



MEDIA RELEASE

Industry calls for move to circular agriculture at LEAF Conference

Leading thinkers from the food and farming industries came together to debate circular agriculture and the part this has to play in the future of sustainable farming at the LEAF Annual Conference in London on Friday 15th November. The event discussed the need for a circular economy framework in driving sustainability and regenerating natural systems and how farming systems, such as LEAF's Integrated Farm Management (IFM) can be a strong foundation for delivering circular agriculture.

Hosted at Barclays in Canary Wharf and chaired by Environment and Rural Affairs Broadcaster, Tom Heap, the event explored the need for a circular framework to agriculture. Speakers including representatives from the Food Foundation, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the Royal Institute of International Affairs and the farming industry spoke passionately about the circular economy model and how it is challenging resource efficiency and providing a real opportunity to protect our planet, economy, health and wellbeing and energy systems.

Caroline Drummond, LEAF Chief Executive backs a move to a more circular economy: "With climate change and the growing pressure on our natural resources, we as an industry, must rethink, redesign and reimagine our food and farming systems. Radical thinking is required towards a more circular framework if we are to improve sustainability, efficiency and drive a more circular economy. As an organisation, we strive to support farmers through the practice of circular systems, like Integrated Farm Management, so they can be more efficient in resource use and waste reduction in the future. We need a new economy that recognises and rewards all the environmental goods and services that farmers deliver."

Anna Taylor, Executive Director at The Food Foundation led the call to action for the industry to join the conversation on the future of our food system: "The National Food Strategy is all about protecting our future food system. Currently we have a linear approach to global food production increasing at a faster rate than the population and land use for agriculture, now is the time for us to act. LEAF's work and the framework of IFM has already provided a very effective foundation on which to address many

of the challenges we are currently facing, however the entire industry must get involved if we are going to make our food system future fit.”

Emma Chow of Ellen MacArthur Foundation highlighted how precious our resources are: “We are seeing soil degradation and damage to our waterways. We are running down our finite resources. Circular Economy is all about working in new ways, redesigning business models and thinking. All of us have a role to play in this transition to make the necessary changes. For example, 72 per cent of land in the UK is dedicated to farmland and if 16 per cent of that was converted to agroforestry, then we’d become carbon net zero by 2050.”

Tim Heddema, Agriculture Counsellor for Embassy of the Netherlands provided a useful insight into how circular agriculture has been put into practice in the Netherlands. An overview that was warmly welcomed by other delegates, receiving a special mention from attendees

The conference included three case studies on Circular Agriculture in practice, presented by three LEAF Demonstration farmers. Andrew Francis, Farms Director at Elveden Farms explained how Integrated Farm Management is enabling the business to be future ready: “Today we do the very best job we can using the best tools, people and technology available to us. But we recognise that tomorrow we must strive to do it differently. Integrated Farm Management helps us understand what we are trying to combine and why - four key pillars are the bedrock of the Elveden Farming business - people, water, soil, customers.”

LEAF is building towards some key milestones, and with this in mind Philip Wynn, LEAF Chairman, gave delegates a flavour of how the organisation are planning for the future, whilst encouraging the industry to have their say to help shape this ambitious 10 year strategy: “As LEAF heads towards its 30th anniversary in 2021, we are launching a 10-year strategy that will be clearly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Throughout this period of transformational change for food and farming, LEAF will be instrumental in the facilitation of this change. A 6-week consultation period about LEAF Strategy (2021-2031) opens today and we want to hear from everyone across the industry. The new strategic plan will be launched at next year's LEAF Annual Conference.”

If you would like to take part in the public consultation on the LEAF Strategy then, you can do so by visiting: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/TLRDPC>

Speaker presentations, photographs and commentary from the event are available <https://leafuk.org/news-and-media/events/leaf-annual-conference-2019-circular-agriculture-transforming-performance-in-a-circular-economy>

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Editors' Notes:

- **LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming)** is a leading organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming. LEAF works 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** promotes **Integrated Farm Management (IFM)**, a whole farm business approach that uses the best of modern technology and traditional methods to deliver more sustainable farming. IFM is made up of nine sections, which together address the entire farm business. These include soil and water management, pollution control, crop health and protection, animal welfare, community engagement, energy efficiency and landscape and nature conservation.
- **The LEAF Marque** is a leading global assurance system recognising more sustainably farmed products. It is underpinned by the sustainable farming principles of IFM. **LEAF Marque** certified businesses are independently verified against the LEAF Marque Standard.
- The LEAF Network includes **LEAF Demonstration Farms** – commercial farms in England and Scotland, which show the beneficial practices of IFM to a broad range of audiences, through organised visits. They communicate an understanding of IFM to encourage uptake by farmers, support from the industry and political awareness of sustainable food and farming. The LEAF Network also includes **LEAF Innovation Centres** – research organisations from across the UK whose work supports the research, evidence, development and promotion of IFM.

- **LEAF Education** builds on the work of FACE (Farming and Countryside Education) following its merger with LEAF in July 2017. It works to inspire future generations about farming, food and the countryside. It manages a number of industry and educational initiatives, including FaceTime a Farmer, Access to Farms, CEVAS (Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme), Countryside Classroom, Chef on the Farm and LEAF Open Farm School Days.
- **LEAF Education** provides teachers with curriculum focused training, tools and resources to help them deliver high-quality learning experiences about farming. It also helps farmers navigate the world of education and supports them in delivering inspiring and engaging on-farm and in-classroom activities.
- **LEAF** manages **Open Farm Sunday**, the farming industry's annual open day when farmers open their gates and welcome people onto their farms to discover the world of farming.

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