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**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Integrated Farm Management signals future for sustainable food and farming**

**Achieving more sustainable food and farming will only be possible through sound science that is firmly rooted in practical application. This was the message delivered at LEAF's inaugural Integrated Farm Management Conference last week.**

More than sixty delegates from across the farming industry, including LEAF Demonstration farmers, representatives from LEAF Innovation Centres, LEAF Marque producers, food and drink manufacturers, industry bodies and NGOs came together at the event titled, "IFM: A Framework for the Future". Speakers from LEAF's eight Innovation Centres highlighted state of the art research being carried out within each section of LEAF's Integrated Farm Management (IFM). Delegates heard about the use of LED lights to maximise growth and plant quality, the application of drones to improve yields, how biobeds and phytobacs are enabling farmers to reduce their environmental impact and the benefits of cover crops to farmers and wildlife. This was followed by talks from LEAF Demonstration Farmers who highlighted how they were making IFM work for them.

Julian Davies from Stockbridge Technology Centre, one of LEAF's Innovation Centres explained the advances that were being made in the horticultural sector. For example, looking at LED lights and more sustainable growing media to push forward more sustainable methods of glasshouse production.

Also speaking at the conference, Professor Dave Roberts, Head of SRUC Dairy Research said that "the framework of IFM had the potential to offer much to the livestock sector in terms of better grassland management systems, feeding and welfare", but acknowledged there was still a long way to go.

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At the conference, which was introduced this year as part of LEAF's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the LEAF Information Centre was unveiled – an online information portal for LEAF members housing all of LEAF's technical publications and a range of guides, assessments and videos on all aspects of IFM as well as some of the broader topics associated with sustainable agriculture.

Caroline Drummond, LEAF's Chief Executive said: "LEAF has been at the forefront of delivering more sustainable food and farming for the past 25 years. We have spent this time defining the principles of IFM, building our knowledge generation and exchange activities, developing management tools and guidance for farmers, creating a robust and transparent global assurance system and delivering innovative public engagement activities. I am immensely proud of what we have achieved and hugely excited by the challenges that lie ahead. The practices and developments within IFM must continue to evolve and improve. Meeting the challenge of providing better nutrition for more people sustainably calls for joined-up research that takes an ecological approach, responds to people's real needs and respects farmers' know-how. Our Demonstration Farmers and Innovation Centres are key to making this happen."

Alice Midmer, LEAF's IFM Manager added: "Underpinning all our activities is our network of Demonstration Farmers and Innovation Centres. If farmers are to continue to farm more sustainably, then it is vital they have access to the very latest research and technologies as well as opportunities to share their own knowledge and expertise. This helps to drive forward real change and helps farmers seize opportunities and make meaningful and informed choices that will work for them and their businesses. Our Innovation Centres and Demonstration Farms represent some of the most forward looking scientists and farmers in the country. This feeds into the continual development of IFM to ensure it remains robust, relevant and able to address the challenges ahead in a way that is pragmatic and resilient to future uncertainties."

LEAF Demonstration Farmer, John Renner from Renner Farming in Northumberland concluded the afternoon talks by stating: "I have been amazed today to see the sheer diversity of farming enterprises represented by LEAF members and implementing IFM principles. There is a very positive future for farming in every sense. We can supply the food we need, protect and enhance the environment as well as offering some fantastic career opportunities for young people. LEAF has got to shout its messages from the hilltops."

## ENDS

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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 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.
- **LEAF Innovation Centres** are research organisations whose work supports the research, development and promotion of IFM. They investigate and communicate practices which underpin the continual improvement of IFM to help deliver more sustainable food and farming.
- **The LEAF Information Centre** is an online information portal for LEAF members housing all of LEAF's technical publications and a range of guides, assessments and videos on all aspects of IFM as well as some of the broader topics associated with sustainable agriculture.