



E W Davies Farms Ltd



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E W Davies Farms Ltd is a 1300 hectare family owned arable business based in Essex specialising in contract farming. The Davies family started farming at the original farm in Waltham Abbey in 1913; although we still farm the original land, the company has been based at Thaxted since 1987. We have adopted precision farming and modern techniques, within the framework of Integrated Farm Management (IFM), to be a productive arable business. We gained LEAF Marque certification in 2012.



The Farm

A family owned, LEAF Marque certified, agricultural business growing a range of combinable crops, sugar beet, grass leys and environmental mixes.

Crops for food

We grow a wide range of combinable crops such as wheat, barley, rape, beans, peas, oats and linseed all destined for specific pre-determined markets. We also grow sugar beet for British Sugar as well as grass for forage to an anaerobic digester. We integrate cover crops into our rotation in front of spring crops, to capture nutrients and provide feed for our lambs during the winter months. Using the principles of IFM, we plan our rotation to suit individual fields ensuring we only use pesticides and artificial fertilisers where necessary. We operate a Control Traffic Farming (CTF) system across all our land to reduce compaction. This has enabled us to reduce the amount of cultivation required as well as reduce our fuel consumption.



Livestock

In recent years, we have introduced livestock to the farm to complement our arable system which has helped improve soil health and as an aid for blackgrass control. We currently run a 200 strong flock of Polled Dorset sheep with the view to increase numbers through breeding our own replacements. All our lamb is LEAF Marque certified and is sold via a box scheme to local markets.

Community

As farmers we are very proud of what we do and like to share it with the people around us. We do this by displaying LEAF information boards around all the footpaths that cross our farm to explain the importance of what we do. We participate in LEAF Open Farm Sunday and encourage others to join us on the day to help tell their story. We have also installed a platform on one of our reservoirs to enable local primary school children to learn about the importance of clean, healthy water through activities such as pond dipping.

Conservation

Maintaining and improving the wildlife features on our farm is extremely importance to us. We have a large network of environmental areas around the farm which are well connected through wildlife corridors. We use a local wildlife photographer to monitor and record what species are present on the farm at different times of the year. Most of the water that we use for spraying is from rainwater collected from roofs and springs. A high proportion of the electric that we use is generated from a purpose built Solar Barn that was designed to capture the most amount of sunlight as well as be efficient for the loading of grain in and out.

Visits

As a LEAF Demonstration Farm, we host visits for a wide range of groups interested in agricultural production. We have regular visits from Writtle College looking at how our farming system works using IFM, Precision Farming and other modern techniques. We also host regular primary school visits, farmer discussion groups and other smaller groups interested in seeing what different methods we use.



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.