

LEAF calls on industry to collaborate and seize growth opportunity

Work together and recognise the value of certification schemes in a post-Brexit world: that was Linking Environment And Farming's (LEAF) message to the food and farming industry at the second annual LEAF Marque summit last week.

The 2017 LEAF Marque Summit explored the theme ***From My Field to Your Fork: Marketing the supply chain sustainability story*** and asked if the food and farming industry is doing enough to market its own sustainability achievements and aspirations. During a thought provoking day, speakers and delegates at the event debated the role that NGOs and independent assurance schemes, like LEAF Marque, can play for growers, farmers and retailers alike. Now LEAF are calling on the entire industry to collaborate and seize the opportunity for growth.

British farmers who use the LEAF Marque scheme can benefit from access to overseas markets, within and beyond the EU, because the LEAF Marque is internationally credited through ISEAL (International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance). Caroline Drummond, LEAF CEO said: "Britain is facing a new, challenging, yet exciting era as we leave the European Union. The food and farming sector will be impacted greatly by this change and smart and reasoned approaches are critical to develop a confident, profitable and sustainable world-leading UK food and farming sector. We want farmers and growers to take advantage of all that LEAF Marque can offer them in the market place to build more resilient businesses.

"Independently verified certification schemes, like the LEAF Marque empower businesses, whether retailers, farmers, growers or packers, to market their vision, their aspirations and their credentials. The LEAF Marque environmental assurance system provides robust evidence that sustainable farming standards are being met. Farmers across the world are already making important sustainability commitments and choosing to realise them through LEAF Marque certification. If more farmers and growers embrace this opportunity, we can represent a truly powerful force for change."

At the Summit, LEAF also launched the results of its 2017 Global Impacts Report which showed the significant progress LEAF Marque growers are making in sustainable farming. The total number of LEAF Marque businesses in all sectors across the globe now totals 1,013 covering 367,395 hectares. In the fresh produce sector, LEAF Marque has further consolidated its strong position, with 1 in 3 hectares of UK fruit and vegetables being grown to the LEAF Marque Standard.



Speaking at the Summit Jonathon Porritt, Founder and Director, Forum for the Future, said: “We live in deeply disturbing times and there are huge splits in the farming community about Brexit. Currently there is nothing coming out of Defra to help us understand what farming will look like post CAP. However, it is good to see much more applied, realistic work going on in this area from the NGO sector. You cannot make the world's food system more sustainable without recognising that it will come at a cost. The world’s farmers have to be paid a fair price for producing sustainably. The debate has to be had about the illusion of cheap food. LEAF has been at the heart of progress in the last 25 years. The result of LEAF’s Global Impacts Report is hugely encouraging. However, we still operate in a sea of illusion. LEAF cannot prosper unless we work hard to break these.”

Emma Keller, Agricultural Commodities Manager, WWF reiterated LEAF’s call for collaboration. “Since 1970 we have seen a significant decline in global bird populations. WWF takes businesses on journeys of "corporate stewardship"- turning awareness into knowledge into action, and encourage companies into collaboration solutions. This is where LEAF comes in - bringing people together leads to innovation. Engaging more widely means we can use our combined voice to influence political agendas to bring about meaningful change.”

LEAF’s future priorities include expanding the LEAF Marque in the livestock and dairy sectors, and working with the supply chain to deliver more demand for LEAF Marque certified products. The organisation has also called for new benchmarking standards in monitoring farm performance. Caroline Drummond stated: “Monitoring performance is the basis for farm business improvement. A common set of farm benchmarking standards (which do not currently exist for every sector) would provide the food and farming industries with data and a means of tracking improvements. We recommend that this is developed as a matter of urgency. These standards could be included in assurance schemes such as LEAF Marque.”

For more information on LEAF, LEAF Marque, Integrated Farm Management or to view the full Global Impacts Report visit www.leafuk.org

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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.