



## The Waitrose farm *Leckford Estate*

### Case Study: The Leckford Estate, Hampshire, UK



The Leckford Estate is also known as The Waitrose Farm, which signals the blend of opportunity and responsibility that this LEAF Demonstration Farm carries. With 1600 hectares in the Test Valley, bisected by the River Test, one of the world's premier fisheries. The farmed environment of the Leckford Estate is of vital importance to a wide range of stakeholders.

The farm has a herd of 550 Holstein/Friesian cows producing over 5 million litres of milk a year, 12 hectares of apple and pear orchards, free range eggs, and over 650 hectares of wheat, barley, oats and oilseed rape. In line with all Waitrose dairy farms the cows have access to grazing for at least 120 days a year, and they grow their own forage crops to ensure they have the very best quality feed.



The newest addition to the farm is a vineyard, planted in 2009 which grows three different varieties of grape. There are beef cattle and sheep conservation grazing in the River Test water meadows and on the chalk grassland banks during the winter and summer months. As well as the farming enterprises, over 27 tonnes of chestnut mushrooms are grown per week, and the farm presses its oilseed rape to produce 'Leckford Estate Cold Pressed Rapeseed Oil'. There are 16 Leckford Estate products available through the Waitrose stores nationally.

## LEAF credentials

With the farm nested within a wider parent company and in such a highly valued environment, Farm Manager, Andy Ferguson stresses that the LEAF credentials are relevant, although they will not always be on the product packaging. A key feature of the wider Waitrose brand is that ‘we understand farming because we are farmers’. This means issues, such as animal welfare, are given paramount importance. Within this the role of LEAF Marque is:

***“I remember the original LEAF Audit tagline was ‘it makes you think’. LEAF is helpful in that it holds you to account, it makes you focus.”***

As part of this discussion is that LEAF Marque helps to organise strategic thoughts in a complex business environment:

***“It is easy in business management to get distracted from all sorts of things, and the LEAF Marque keeps you honest, it helps you keep your head up and gives you a structure as what to focus on.”***

## Demonstrating continual improvement

Examples of this focus on the details can be seen in the savings that investments into renewable energy have made. In 2013, a 50kW PV solar array was installed on the dairy roof, and in 2015 a second 186kW array installed on the grain store roof. Most of this energy is used on the farm with a small amount sold into the national grid. Regarding pollution management, LEAF Marque has indirect impacts, as part of the risk register for the farm the decision has been made not to move manures from one side of the farm to the other, to ensure no manures could accidentally enter the River Test. While many outside the farm point to the benefits of being part of a larger business, LEAF Marque allows the farm to demonstrate continual improvement as verified by an external body. Andy Ferguson is convinced that sustainability is going to “take on a more front of mind importance”, and attention to questions such as fuel efficiency improve the resilience of the farm, as he explains:

***“With things such as ‘Brexit’, there are many things that are outside of our control, so we need to take control of what we can do.”***