



LEAF Adds Value

Embargoed until 12 midday 16th November

A new independent report published today (16th November), shows that LEAF membership offers clear, tangible and valuable benefits to farmers. The study, commissioned by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) was carried out by CCRI (Countryside and Community Research Institute) and examined the wide range of services that members receive and their impacts on farm businesses.

The study identified three main areas where farmers benefit from LEAF membership: financial, environmental and social. Dr Janet Dwyer from CCRI who led the research says there are many ways in which farmers profit. "LEAF membership had enabled the farmers whom we interviewed to save money in several ways - such as by improving energy efficiency and reducing their use of chemicals and fertilisers, without compromising output. But the value of LEAF goes much further than the pure financial, with the majority of farmers also highlighting the social benefits and increased confidence that membership brings. Farmers also reported increased awareness of the environment on their farms, which in turn had helped them to improve biodiversity, soil structure and water quality. "

The financial savings realised by LEAF farmers as a result of their membership were substantial. The amount saved by reducing fertiliser and chemicals use ranged from £2,500 to £10,000 per farm; and implementing IFM* (Integrated Farm Management) saved one farmer £14,000 on his water bill alone. But LEAF isn't just about saving farmers money, it also provides opportunities for them to increase revenue too. The report indicates that LEAF Marque accreditation can be essential in enabling members to secure the best price for their produce and for securing valuable retailer contracts. Also, by welcoming visitors to the farm through events and demonstrations, some farmers have increased their income from direct sales.

LEAF's Chief Executive Caroline Drummond commented on the report: "We are delighted with the results of the CCRI report. It confirms our own research that has consistently shown that LEAF offers farmers real benefits that go well beyond the financial and the environmental. A key part of our role is to build public understanding and trust of food. It is really good therefore, to see that so many farmers say that LEAF farmer membership has delivered more contact with the public and that a fantastic 91% said that it had improved understanding of food and farming among the local community. LEAF's annual Open Farm Sunday has grown year on year, with more and more people visiting a farm to find out for themselves how their food is produced and to meet the farmers responsible. Our nationwide network of LEAF Demonstration Farms is also growing, both in terms of the number of farms opening and the number of visitors they receive."

Waitrose MD, Mark Price commented on the findings at today's LEAF Presidents Event: "Many of the farms that supply Waitrose are LEAF Marque accredited and are key to ensuring we can offer high quality food from around the world that is grown with the greatest possible care for the environment. So it is really good to see independent research confirming just how much LEAF has to offer our farmers, wherever they are."

This report coincides with a new study which was commissioned by Defra and carried out by the University of Hertfordshire's Agricultural and Environmental Research Unit that shows that LEAF Marque, (the assurance scheme developed by LEAF) is leading the way in the environmental food labelling. The research evaluated a number of schemes and compared how they help to protect the environment. It found that whilst LEAF Marque, scored the highest marks across a range of criteria, other better known schemes actually scored significantly less in some important areas. The report's author, Dr Kathy Lewis is therefore calling for a more consistent approach and highlights the need for environmental labelling to be based on a robust, scientific approach.

Speaking at LEAF's President's Event today Caroline Drummond highlighted how much LEAF has to offer everyone – farmers, retailers and consumers. "The results of these two studies clearly show that LEAF offers a real and accessible solution to the huge challenges facing us if we are to produce sufficient affordable food for everyone. We would encourage more farmers to join LEAF and reap the benefits and urge consumers to seek out for the LEAF Marque when they go shopping."

Ends

For more information about LEAF membership and LEAF Marque please contact: LEAF on: 02476 413911

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For further information on all LEAF's work and activities, visit www.leafuk.org

Editors' Notes:

- LEAF Marque is an assurance scheme based on LEAF farming principles. It is independently inspected and certified by third party certification bodies. Farms certified as LEAF Marque can use the LEAF Marque logo on all the produce they sell, direct to the consumer or to retail outlets
- *LEAF's Integrated Farm Management (IFM) approach combines the best of traditional farming methods with modern technology, allowing farmers to manage their farms in an informed, professional and caring way. IFM encourages farmers to maintain the highest standards of food production with the minimum environmental impact
- Open Farm Sunday (taking place on 12 June 2011) is a national flagship event when hundreds of farms open their gates to the general public. It is a great opportunity for visitors to see at first

hand how farmers produce the food they eat and care for the countryside. For more information visit www.farmsunday.org

- There are 49 LEAF Demonstration Farms across England and Scotland. A variety of different groups visit LEAF Demonstration Farms including farmers, MPs, MEPs, government groups, farming, wildlife and conservation groups (including Young Farmers, Wildlife Trusts, RSPB groups) WI groups, schools, teachers and other educational bodies
- Let Nature Feed Your Senses – LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) and the Sensory Trust are working together on a flagship project to connect disengaged groups and individuals with nature and the countryside, through food and farming. The project involves sensory rich visits to farms and nature reserves across England and is part of Natural England's Access to Nature programme, which is funded by The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme