LEAF Marque

Impacts

Public System Report

LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is the leading organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming. We work 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 Marque is an environmental assurance system recognising more sustainably* farmed products. It is run by LEAF and based on LEAF’s Integrated Farm Management (IFM) principles. All LEAF Marque certified farms are independently inspected.

Integrated Farm Management

Integrated Farm Management (IFM) is a whole farm business approach that delivers sustainable* farming. IFM uses the best of modern technology and traditional methods to deliver prosperous farming that enriches the environment and engages local communities.

*“LEAF’s sustainable farming - is an approach that works to deliver a site-specific farming system that supports the integration of and needs of the environment, farm economic viability and society over the long term”.

Figure 1 – Integrated Farm Management – Continuous Improvement – Transforming Farming and Food System
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Introduction

LEAF’s Vision – A global farming and food system that delivers Climate Positive action builds resilience and supports the health, diversity and enrichment of our food, farms, the environment and society.

LEAF’s Mission - to inspire and enable more circular approaches to farming and food systems through integrated, regenerative and vibrant nature-based solutions, that deliver productivity and prosperity among farmers, enriches the environment and positively engages young people and wider society.

2031 Ambition

LEAF’s ambition is to play a demonstrable part in transforming farming and food systems. Building on our work since LEAF was established in 1991, this will be through the agro-ecological and regenerative benefits of the whole farm, site specific focus of Integrated Farm Management to drive Positive Action for Climate, Nature, Economy and Society. Embracing circular agriculture with health, diversity and enrichment at the centre of all we do. Through the use of management tools, the harmonisation of metrics, technology, innovations, data and Artificial Intelligence, training, research, demonstration, market opportunity, education and engagement, we will support and contribute to the practical delivery of national and global commitments. This will include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement, the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework.

This document is a public report that describes LEAF Marque’s current Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system. It is intended to ensure transparency and demonstrate compliance with the ISEAL Impacts Code. As LEAF has just launched its 10-year strategy, the supporting Theory of Change and Delivery Targets are in development. Please see more information about LEAF and LEAF Marque on the LEAF website.

1. Scope and Boundaries of M&E System

The value and benefits of effective monitoring and evaluation are widely recognised within LEAF and serves to focus LEAF/LEAF Marque’s work to ensure we are positioned to deliver our objectives effectively and efficiently. LEAF/LEAF Marque also recognises that monitoring and evaluation is a continuous process and one that seeks to deliver continued improvement and best practice on an ongoing basis.

The LEAF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mission is to increase the understanding of the environmental, social, political, organisational and other impacts of LEAF and LEAF Marque activities. The continuous M&E programme augments the scientific basis, benefits, value and the impartiality, transparency and inclusiveness of LEAF’s activities.

The LEAF M&E system has a global scope and includes all farming systems, which is in-line with LEAF’s ethos and the applicability of the LEAF Marque Standard. The scope and boundaries of the LEAF Marque M&E system are defined around environmental impacts as its major focus, although LEAF also recognises its
secondary/unintended effects. More information about the scope of the LEAF Marque M&E System can be found in the LEAF Marque M&E Summary.

The M&E system will monitor at a farm/producer/certified business level as well as at supply chain level.

2. Role and Responsibilities
The specific M&E roles and responsibilities of staff are defined below:

- **M&E Champion** – The Chief Executive, working with governance boards, determines LEAF’s strategy and primary objectives, sets targets and steers the M&E group both informally and formally at governance, management and technical meetings.
- **M&E Group** – In addition to the Chief Executive, the M&E Group works collaboratively to shape policy, define impacts and contribute to the continuous development of M&E. The Group is comprised of:
  - **M&E Planning** – The Chief Operating Officer is accountable to the Chief Executive for the production and development of the LEAF M&E Framework and plan and, working with the M&E Group, ensures the plan is monitored, reviewed and delivered.
  - **M&E Technical Team** – The LEAF Technical Team members identified below, work collectively to develop and refine indicators, collect and evaluate data and provide regular reports on outcomes these include: Chief Executive (Chairman), Assurance Manager, Technical Manager, Senior Technical Coordinators, Technical Coordinators and Technical Assistants.

For 2021, staff time is estimated as 10% FTE Chief Operating Officer’s time, 20% FTE Technical Team, and 10% FTE Admin support and external resources as required.

In the first instance, the Chief Operating Officer should be contacted for all M&E enquiries.

3. Defining the Intended Change
LEAF Marque, as part of LEAF, supports the eight cross-cutting commitments of LEAF’s 10-Year Strategy (see Figure 2) and is core to the Market Opportunity Workstream:

- Creating leadership in championing environmental sustainability in the market-place
- Demonstrating impact and transparency in approaches that deliver a profound shift
- Delivery sustainable value for all – fair, ambitious and effective

![Figure 2 – Our LEAF Commitments](image)

**LEAF Marque Long-term Goal:** Increasing the implementation of more environmentally sustainable farming

**LEAF Marque intended impacts** are to improve:

- Resilient and diverse businesses
- Increased implementation of regenerative practices
• Improved positive action for climate change through reduced carbon footprints
• Improved soil management to enhance soil quality and soil health
• Improved implementation of effective IPM solutions for crop health and protection
• Circular approach to resource use and waste management
• Optimised and integrated livestock health, performance, and environmental impact
• Improved energy use and efficiency
• Improved management of water use and water quality
• Enriched diversity of native habitats and species

LEAF Marque views the development of its Theory of Change as an essential and strategic planning management tool. Whilst in development please refer to the M&E Framework, 10-Year Strategy and find more information on the LEAF website.

LEAF/LEAF Marque is simply a catalyst of this change. It is our producers themselves that make change happen. Through continuous improvement, LEAF members and LEAF Marque certified producers are making steady progress towards more sustainable farming practices, by embracing IFM practices. LEAF is extremely well placed to support producers to do just this.

3a) Unintended Effects

Whilst LEAF Marque’s focus is environmental impacts, LEAF also recognises its secondary/unintended effects will include all aspects of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) on its members through the promotion of IFM. LEAF Marque secondary effects (previously called unintended effects) and mitigation strategies, where appropriate, have been determined and reviewed from commissioned studies, stakeholder workshops, analysis of LEAF Marque data, insight from the LEAF Marque Technical Advisory Committee and on-going dialogue with stakeholders.

4. Performance Monitoring

LEAF Marque implements performance monitoring at a range of levels guided by its pre-defined indicators, which are based on LEAF Marque’s Intended Impacts, LEAF’s 10-Year Strategy and Theory of Change (currently under development).

The annual Global Impacts Report showcase our members and certified producer’s achievements against the current, externally available indicators. LEAF/LEAF Marque also produces a Data Book which provides further internal performance monitoring. LEAF Marque has an internal list of LEAF Marque Indicators available on request and will also assess present and future indicators as part of its ongoing M&E continuous improvement, in collaboration with stakeholders where appropriate. Within the LEAF Marque system, the majority of indicators are based on the degree of adoption of practices. While these are useful proxies for assessing impact across the standard as a whole, there is a need to develop more evidence on actual outcomes and impacts on farm.
Figure 3 shows the different levels of data collection and how they can be used to assess impact, with the ultimate goal being to show the long-term impacts. Most data available to LEAF is Level 1 (e.g. LEAF Sustainable Farming Review and production information results show that practices have been adopted by producers). Additionally, there is a growing amount of in-depth data collected from a subset of members and in supporting external impact evaluations. There are other proxy indicators within policies, plans and other records e.g. Key Species within the Landscape and Nature Conservation and Enhancement Plan. LEAF Marque will continue to expand its performance monitoring as part of the 10-Year Strategy.

LEAF/LEAF Marque has been able collect data from its members/certified businesses overtime from ongoing operations such as audit reports, LEAF Sustainable Farming Review (a self-assessment sustainability management tool), media monitoring, oversight reports, and programme of training and events. LEAF/LEAF Marque continuously collects data and, where possible, tries to understand trends over time using its most recent and historic data, and aligns data and findings with standardised reporting (e.g. ISEAL Core Common Indicators) and global targets (e.g. Sustainable Development Goals).

It has been rightly noted that evaluation of the medium- and long-term effects of certification are usually too costly to apply across all production units, or may require specialised research designs that are beyond the resource of a small organisation. Conversely, other indicators are more feasible to collect for all production sites, but are not capable of attributing desired outcomes and impacts to certification.

5. Outcome and impact evaluation

To supplement LEAF Marque’s performance monitoring and Global Impacts Report, LEAF/LEAF Marque continues to develop its outcome and impact evaluations to provide more rigorous and detailed information on LEAF Marque certified businesses and the true impact of LEAF Marque, included unintended/secondary effects. LEAF prioritises collaborating with researchers to produce external, independent evaluations including participating in research projects, and where budget allows, commissioning external evaluations. The focus of each evaluation will be determined on a yearly basis, responding to the needs of LEAF/LEAF Marque and the emerging issues of our stakeholders. It is a LEAF Marque policy to make summaries of full impact evaluations publicly available, where possible. LEAF also values and utilises good quality independent research that we have not been actively involved in but has findings that are related to LEAF/LEAF Marque/IFM.

The most recent outcome and impact evaluations are outlined in the LEAF Marque M&E Summary. Please contact LEAF for information about in-progress evaluations. LEAF collaborates with a number of research projects and partners to support the development, demonstration and uptake of IFM and more sustainable farming techniques.
6. Improving the Effectiveness of the M&E System
LEAF/LEAF Marque’s M&E system is inextricably linked to its overarching business strategy. LEAF/LEAF Marque proactively reviews and revises the M&E system to continually improve effectiveness annually, with a more detailed review and revision following changes to the 10-year strategy. A detailed review is currently underway including developing a new Theory of Change. LEAF/LEAF Marque recognises the need to review and revise the system reactively at times. Any reviews take into account learnings from implementation of the M&E Framework, performance monitoring and evaluations as well as stakeholder input. There is emerging best practice in sustainability standard impact assessment and indicator selection. LEAF/LEAF Marque will, where possible, follow this as it develops its M&E programme.

7. Opportunities for engagement
LEAF/LEAF Marque are committed to an ongoing development of its management systems and works closely with a range of stakeholders and partners in this development including but not limited to its members, certification bodies and operators of similar assurance systems. LEAF/LEAF Marque actively engages with its policy and advisory groups and with all interested parties as it considers collaboration a key ingredient to its success and is committed to continuous improvement.

LEAF Marque welcomes comments on all aspects of the LEAF Marque System at any time and uses this to inform how it can improve its monitoring and evaluation system. Please contact LEAF/LEAF Marque for any comments, questions or complaints about the M&E System.

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