



# LEAF Marque Assurance Public System Report



November 2016

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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LINKING ENVIRONMENT AND FARMING

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### 1. Assurance System Structure

The LEAF Marque Assurance System applies to the LEAF Marque Standard, LEAF’s only Standard. LEAF Marque Standard version 13.0 is effective until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 and LEAF Marque Standard version 14.0 is effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017. The LEAF Marque Standard is an established global environmental standard. The LEAF Marque Standard is additional and complementary to other farm assurance schemes (including Red Tractor Assurance for Farms, GLOBALG.A.P).

LEAF Marque certification is third party verified by LEAF approved certification bodies.

All LEAF approved certification bodies must be accredited to ISO 17065 (a direct replacement to EN 45011) by an accreditation body. The accreditation body must be part of either the European Accreditation (EA), Multilateral Agreement (MLA) on Product Certification, or members of International Accreditation Forum (IAF) which have been subject to a peer evaluation in the product certification field and have a positive recommendation in its report. For example, [UKAS](#), [DAKKS](#).

The certification body must have obtained accreditation within the set timeframe; this must be achieved within 18 months of the date of commencing LEAF Marque certifications. This period can be extended for an additional time span if justified reasons that are acceptable to LEAF Marque Ltd are given by the certification body explaining the delay.

All certification bodies must initially apply to LEAF, providing supporting evidence, to be considered as a LEAF approved certification body. LEAF personnel assess all applications and make recommendation to the LEAF Marque Board of Trustees who make the final decision.

All LEAF approved certification bodies sign a Licence Agreement with LEAF Marque. This requires the certification body to follow the requirements and obligations of LEAF for certification bodies including training.

All LEAF Marque certificates are issued by individual certification bodies to producers who have met the requirements of the LEAF Marque Standard following annual on-farm inspection. Where producers have non-conformances, a certificate will be issued if the certification body is satisfied by all corrective evidence supplied within the timescale set out in the LEAF Marque system rules. The results of the inspection and detail of certificates issued are sent to LEAF Marque via a data feed. Through an intranet system, there is a daily tracking of certification decisions.

A list of the LEAF Marque certification bodies is provided on the LEAF website [here](#).

LEAF has identified its risks to assurance and it has a strategy to improve risk management practices and guidance. The License Agreement with certification bodies binds them into a contractual relationship which addresses certain risk issues and obligations for both parties. LEAF aim to continually improve their approach to risk in the Assurance System through regular review (annually and dynamically) of the risks and implementation of actions identified to manage these risks.

Stakeholder engagement is central to all LEAF activities. In addition to the LEAF Marque Technical Advisory Committee, LEAF engages with a range of stakeholders. Additionally, stakeholders can engage through the complaints procedure.

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](http://www.leafuk.org/). <http://www.leafuk.org/>Each certification body, under accreditation requirements, must also have a complaints procedure.

## **2. Personnel Competence**

All LEAF approved certification bodies must comply with LEAF Marque certification body requirements. These include: farm assurance (food safety / quality auditing) training (for both food systems and LEAF Marque) and experience, administrative capacity, IT competence with data requirements, and accreditation to ISO 17065 for 'Conformity assessment -- Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services'. ISO17065 addresses the need for auditors and certifiers to be competence in delivering inspections to Standards. This will include on-site witness audits, by lead auditors, to evaluate the performance of auditors. Each certification body will have in place a procedure to deal with poor performance.

As part of the application process for becoming a LEAF approved certification body, the supporting evidence must include detail of personnel and their responsibility with the organisation; their qualifications (including CVs) and experience; and the quality manual (or equivalent management system documentation).

Certification bodies inform LEAF of new auditors and trainings as appropriate.

To ensure competence to inspect and certify farms against the LEAF Marque Standard, additional training is required. At least one lead auditor, responsible for LEAF Marque certification, from each certification body must satisfactorily attend a LEAF Marque approved training course. The lead auditor must then disseminate the training within the certification body. At the completion of the LEAF Marque training course there is no formal examination but the course deals with each control point in detail plus a separate session for certification bodies and auditors so that they can address any specific queries and learn about the LEAF data management system for assurance and certification. This forms part of an informal process of evaluation and relationship building with the assurance personnel.

Further to this, certification bodies must be aware of all revisions to the LEAF Marque Standard and updates to any guidance and rules.

## **3. Assessment**

All LEAF Marque inspections are conducted by LEAF approved and externally accredited third party certification bodies on an annual basis on-farm for every certificate issued. This will include the following types of verification of the business:

- 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.

In most cases, inspections are carried out by individuals.

Audit time can vary from the size of farm and the number of the businesses additional sites. LEAF Marque requires that baseline systems around food-safety are held by the business also and therefore whilst LEAF Marque inspections can be carried out as stand-alone inspections, they often occur in conjunction with other audits (e.g. Red Tractor Assurance for Farms, GLOBALG.A.P.).

There is requirement within the accreditation process prohibiting certification body from providing consultancy services and any conflicts of interest. Auditors are permitted to sharing information to ensure that businesses understand the LEAF Marque Standard.

Each LEAF Marque member must complete a self-assessed LEAF Sustainable Farming Review every year. They must have the performance profile and their targets for action; this can be printed from the Review as well as a Record of Completion. LEAF Producer Groups need to complete a Review for their LEAF Producer Group. The certification body has access to the completion of the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review prior to inspection.

LEAF Marque certification covers the whole farm businesses, including sites and fields managed centrally. LEAF Marque certification applies to products from the whole farm businesses and is NOT limited to defined crops or enterprises within the business.

Each control point within the LEAF Marque Standard is classified as either:

- **Essential (E)** – all certified businesses must comply ALL Essential control points. (These control points were known as ‘Critical Failure Points’ up to version 13.0 of the LEAF Marque Standard)
- **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.

All new LEAF Marque members have 3 months to resolve any non-conformance. Re-certifying businesses, with a non-conformance for a control point of more than 28 days after the inspection will lead to the LEAF Marque certificate being withdrawn.

#### LEAF Marque Producer Groups

For Producer Groups, the process is very similar with annual, third party inspections against the LEAF Marque Standard. At a minimum, the square root of the total number of producers in the LEAF Marque Producer Group must be inspected. This should take into account such items as crops grown, location from the Main site or Producer Group, size of unit, internal auditor(s) and external influences.

Each 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**

For LEAF Marque, the oversight process follows ISO principles for assessing certification bodies. Accreditation is a formal, third party recognition of competence to perform specific tasks. It provides a means to identify a proven, competent evaluator so that the selection of an inspection or certification body is an informed choice and it builds added trust and robustness to the LEAF Marque Standards System. Accreditation means the certification body can demonstrate to LEAF Marque that it has been successful at meeting the requirements of international accreditation standards.

As LEAF Marque seeks to improve its assurance system, we are considering whether an internal Oversight Committee will make LEAF Marque management more robust.

## **5. On-going Scrutiny**

LEAF Marque has a system in place to deal with any infringement of the LEAF Marque Standard System.

LEAF and LEAF Marque take scrutiny and market surveillance very seriously as it is important to uphold the reputation of LEAF Marque within the supply chain.

The LEAF Marque logo has a trade mark registration in the UK and Europe which affords certain protection against misuse of the logo.

LEAF is currently re-developing its claims and labelling policy across all its activity and subsequent to this, plans to consider the need for further scrutiny.

For certified products, LEAF Marque holds the history of all LEAF Marque inspections and certification numbers on the LEAF Marque database. This allows interested stakeholders to verify certification information directly.

If there are any issues around fraudulent claims, stakeholders can contact LEAF by phone or email or on the LEAF website (through an [enquiry](#) and/or as a [complaint](#)).

Google Analytics also helps us to monitor any online activity with logo misuse.

LEAF Marque also undertakes an informal review of member websites to check for LEAF Marque certification claims and LEAF Marque is also developing a Chain of Custody to improve this facility. Members are required to amend their website accordingly.

LEAF will use the learning from these feedback routes and feed into reviews of claims and labelling guidance and rules for logo use and other areas of the Assurance System as required.