Farm Management in practice. As stated above, the scope of the Standard focusses on explicit environmental areas which also have other implicit effects that can benefit overall sustainability. LEAF will work with its stakeholders to help report on these indicators.

Intended effects – IFM in practice contributes to the following:

- good crop and animal husbandry;
- efficient soil management and appropriate cultivation techniques;
- optimal reliance on animal medicines, plant protection products and fertilisers;
- efficient water management and energy use;
- responsible pollution control and by-product management;
- maintenance of the landscape and rural communities and the enhancement of wildlife habitats;

- a commitment to team spirit based on communication, training and involvement

Unintended effects of the LEAF Marque Standard system may include:

- Overburdening costs due to required technological improvements to comply with the LEAF Marque standard
- Not excessively focussing on documentation but rather make an effort to acquire complete understanding of what happens on the ground;
- Developing and enforcing a strict Standard could exclude groups that do not have the ability to match its requirements.

LEAF will assess the intended effects and the potential for (or actual realisation of) unintended effects based on data monitoring experience as well as input from producers and other stakeholders.

Whilst LEAF's M&E focus is environmental impacts LEAF needs to be aware of the economic and social effects on its members e.g. if they become more reliant on revenue from cash crops or more dependent on specific buyers or traders purchasing certified products.

There is emerging best practice in sustainability standard impact assessment and indicator selection. LEAF will, where possible, follow this as it develops its M&E programme.

LEAF is no more than a catalyst of this change. It is our producers themselves that make change happen. Through continuous improvement, LEAF members and LEAF Marque certified producers are making steady progress towards more sustainable farming practices, by embracing Integrated Farm Management practices. LEAF is extremely well placed to support producers to do just this. The fifth annual report will be published in March 2017 and will be available on the [LEAF website](#).

Based on the above, an [annual report](#) cycle is now in place.

2. Role and Responsibilities

The process of monitoring and evaluation is embedded culturally as all staff are managed and developed based on results and continuous improvement. The M&E plan and staff performance monitoring are inextricably linked; however, specific M&E roles and responsibilities are defined below:

- M&E Champion – The Chief Executive, working with governance boards, determines LEAF's strategy and primary objectives, sets targets and steers the M&E group both informally and formally at governance, management and technical meetings.
- M&E Group – In addition to the Chief Executive, the M&E Group works collaboratively to shape policy, define impacts and contribute to the continuous development of M&E. The Group is comprised of the following:
 - M&E Planning – The Operations Manager is accountable to the Chief Executive for the production and development of the LEAF M&E Framework and plan and, working with the M&E Group, ensures the plan is monitored, reviewed and delivered.
 - M&E Technical Team – The LEAF Technical team members identified below, work collectively to develop and refine indicators, collect and evaluate data and provide regular reports on outcomes.
 - Chief Executive (Chairman), Sustainability Manager, Certification & Assurance Manager, IFM Manager, Technical Assistant and Technical Assistant (Projects)

This team is not considered as exclusive and works with other internal stakeholders (i.e. Business Development, Marketing, Open Farm Sunday) to ensure non-technical indicators are captured. Other team members will be invited to inform and or contribute to the M&E group in relation to their areas of expertise.

LEAF has a strong commitment to continuous development of all its activities and people and regularly reviews its progress against its strategic objectives tactical goals and personal performance targets. It is usually during the annual review and the budget planning process where appropriate levels of funding and operational resource are allocated to LEAF's M&E framework and programme of activities. However, LEAF's approach is dynamic and regular periodic reviews of budgets and staff performance are conducted through a range of medium (e.g. Board meetings, M&E meetings, personnel performance reviews) to ensure M&E is afforded appropriate priority consistently throughout any reporting period. Performance against annual targets is further reviewed following publication of LEAF's annual impacts report and any corresponding lessons learnt. For 2017, staff time is estimated as 10% FTE Operation Manager's time, 20% FTE Technical Team, and 10% FTE Admin support and external resources as required.

In the first instance the [Operations Manager](#) should be contacted for all M&E enquiries.

3. Defining the Intended Change

Theory of Change

LEAF's theory of change describes how our activities contribute to achieving our mission.

Long-Term Goals

LEAF Mission ... a world that is farming, eating and living sustainably.

Medium to Long Term Goals

LEAF continually updates its Strategy document to help meet the medium to long term goals. Our priorities will be focused on building our capability and delivery, specifically around five enabling objectives:

1. Tripling LEAF's capability and capacity over the next five years to deliver its work and outreach.
2. Increasing the adoption of more sustainable farming practices through Integrated Farm Management.
3. Improving industry recognition and demand for sustainably sourced products.
4. Leading a collaborative approach within the industry for better public engagement among consumers.
5. Positively influencing consumer attitudes towards, and knowledge of food, farming and the environment.

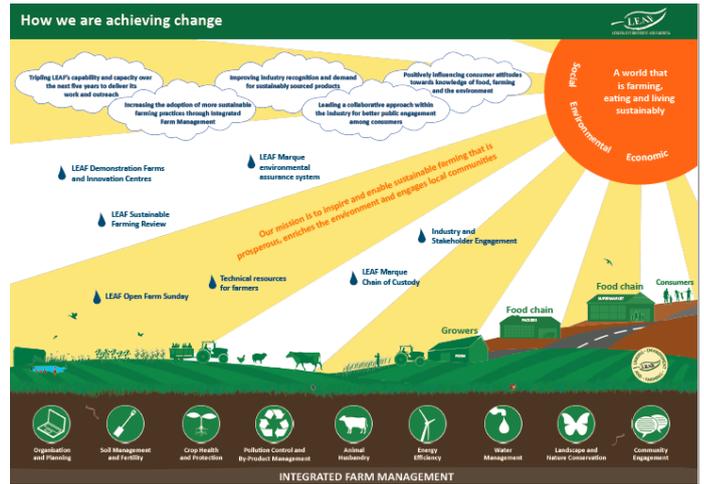


Figure 1 - LEAF Theory of Change

The strategies that LEAF employs i.e. Integrated Farm Management, the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review, the LEAF Marque Standard, the M&E Framework etc. are shown in Figure 1 above. The above objectives incorporate an embedded M&E element. Whilst specific information on LEAF's Strategy is not publicly available, elements of our work and influence can be seen on the [LEAF website](#).

4. Performance Monitoring

As stated above, LEAF's M&E mission is to increase the understanding of the environmental, social, economic and other impacts of LEAF's activities. However, due to a variety of factors, there is no single set of indicators that can test and validate LEAF's Theory of Change across the scope and boundaries of its work. It has been rightly noted that evaluation of the medium- and long-term effects of certification are usually too costly to apply across all production units, or may require specialised research designs that are beyond the resource of a small organisation. Conversely, other indicators are more feasible to collect for all production sites, but are not capable of attributing desired outcomes and impacts to certification.

A very useful ISEAL concept is the data collection hierarchy – see figure 2 for how this works with LEAF data. This shows the different levels of data collection and how they can be used to assess impact (the ultimate goal being to show the long-term impacts). Most data available to LEAF is Level 1 (e.g. LEAF Sustainable Farming Review and production information results show that practices have been adopted by producers). There is a growing amount of data collected from a subset of members. There are other proxy indicators within policy, plans and other records e.g. Key Species within the Landscape and Nature Conservation and Enhancement Plan. In future M & E work, we can specify and request data on the impact of IFM across the total LEAF Marque Standard system production area.

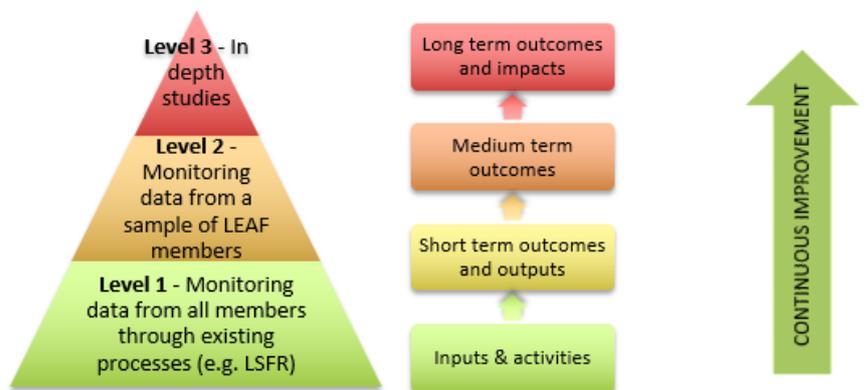


Figure 2 - LEAF data collection pyramid

Selecting indicators for 2017 report

LEAF keenly recognises that the development of metrics and indicators built around qualitative and quantitative data is increasingly important for us to understand more about progress and barriers in demonstrating change in the delivery of Integrated Farm Management. Therefore, from 2017, the data collected from the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review will be able to further help demonstrate LEAF's impact in conjunction with the LEAF Marque Standard system data as in previous years. These additional data questions were peer reviewed and piloted in 2015 and available to members in 2016. They are spread across 6 IFM sub-sections with further development planned for other sub-sections. LEAF will also assess present and future indicators as part of its ongoing M&E continuous improvement.

5. Outcome and impact evaluation

For LEAF this stage is in development and it begins at the Level 2 stage of M&E where medium term outcomes from a sample of all LEAF Marque growers (Level 1) are monitored against specific indicators. The main purpose of this level is to provide more rigorous and detailed information focusing on medium-term environmental outcomes, as well as track unintended effects of LEAF Marque certification. The LEAF M&E Framework outlines our intentions to further develop Outcome and Impact Evaluations in the future. The Theory of Change (ToC) is based around Impacts, Outputs, Outcomes and Inputs (IOOI) – the 'If this, then what' approach. The evaluation process will help to test out the raw hypotheses of the values / ideas behind LEAF's ToC. In the year ahead LEAF will commission impact studies accordingly.

For any organisation, M&E is an ongoing process and there is a lot of learning along the way. Within the LEAF system, the majority of indicators are based on the degree of adoption of practices. While these are useful proxies for assessing impact across the standard as a whole, there is a need to develop more evidence on actual outcomes and impacts on farm.

6. Improving the Effectiveness of the M&E System

LEAF has always had a strong stakeholder engagement from the beginning and it has always monitored its progress, a more formal review began in 2012 and again at the end of 2015. LEAF aims to 'plan, do and review' its progress and develop the M&E of its new objectives. LEAF is developing this process and the LEAF team has quarterly strategy meetings to review progress. The review cycle of LEAF's Strategy helps the whole LEAF executive and LEAF team to prioritise LEAF's work.

As stated in earlier sections, the results from the various reports on membership, certification, consultations and questionnaires give LEAF many anecdotal and case study type information. This also helps us tailor event topics; prioritise additional guidance notes, new publications and resources based on the information and areas which need more support.

LEAF recognises that its M&E programme is subject to continuous improvement and development and will ensure its M&E Framework and associated plans are reviewed and that a formal full review is conducted annually by the M&E Group.

7. Opportunities for engagement

LEAF is committed to an ongoing development of its management systems and works closely with a range of stakeholders and partners in this development including but not limited to its members, certification bodies and operators of similar assurance systems. LEAF actively engages with its policy and advisory groups and with all interested parties as it considers collaboration a key ingredient to its success and is committed to continuous improvement. LEAF concurs with ISEAL that continuous learning and improvement mechanisms are necessary to improve its general activity as well as to inform strategic planning. The analysis of data can help to pinpoint when results are or are not occurring, where attention is needed, and where and how success is being achieved. Such learning will be used as a planning input to inform future strategies and investment, thus increasing LEAF's impact. LEAF is keen to hear from other like-minded organisations of how it can improve its monitoring and evaluation system. Please contact LEAF for any comments, questions or complaints about the M&E System.