



LEAF Marque

Impacts

Public System Report

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, and 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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Introduction

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

This document is a public report that describes LEAF Marque'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 and LEAF Marque on the LEAF [website](#).

1. Scope and Boundaries of M&E System

The value and benefits of effective monitoring and evaluation are widely recognised within LEAF and serves to focus LEAF/LEAF Marque's work to ensure we are positioned to deliver our objectives effectively and efficiently. LEAF/LEAF Marque 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 and LEAF Marque activities. The continuous M&E programme augments the scientific basis, benefits, value and the impartiality, transparency and inclusiveness of LEAF's activities.

The scope and boundaries of the LEAF M&E system are defined around environmental impacts as its major focus.

LEAF Marque Long-term Goal: increasing the implementation of more environmentally sustainable farming practices through Integrated Farm Management (IFM).

LEAF Marque intended impacts are to improve:

- Soil management to enhance soil quality and soil health
- The resilience of cropping systems
- Management of water use and water quality
- Energy efficiency and energy use
- Waste management
- Management of livestock to enhance the environment
- And enhance the management of native habitats and biodiversity



LEAF Marque also recognises that there may be unintended effects of its work. Such positive effect might include a greater farmer pride through adoption and recognition of environmentally responsible farming practices; increased transparency; and increased skills to engage people in sustainable food and farming, including through increased opportunities to network with peers to exchange information and experience. Possible negative effects include overburdening costs (for example, for compliance, new technologies, additional inputs, conservation measures etc.); reduced area for growing food (due to increased emphasis on conservation and habitat); greater expectation for maintaining premiums and new market opportunities; and focus on documentation over implementation of best farming practice.

Whilst LEAF Marque's M&E focus is environmental impacts LEAF needs to remain aware of the effects of all aspects of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) on its members through the promotion of IFM.

LEAF/LEAF Marque is simply 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 IFM practices. LEAF is extremely well placed to support producers to do just this.

The fifth annual Global Impacts Report, showcasing our members and certified producer's achievements, was published in March 2017 and is available on the [LEAF website](#).

2. Role and Responsibilities

The specific M&E roles and responsibilities of staff 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 :
 - 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 these include: Chief Executive (Chairman), Sustainability Manager, Certification & Assurance Manager, IFM Manager, Technical Assistant and Technical Assistant (Projects).

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

LEAF's Theory of Change (see Appendix 1), containing LEAF Marque's work, describes how our activities contribute to achieving our mission. LEAF Marque, as part of LEAF, contributes to many of LEAF's five enabling objectives in a range of ways:

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 and education among consumers, children and young people.
5. Positively influencing people's attitudes towards, and knowledge of food, farming and the environment.



The LEAF Theory of Change outlines the LEAF Marque long-term goal, and intended impacts of the LEAF Marque system (Appendix 1):

LEAF Marque Long-term Goal: increasing the implementation of more environmentally sustainable farming practices through IFM.

LEAF Marque intended impacts are to improve:

- Soil management to enhance soil quality and soil health
- The resilience of cropping systems
- Management of water use and water quality
- Energy efficiency and energy use
- Waste management
- Management of livestock to enhance the environment
- And enhance the management of native habitats and biodiversity.

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 also shown within the LEAF Theory of Change (Appendix 1). The above objectives incorporate an embedded M&E element.

4. Performance Monitoring

Over time, LEAF/LEAF Marque has been able to collect data from its members/producers from its supporting strategies used in the delivery of LEAF’s IFM. These strategies include the LEAF Marque Standard system; the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review (a self-assessment sustainability management tool) and LEAF Marque training. LEAF/LEAF Marque continuously collects data and, where possible, tries to understand trends over time using its most recent and historic data. This provides the basis for performance monitoring. The current, externally available indicators can be found in the [Global Impacts Report](#). LEAF/LEAF Marque also produces a Data Book which provides further internal performance monitoring.

LEAF recognises that the development of metrics and indicators built around qualitative and quantitative data is increasingly important to enable a greater understanding of progress and barriers in demonstrating advancements in the delivery of Integrated Farm Management. Therefore, our 2017 Global Impacts Report includes more detailed data collected from the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review which further demonstrates LEAF/LEAF Marque’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/LEAF Marque will also assess present and future indicators as part of its ongoing M&E continuous improvement, in collaboration with stakeholders where appropriate.

LEAF Marque’s M&E activities include performance monitoring at a range of levels. 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.

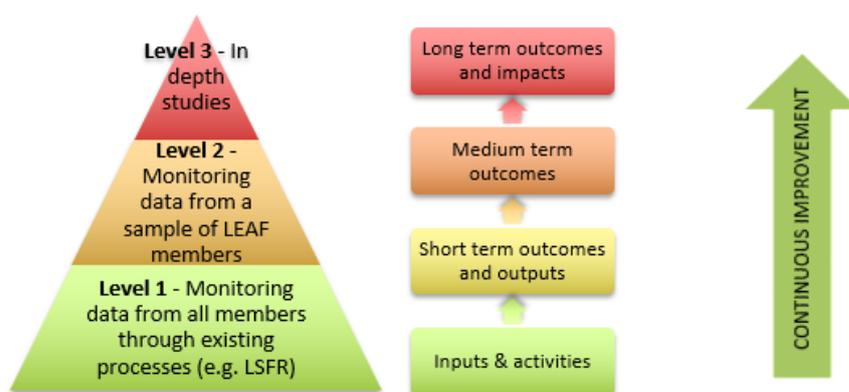


Figure 2 – LEAF/LEAF Marque data collection pyramid



Figure 2 shows the different levels of data collection and how they can be used to assess impact, with 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). Additionally, there is a growing amount of in-depth data collected from a subset of members. There are other proxy indicators within policies, plans and other records e.g. Key Species within the Landscape and Nature Conservation and Enhancement Plan. In future M&E work, we will look to collect more data on the impact of IFM across the total LEAF Marque Standard system production area.

5. Outcome and impact evaluation

LEAF/LEAF Marque continues to develop its outcome and impact evaluations. The annual Global Impact Report monitors data from all members through existing processes (Level 1). Evaluations (commissioned, conducted and/or undergone) enhance outcomes from a sample of all LEAF Marque growers are monitored against specific indicators begin to provide more rigorous and detailed information focusing on medium-term environmental outcomes, as well as track unintended effects of LEAF Marque certification (Level 2). Most recently, in May 2017, LEAF published its [response](#) to an evaluation conducted by the CCRI (see [Highlights](#), Full Report and Summary [here](#)).

For any organisation, M&E is an ongoing process and the LEAF/LEAF Marque M&E Framework outlines our intentions to further develop Outcome and Impact Evaluations in the future. Within the LEAF Marque 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/LEAF Marque's M&E system is inextricably linked to its overarching business strategy. LEAF/LEAF Marque proactively reviews and revises the M&E system to continually improve effectiveness annually, with a more detailed review and revision following changes to the five-year business strategy. Additionally, LEAF/LEAF Marque recognises the need to review and revise the system reactively at times. Any reviews take into account learnings from implementation of the M&E Framework, performance monitoring and evaluations as well as stakeholder input. There is emerging best practice in sustainability standard impact assessment and indicator selection. LEAF/LEAF Marque will, where possible, follow this as it develops its M&E programme.

7. Opportunities for engagement

LEAF/LEAF Marque are 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/LEAF Marque 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/LEAF Marque is keen to hear from other like-minded organisations of how it can improve its monitoring and evaluation system. Please [contact](#) LEAF/LEAF Marque for any comments, questions or complaints about the M&E System.

LEAF Marque Ltd
Stoneleigh Park
Warwickshire
CV8 2LG
United Kingdom

t: +44 (0)24 7641 3911
e: info@leafmarque.com
w: www.leafmarque.com
@LEAFMarque

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Appendix 1 – LEAF Theory of Change

