



E J Barker and Sons



Farmers: Brian and Patrick Barker

Address: Lodge Farm, Westhorpe, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4TA

Twitter: @The_Barker_Boys

E J Barker and Sons is a family owned partnership based at Lodge Farm, Westhorpe in North Suffolk, focusing primarily on the production of high quality arable crops for a range of markets. The 513 hectare farm has been run by cousins, Brian and Patrick Barker since 2005; they have brought new energy and ideas to the business, developing and building upon the work of previous generations of Barkers.



The Farm

A 513 hectare farm situated on the north Suffolk Clay lands, growing winter and spring cereals, oil seed rape, spring beans and herbage grass seed for a range of markets.

Crops for food

We aim to grow high quality, high yielding crops for a range of markets. We understand the role of a balanced ecosystem with regard to farming and increasing biodiversity. We look at everything from the soil up, detailed nutrient mapping is carried out, crop pests are monitored to ensure we only apply treatments when and where they are needed most. We have a long crop rotation using appropriate cultivation techniques depending on soil condition so that we get full benefits from our cultural controls, agrichemicals and reduce fuel usage. We produce high crop yields as well as delivering a plentiful all year-round food supply, numerous safe breeding habitats and protection for all our farmland birds, insects and mammals. We are very aware of our role, as farmers, in protecting our precious natural resources and are continually looking at ways to conserve and reduce our energy use. We have reduced our machinery fleet, monitor fuel usage, recycle all farm waste, harvest rain water and have made energy saving alterations to our crop drying facilities. All this has significantly reduced our energy consumption and we now generate electricity with two solar installations on farm buildings.



Community

We are both enthusiastic about the future of farming and are keen to pass on our passion and knowledge of farming, local wildlife and the countryside to as many people as we can. We are proud of our work on the farm and our close links with the local community. We have created permissive access for local walkers and horse riders and regularly host visits to the farm for a wide range of groups and clubs.

Conservation

The Barker family aim has always been to increase biodiversity by using this whole farm ecosystem approach. We continue to maintain and create habitats so there is a range of heights, ages and density of vegetation – varied habitats mean varied species. We have created a ‘Green Grassland Corridor’ through the middle of the farm to allow for safe wildlife movement by linking vital habitats. Wild food provision is key with ancient and new native hedgerows providing a mix of different plant species that flower and bear fruit throughout the year. Large areas of wild seed mix and wild flowers are planted each year which act as ‘giant bird tables’ during the hungry gap in winter. Farm BAP species - Skylark, Linnet, Cuckoo, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Dunnock, Bullfinch, Turtle Dove, Starling, Song Thrush, Marsh Tit, Grey Partridge, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Common Toad, Great Crested Newts, Hedgehog, Brown Hare, Dormouse, Pipistrelle Bat.

Visits

Being a LEAF Demonstration Farm is a fantastic way for us to welcome people, from all walks of life, onto the farm to see how we are farming with nature.



About LEAF Demonstration Farms

LEAF Demonstration Farms are commercial farms, which show the beneficial practices of Integrated Farm Management (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. For more information, visit www.leafuk.org.