



# LEAF Marque

## Assurance System

### Public System Report

LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) Marque is an environmental assurance system recognising more sustainably\* farmed products. It is 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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### 1. Assurance System Structure

The LEAF Marque Assurance System is underpinned by the LEAF Marque Standard which is an established global environmental standard. The LEAF Marque Standard is supplementary and complementary to other baseline certification systems (e.g. Red Tractor Assurance, GLOBALG.A.P), a list of which can be found within the LEAF Product List which is available on the [LEAF Marque Standard webpage](#). Upon achieving LEAF Marque certification the business is entitled to make a LEAF Marque claim, which can be either or both the use of the LEAF Marque logo, or making a sustainability claim that is used to set apart and promote a product, process, business or service that is based on achievement of LEAF Marque certification.

LEAF Marque Approved Certification Bodies (CBs) conduct certification audits against the current version of the LEAF Marque Standard. Certification decisions are made independently of the audit process by trained CB staff. Following an on-farm audit, LEAF Marque certificates are issued by individual CBs to producers who have met the requirements of the LEAF Marque Standard. Where producers have non-conformances, a certificate will be issued if the CB is satisfied that they have been resolved by the corrective evidence supplied within the required timescale. CBs upload audit reports and certificates onto the LEAF Marque database via an automated data feed or online data entry.

CBs must complete an application process to become a LEAF Marque Approved CB. LEAF Staff assess all applications and the supporting evidence and inform the LEAF Marque Board of the decision.

All LEAF Marque Approved CBs must have ISO 17065 accreditation for the relevant baseline certification system(s). This must be obtained from an Accreditation Body (AB) that is part of the European Accreditation, Multilateral Agreement on Product Certification, or members of International Accreditation Forum which have been subject to a peer evaluation in the product certification field and have a positive recommendation in its report. For example, [UKAS](#) or [DAKKS](#). The CB must also obtain ISO 17065 accreditation through extension of scope for the current version of the LEAF Marque Standard within 18 months of the first LEAF Marque audit, or the issue of 30 certificates if this occurs within 18 months. Failure to do so entitles LEAF Marque to terminate the LEAF Marque Certification Body Licence Agreement.

All LEAF Marque Approved CBs sign a LEAF Marque Certification Body Licence Agreement with LEAF Marque. This commits the CB to comply with LEAF Marque rules, including training requirements, certification procedure and reporting. LEAF also monitors CB performance as part of the Oversight Programme (see 4. Oversight). A list of LEAF Marque Approved CBs can be found on the [website](#).

Continual improvement is a key feature of the LEAF Marque Standard, but it is also integral to the LEAF Marque System. Stakeholder feedback, risk analysis and internal reviews form part of ongoing. Mechanisms to drive learning are also important. LEAF Marque promotes expertise in the industry to help support the implementation of IFM and works with other organisations to develop market opportunities which reward and provide support for farmers undertaking sustainable practices.



LEAF Marque has identified risks to assurance and the corresponding risk management strategy. The Certification Body Licence Agreement binds CBs into a contractual relationship which addresses certain risk issues. LEAF Marque aims to continually improve the Assurance System through regular review of the risks and implementation of actions identified to manage these risks.

Stakeholder engagement is central to all LEAF Marque activities. In addition to the LEAF Marque Technical Advisory Committee, LEAF Marque engages with a range of stakeholders during the development and review of the LEAF Marque Standard. LEAF Marque welcomes comments on the LEAF Marque System at any time. LEAF has a complaints procedure in place to deal with complaints submitted from anyone, at any time, about LEAF Marque certification and/or other areas. The complaints form can be found on the [LEAF website](#). Each LEAF Marque Approved CB must also have an implemented complaints procedure.

## 2. Personnel Competence

LEAF Marque addresses auditor competence by building on the requirements from baseline certification systems rules and ISO 17065 accreditation. Training requirements of other baseline certification systems address farm assurance (food safety/quality auditing) training and experience, administrative capacity, and IT competence with data requirements. ISO 17065 accreditation addresses the need for auditors and certifiers to be competent to deliver audits and make certification decisions. Accreditation requirements will include on-site witness audits by lead auditors to evaluate the performance of auditors. Each CB will have in place a procedure to deal with poor performance.

The CB Licence Agreement requires that at least one member of CB staff attends IFM & LEAF Marque Training. This training includes an additional tailored session for CBs, which also forms part of an informal process of evaluation and relationship building with the assurance personnel. All auditors and other relevant staff carrying out activities concerning the LEAF Marque System must receive initial training and competency must be maintained through completion of regular training (at least annually), in addition to audit witnessing. In-house trainers must have attended IFM & LEAF Marque Training.

CBs applying to be a LEAF Marque Approved CB must submit scheme manager and relevant staffs' roles, qualifications (including CVs) and experience. The quality manual (or equivalent management system documentation) must also be provided. CBs must inform LEAF Marque of new auditors and their trainings as appropriate, and competency is reviewed in the Oversight Program (See 4. Oversight). LEAF Marque keeps CBs informed of all revisions to the LEAF Marque Standard and updates to any guidance and rules.

## 3. Assessment

All LEAF Marque audits are conducted by a LEAF Marque approved and accredited third-party CB. Audits take place on-farm and are performed annually for each certificate. LEAF Marque certification covers the whole farm business; it applies to products from the whole farm business and cannot be applied to defined crops or enterprises within the business.

The following types of verification are included in LEAF Marque audits:

- Verbal - e.g. interview with business staff and/or management and/or contractors.
- Observe - e.g. observation of activities, practices and environment.
- Record - e.g. a printed or electronic copy of a record or document.



The time required to conduct an audit is calculated by the CB and is dependent on the business' size, number and location of sites, complexity, and the number of other certification systems included in the same audit. LEAF Marque audits can be performed as a stand-alone audit, though they often occur in conjunction with other certification systems (e.g. Red Tractor Assurance, GLOBALG.A.P.).

CBs ISO 17065 accreditation requires that CBs identify any conflicts of interest and are prohibited in providing consultancy services. Auditors are permitted to share information to ensure that businesses understand the LEAF Marque Standard.

Each Control Point within the LEAF Marque Standard is classified as either:

- **Essential (E)** – compliance with these Control Points is compulsory.
- **Recommended (R)** – compliance with these Control Points is preferable but non-compliance is acceptable.

Some Control Points may be Non-Applicable (N/A) to some businesses, as determined within the LEAF Marque Standard.

LEAF Marque Approved Certification Bodies have responsibility for certification decisions. Audit reports are reviewed independently, and LEAF Marque certification is awarded when there is compliance with all the Essential Control Points (unless appropriate N/A's are recorded).

For a business' first LEAF Marque audit, they have 3 months to resolve any non-conformance. For non-conformances in any subsequent audits, the business has 28 days to rectify them. If non-conformances against Essential Control Points are not resolved within the appropriate timeframe, LEAF Marque certification will not be awarded.

The CB has the right to suspend or terminate LEAF Marque certification at any time if necessary.

#### LEAF Producer Groups

For LEAF Producer Groups, the process is very similar, with annual, third party audits against the current version of the LEAF Marque Standard. At a minimum, the square root of the total number of producers in the LEAF Producer Group must be inspected. Audit scheduling should consider crops grown, location from the main site, or LEAF Producer Group size of unit, internal auditor(s) and external influences.

A LEAF Producer Group is required to have in place a rigorous internal Quality Management System which ensures that all members of the group are meeting the requirements of the LEAF Marque Standard.

## 4. Oversight

The LEAF Marque Oversight Programme protects the integrity, transparency and credibility of the LEAF Marque System by monitoring and reviewing the activities of CBs and ABs delivering the LEAF Marque System. LEAF Staff has allocated member(s) of the LEAF Marque Board with responsibility for Oversight. These member(s) are provided with the results of the CB approval process and the CB monitoring programme. LEAF Staff also works with these member(s) to put forward recommendations to the LEAF Marque Board for CB approvals, re-approvals and possible sanctions.

LEAF Marque reviews the competence and performance of each LEAF Marque Approved CB annually. The list of LEAF Marque Approved CBs can be found on the [LEAF Website](#).



The Oversight Programme evaluates CBs performance using information submitted from the CB, producer feedback, and evidence collected through the course of the year by LEAF Staff. CB performance is scored against the following Key Performance Indicators (KPI's):

- Compliance with the LEAF Marque Certification Body Licence Agreement
- CASI online portal – data and management decisions
- Audit Report Completion and Associated Document Evaluation
- Auditor Training and Competence
- Feedback and Complaints
- Communication and Issue Management

The KPI's are collated into a report which provides the CB with recommendations for improvement and their overall performance score. Based on the results of one or more CB assessment reports and in case of failure to demonstrate improvement from previous assessments, LEAF Staff will forward the information, including the recommendation, to the LEAF Marque Board Member(s) with oversight responsibility. These board members will decide on the next steps which may include increased frequency of CB performance review or possible CB sanctions.

LEAF Marque can liaise with ABs and CBs to ensure the requirements within ISO 17065 accreditation are maintained.

## 5. On-going Scrutiny

LEAF and LEAF Marque takes scrutiny and market surveillance very seriously as it is important to uphold the reputation of LEAF Marque within the supply chain. If there are any issues around fraudulent claims, stakeholders can contact LEAF by phone, email or on the LEAF website (through an [enquiry](#) and/or as a [complaint](#)). In addition, the LEAF Marque logo is a trademark registration in the UK and Europe which affords certain protection against misuse of the logo.

The process in which LEAF Marque claims are monitored has been reviewed and developed. As of the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2020, LEAF Marque Claims & Labelling (C&L) will be enforced. C&L Surveillance has a two-fold strategy for monitoring LEAF Marque claims, including evaluating the database of C&L Licence Holders, and 'Secret Shopper' activity. Informal comments or findings on any LEAF Marque claim will also inform C&L Surveillance.

The effectiveness of C&L and C&L Surveillance will be periodically reviewed following its implementation. This review will be used to inform development of scrutiny and market surveillance strategies.

## 6. Value and Accessibility

The eligibility for and certification processes of the LEAF Marque System are publicly available on the [LEAF Website](#), in addition to governance structure and opportunity for stakeholder input. LEAF's Global Impacts report is produced annually to demonstrate the performance of LEAF Marque and its value, in addition to any other Monitoring & Evaluation work that would be relevant for stakeholders. Feedback from stakeholder consultations are also [publicly available](#), in addition to operational procedures within the LEAF Marque System relating to [Assurance, Standard-Setting, and Impacts](#).