



## **LEAF Marque Standard Terms of Reference**

### **1. Introduction to LEAF Marque**

LEAF Marque is an environmental assurance system that recognises and rewards more sustainable farming practices through building market opportunities. Integrated Farm Management (IFM) underpins the LEAF Marque System, which increases the implementation of more environmentally sustainable farming practices through IFM.

IFM is a whole farm business approach that combines the best of modern technology and traditional methods. IFM delivers more sustainable farming by supporting the integration and needs of the environment, farm economic viability and society over the long term. IFM has a site-specific approach that is applicable across different farm enterprises and different countries.

The LEAF Marque System is run by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), a leading global organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming. LEAF works with farmers, the food industry, scientists and consumers to inspire and enable sustainable farming practices that are prosperous, enrich the environment and engage local communities. As well as managing the LEAF Marque System, LEAF also drives forward the uptake of more sustainable farming practices through Integrated Farm Management with knowledge generation and exchange based around its network of Demonstration Farms and Innovation Centres, the provision of management tools and guidance, and through its various public outreach initiatives such as LEAF Education and LEAF Open Farm Sunday.

### **2. About this Terms of Reference Document**

This document provides an overview of the activities for the development of the LEAF Marque Standard and is accessible from the [LEAF Website](#).

Development of the LEAF Marque Standard follows the ToR outlined in this document and the [LEAF Marque Standard Setting Procedure](#). This ToR document has been developed in compliance with requirements of the ISEAL Standard Setting Code ([ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards v6.0](#)).

### **3. Scope**

The LEAF Marque Standard is applied to all LEAF Marque audits regardless of country and enterprise. The LEAF Marque Standard covers the whole farm business. LEAF Marque certification applies to products from the whole farm business and is not limited to defined crops or enterprises within the business.

The LEAF Marque Standard is additional and supplementary to LEAF Marque approved baseline systems, a list of which is published in the [LEAF Product List](#). The LEAF Marque Standard builds on the environmental aspects of the approved baseline systems.

### **4. Need for the LEAF Marque Standard**

Soon after LEAF was established in 1991 to encourage more sustainable farming practices through the demonstration and development of IFM, it was recognised that there was a need to develop a market focused approach and enable consumer recognition of more sustainably produced food. The LEAF Marque System was identified as a way to enable this, and with the input of the LEAF Marque Technical Team, wider stakeholders, and relevant expertise including UK retailers, the LEAF Marque Standard was developed in 2003. The need for such an assurance system is evidenced by the many



ways in which the LEAF Marque Standard is utilised, ranging from larger organisations demonstrating their sustainability commitments, partnerships with other environmental organisations, and brands supporting their sustainability credentials.

There are many challenges in achieving sustainable food production from global pressures such as climate change, a growing population, and the increasing incidence of resistance to plant protection products and antibiotics. Sustainable farming practices are therefore essential to ensure food supply in the future, and also have an important role to play in delivering towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The sustainable farming practices within LEAF Marque contributes to addressing these challenges, as impacts can include reduced plant protection product use, saving energy and water, supporting the preservation of threatened species and helping communities manage the land in a sustainable way so it can be farmed successfully by future generations. Globalisation and the importance of world trade to many individuals' livelihoods means that the challenges of delivering more sustainable farming practices are beyond the capability of individual countries. LEAF Marque welcomes these partnerships and the international exchange of information, research and ideas.

## 5. Intended Impacts

The long-term goal of the LEAF Marque System is to increase the implementation of more environmentally sustainable farming practices through IFM. As LEAF Marque is part of LEAF, the activities of LEAF Marque also contribute to achieving LEAF's Theory of Change, as defined in the [LEAF Marque Impacts Public System Report](#).

Within the context of Integrated Farm Management, the LEAF Marque System aims to improve:

- Soil management to enhance soil quality and soil health
- The resilience of farming 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.

These aims work alongside LEAF's beyond certification work which aims to:

- Inspire and enable sustainable farming that is prosperous, enriches the environment and engages local communities.

## 6. Stakeholder Engagement

LEAF Marque welcomes feedback from all stakeholders on this document and/or any aspect of the LEAF Marque System. Feedback can be given by contacting LEAF Marque ([info@leafmarque.com](mailto:info@leafmarque.com)), or the [LEAF Website](#).

Stakeholder engagement is a core part of LEAF Marque. LEAF Marque wants to ensure that all stakeholders have the option to be involved in the process of revising and further developing the LEAF Marque Standard, as well as other areas of the LEAF Marque system as detailed in wider LEAF Marque documentation. For further detail, see [LEAF Marque Standard Setting Procedure](#) and [Stakeholder Mapping](#).



Strategies for involving stakeholders in LEAF Marque System developments may include:

- Direct contact with producers / companies / industry contacts
- Meetings
- LEAF email newsletters
- LEAF website / media channels
- Online consultations /questionnaires
- Publicise at relevant events / conferences attended by LEAF
- Workshops

## 7. Process of LEAF Marque Standard Revision

If revision of the LEAF Marque Standard is considered necessary following the review process, the ToR will be reviewed and updated as appropriate.

Revision of the LEAF Marque Standard follows the LEAF Marque [Standard Setting Procedure](#), which includes details regarding roles and decision making. A summary of the [Time Plan](#) for revision of the LEAF Marque Standard is publicly available.

The LEAF Marque Standard review may also lead to the review and revision of other documents:

- [LEAF Marque System Rules](#)
- [LEAF Marque Standard Checklist](#)

## 8. Risks

LEAF has identified the following risks and associated, existing and potential, mitigation strategies with the delivery of LEAF Marque including changes to the LEAF Marque Standard.

<p>Competition – other standards/systems/schemes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Clear market differentiation.</li> <li>o Credibility and impact of the LEAF Marque System; including maintaining ISEAL Full Membership as a point of differentiation.</li> <li>o Benefits associated with improved management practices from implementation of IFM.</li> <li>o Maintaining strong relationships with other standards/systems/schemes.</li> </ul>
<p>Widening gap between those producers with low level of improvement in farming practices, despite continuous improvement focus in the LEAF Marque Standard. Impacts include demotivation, perceived irrelevance of the LEAF Marque System, and demand for more from producers/industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o LEAF Marque Standard reviewed for continued relevance and effectiveness.</li> <li>o Support, beyond certification, for farmers adopting the LEAF Marque Standard.</li> <li>o LEAF provision of activities beyond certification to support implementation of IFM for a wider group of producers.</li> <li>o Through continual improvement, working with producers who have a low level of farming practices also provides significant opportunities.</li> <li>o Careful communication around LEAF Marque delivering greater market opportunities.</li> </ul>

<p>Policy changes – changes in policy and their enforcement mechanisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o LEAF involves concerned stakeholders in the development of the LEAF Marque Standard.</li> <li>o LEAF Marque Standard encourages producers to engage in activities which are appropriate for the environment and may be supported by local environmental schemes but allows flexibility for maintaining engagement as changes occur.</li> <li>o LEAF engagement with government departments and policy makers.</li> </ul>
<p>Pest (diseases, unexpected insects/pests and weeds) outbreak and associated climate change impact. In such instances, producers' priority can move to business recovery with less focus on environmental aspects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o LEAF works with industry, governmental and academic groups to improve understanding and mitigation strategies for pest outbreaks including the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM).</li> <li>o Clause in LEAF Marque System Rules to allow for certificate extensions in exceptional circumstances/force majeure</li> </ul>
<p>Impact of climate change and extreme weather events (e.g. flooding, droughts)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o LEAF Marque Standard reviewed for continued relevance and effectiveness</li> <li>o Clause in LEAF Marque System Rules to allow for certificate extensions in exceptional circumstances/force majeure</li> </ul>
<p>Robustness vs accessibility - changes relating to robustness of the LEAF Marque System may result in reduced accessibility and/or increase effort for producers to meet the LEAF Marque Standard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Continued stakeholder engagement through review, revision and development of components of the LEAF Marque System.</li> </ul>
<p>Knowledge of requirements – extensive changes to the LEAF Marque System including requirements and may result in knowledge gaps and confusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Publicise and provide information around changes and transition periods.</li> <li>o Publicise and provide training opportunities as appropriate.</li> <li>o Allow for a transition period when a new LEAF Marque Standard is published where both new and previous version are permitted. This allows businesses to familiarise themselves with and implement changes at a timescale that is appropriate to them.</li> <li>o Develop a variety of guidance documents and resources to increase likelihood of engagement and effective communication with a wide range of audiences.</li> </ul>

*Table 1: LEAF Marque Standard Risks and Existing & Potential Mitigation Strategies*



LEAF Marque recognises that through the implementation of the LEAF Marque Standard and IFM, there are Secondary Effects that impact all aspects of sustainability (economic, environmental and social). For the full list see the [Impacts Public System Report](#), but the areas of risk and their associated mitigation strategies include:

- ✘ Increased resources for farm business (for compliance, new technologies, additional inputs etc) may not outweigh the (perceived) benefits of LEAF Marque and therefore may prevent farmers from engaging in the assurance system. *Mitigation Strategies:*
  - *Ongoing review of membership costs to ensure remain achievable*
  - *Provide regular LEAF Marque & IFM Training*
  - *Mitigation Strategy: Communicate benefits of LEAF Marque to farming businesses so that LEAF Marque recognised as the go-to environmental sustainability standard*
- ✘ Increased focus on documentation leads to a reduced emphasis on implementing best farming practices (from time and resource perspective) and audit fatigue. *Mitigation Strategies:*
  - *Mitigation Strategy: Establish partnerships and earned recognition with policymakers and regulation bodies to reduce audit repetition*
  - *Mitigation Strategy: Maintaining strong relationships with other standards/systems/schemes*
  - *Increased focus on documentation leads to a reduced emphasis on implementing best farming practices (from time and resource perspective) and audit fatigue*
  - *Greater expectations about premiums and market opportunities leads to disappointed and demotivated farmers*