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## LEAF Marque Assurance Programme

It is important that the integrity of the LEAF Marque Standard is upheld therefore the LEAF Marque System has an Assurance Programme to ensure this. This document outlines the LEAF Marque Assurance Programme.

LEAF is a full member of the ISEAL Alliance and this enables LEAF Marque to be more credible. The ISEAL Assurance Code provides a framework for assurance that supports standards systems to achieve their social and environmental objectives and to improve the effectiveness of their assurance models. To achieve this purpose, the Assurance Code sets out minimum criteria for implementation of the assurance process while also recognising that different assurance models can be effective for different purposes. The Assurance Code builds on a set of principles for effective assurance and describes how these principles are applied in practice.

### 1. General Overview

1.1 LEAF is responsible for the implementation of the LEAF Marque System and therefore the LEAF Marque Assurance Programme.

1.2 The LEAF Marque System applies to the LEAF Marque Standard, LEAF's only Standard. LEAF Marque Standard version 14.1 is effective until 31st December 2019.

1.3 LEAF Marque certification is third party verified by LEAF Marque approved Certification Bodies (CBs). All LEAF Marque approved CBs must be accredited to ISO 17065 for the relevant baseline schemes by an Accreditation Body (AB) which is part of either the European Accreditation (EA), Multilateral Agreement (MLA) on product certification, or members of International Accreditation Forum (IAF) which have been subject to a peer review in the field of product certification and have a positive recommendation in its report e.g. UKAS and DAKKS.

1.4 All LEAF Marque inspections are carried out on an annual basis on-farm, by LEAF Marque approved CBs.

1.5 All ABs carrying out accreditation of LEAF Marque CBs must be accredited to ISO 17011.

1.6 LEAF Marque have implemented an Assurance Oversight Programme to monitor and review the activities of the CBs and ABs delivering the LEAF Marque System.

### 2. Risk Management

2.1 LEAF Marque has identified its risks to assurance and it has a strategy to improve risk management practices and guidance.

2.2 The LEAF Marque Risks to Assurance documents how LEAF Marque is addressing the risks to the integrity of the assurance system.

2.3 The LEAF Marque Standard is independently verified by accredited third party certification bodies which addresses many of the potential risks.



2.4 The LEAF Marque Risks to Assurance includes a documented risk analysis that identifies risks and defines management strategies for each one. Risk management is used in different circumstances following a similar sequence of activities: identify and assess the risks and risk control measures, implement risk controls and review the results.

2.5 LEAF Marque has a Certification Body Licence Agreement (LMC8) with each CB that binds them into a contractual relationship which addresses certain risk issues / obligations etc. for both parties.

2.6 LEAF Marque will continue to develop its approach to risk management to minimise the risk element thus seeking to improve our approach to risks within the assurance system.

2.7 Using the LEAF Marque Risks to Assurance document as a basis, risk is proactively (annually) and dynamically assessed as there are numerous influences on the Charity objectives.

### **3. Conflict of Interest**

3.1 All members of LEAF Board, LEAF Marque Board and LEAF Marque Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) must announce any conflicts of interest at the beginning of all meetings. Other members of the meetings should take account of any conflicts of interest raised when considering opinions.

3.2 CBs that attend the LEAF Marque TAC meetings do so as permanent observers and as such do not have any voting rights.

3.3 Under ISO 17065 requirements, there is strict guidance on how a CB manages any conflict of interest amongst its clients' business and inspectors. If a conflict of interest does exist, the requirement under ISO 17065 is to resolve it so as not to adversely influence the activities of the CB.

### **4. LEAF Marque Certification Bodies and Personnel Competence**

4.1 Inspectors need to be able to use their judgement to come to an efficient and effective understanding of a producer's performance. Similarly, individuals responsible for audit reviews and decisions also need to be competent in their responsibilities. LEAF Marque recognises that of the strategies to mitigate the risks of non-conformity, having competent inspectors is one of the most important.

4.2 All LEAF Marque approved CBs must comply with LEAF Marque CB requirements.

4.2.1 These include: farm assurance (food safety / quality auditing) training (for both food systems and LEAF Marque) and experience, administrative capacity, IT competence with data requirements, and accreditation to ISO 17065. This will include on-site witness audits, by lead auditors, to evaluate the performance of auditors. Each CB will have in place a procedure to deal with poor performance.

4.2.2 As part of the application process for becoming a LEAF Marque approved CB, the supporting evidence must include detail of personnel and their responsibility with the organisation; their qualifications (including CVs) and experience; and the quality manual (or equivalent management system documentation).

4.2.3 All auditors and other relevant staff carrying out activities concerning the LEAF Marque System must receive initial training. Their competency must be maintained through the completion of regular training on an on-going basis (at least annually) and include on the job training and witnessing.



#### 4.3 Certification Bodies must have competent personnel.

4.3.1 As all LEAF Marque approved CBs are accredited to ISO 17065, they will be meeting the requirements within ISO 17065 which refer to all personnel being competent. Inspections of CBs by an AB against ISO 17065 includes witnessed audits on site to ensure that inspectors are compliant.

4.3.2 To ensure competence to inspect and certify farms against the LEAF Marque Standard, additional training is required. At least one lead auditor or in-house trainer, responsible for LEAF Marque certification, from each CB must satisfactorily attend the LEAF Marque IFM and CB Training Course. The in-house trainer must then disseminate the training within the CB. At the completion of the LEAF Marque IFM and CB Training Course there is no formal examination but the course deals with each control point in detail plus a specific section for CB scheme managers, in-house trainers and auditors so that they can address any specific queries and learn about the LEAF data management system for assurance and certification. This forms part of an informal process of evaluation and relationship building with the assurance personnel.

4.3.3 CBs must be aware of all revisions to the LEAF Marque Standard and updates to any guidance and rules. Under the terms of the LEAF Marque Certification Body Licence Application, it is essential that the certification body continues to abide by its requirements.

#### 4.4 CBs inform LEAF of new inspectors and trainings as appropriate.

#### 4.5 A list of current LEAF Marque approved CBs can be found on the LEAF website<sup>1</sup>

### 5. LEAF Marque Producers and the Assessment Process

5.1 New LEAF Marque producers must complete the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review, register with a CB and be compliant with the LEAF Marque Standard. New LEAF Marque producers are accepted onto the LEAF Marque System via an application to their approved CB.

5.2 Once a producer is accepted to LEAF Marque, they will receive an annual on-farm audit from a LEAF Marque approved CB.

5.2.1 The auditor from the CB will visit the producer on one occasion during the year and review the producer's performance against each control point in the LEAF Marque Standard.

5.2.2 LEAF Marque inspections should take place annually, either at the same time as the baseline schemes, or as a stand-alone inspection. The LEAF Marque Standard is additional and complementary to other farm assurance schemes (including Red Tractor Assurance, GLOBALG.A.P.).

5.2.3 In most cases, audits are carried out by individuals.

5.3 LEAF Marque certification covers the whole farm businesses, including sites and fields managed centrally. LEAF Marque certification applies to products from the whole farm business and is NOT limited to defined crops or enterprises within the business.

5.3.1 The LEAF Marque Standard is applied to all LEAF Marque audits regardless of country and enterprise.

5.3.2 LEAF Marque certified businesses are expected to comply with all relevant regulatory requirements, existing national and/or international laws and regulations.

5.3.3 Some Control Points may be Non-Applicable (N/A) as determined within the Standard.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://leafuk.org/farming/leaf-marque/certification-partners>



5.3.4 LEAF Marque certification requires the business to fully comply with all the Essential (E) Control Points within the Standard.

5.3.5 Compliance with the Recommended (R) Control Points is preferable. They may become Essential Control Points in the future.

5.3.6 All new LEAF Marque members have 3 months to resolve any non-conformance(s) raised.

5.3.7 Re-certifying businesses have 28 days to resolve any non-conformance(s) raised.

5.3.8 After the inspection visit, the certification body keeps in contact with the producer to ensure any Corrective Evidence (CE) is sent in to close non-conformance(s).

5.3.9 Other than Corrective Evidence, all evidence is gathered by the auditor when on-farm. Some details, such as completion of the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review, can also be checked electronically by the CB directly with LEAF.

5.3.10 The LEAF Marque Standard defines the decision-making mechanism and provides specific direction on how to determine levels of non-conformity and this is applied consistently. All Essential (E) control points must be complied with unless it is not applicable (N/A) for certification.

5.3.11 All the inspections are carried out on an annual basis for all farms therefore LEAF Marque does not conduct a risk-based approach at certificate level.

5.3.12 Sampling is only conducted for a LEAF Producer Group inspection via the square root method (see 5.4 LEAF Producer Groups).

5.3.13 Auditors are not permitted to give advice to producers during their audit. Auditors are permitted to share information to ensure that businesses understand the LEAF Marque Standard.

5.3.14 CBs ensure that they have qualified auditors who can communicate effectively in different countries using the most appropriate language e.g. in Spain – Spanish auditors. The English version of the LEAF Marque Standard is the definitive version and therefore any issues of interpretation from other translations need to be referred to the English version. Currently, the other language translations available are French, Italian and Spanish. If a translator is used at an audit, the CBs are required to only use translators who are independent from the business being inspected.

5.4 For LEAF Producer Groups, the process is very similar with annual, third party inspections against the LEAF Marque Standard.

5.4.1 A LEAF Producer Group is a group of producers (with their respective production locations) who either hold a GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2 certificate or who will be inspected as a GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2 in a joint inspection.

5.4.2 A LEAF Producer Group is required to have in place a rigorous internal Quality Management System (QMS) which ensures that all members of the group are meeting the requirements of the LEAF Marque Standard.

5.4.3 At a minimum, the square root of the total number of producers in the LEAF Producer Group must be inspected. This should take into account such items as crops grown, location from the main site, or LEAF Producer Group size of unit, internal auditor(s) and external influences.

5.4.4 All CBs that inspect LEAF Producer Groups have access to the LEAF Marque document, 'LEAF Marque certification of "LEAF Producer Groups" Quality Management System requirements v.1.1 November 2017'. The process for LEAF Producer Groups follows the process for inspections for GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2.

5.4.5 The LEAF Producer Group must hold a certificate for GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2 prior to being inspected to LEAF Marque or have a joint GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2 and LEAF Marque Inspection. Producers who hold their own GLOBALG.A.P. certificates cannot be certified under a LEAF Producer Group certificate; they need their own LEAF Marque certificate.



- 5.4.6 There should only be one quality management system that delivers GLOBALG.A.P. certification and LEAF Marque certification within the LEAF Producer Group.
- 5.4.7 The LEAF Producer Group may be a subset of a larger GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2 group. The LEAF Producer Group applies for a LEAF Marque Producer Group certificate to a CB approved to carry out certifications to the LEAF Marque Standard.

## 6. LEAF Marque Certificates

6.1 All LEAF Marque certificates must include the following: LEAF Marque membership number; LEAF Marque Standard Scope number; Name of Business; Date of Issue; Valid From date; Valid Until date; Signature of CB and CB details / logo.

6.2 LEAF Marque certificates are valid if their status is 'Full'. An invalid LEAF Marque certificate could be 'Suspended' or 'Withdrawn'.

6.2.1 Full: Inspected and certified as fully compliant to the LEAF Marque Standard

6.2.2 Suspended: An inspection of a re-certifying business has found non-conformances of Essential control points and these have not been cleared within 28 days. Suspended growers must re-apply and be re-inspected.

6.2.3 Withdrawn: Certificate has been withdrawn through membership being closed and the member is no longer part of the LEAF Marque System.

6.3 The status of a LEAF Marque certificate can be immediately changed to 'Suspended', by the CB, when it is necessary to prevent the Standard System from being brought into disrepute by e.g. criminal proceedings against a business; and/or if there is a food safety issue.

6.4 LEAF Marque certificates are issued by CBs to the producer.

6.5 The certificate is valid for one year. It outlines the start and end date and is for the whole farm and not just for specific products.

6.6 With reference to public communication of certificates, LEAF Marque publishes a list of LEAF Marque certified businesses through the LEAF website<sup>2</sup>

## 7. Oversight and Accreditation Bodies

7.1 For LEAF Marque, the Oversight Programme describes the approach implemented to monitor and review the activities of the CBs and ABs delivering the LEAF Marque System. The LEAF Marque Secretariat provides the LEAF Marque Board Member(s) with responsibility for oversight with the results of the CB approval process and the CB monitoring programme. The LEAF Marque Secretariat also works with the LEAF Marque Board Member(s) who have responsibility for oversight, to put forward recommendations to the LEAF Marque Board for CB approvals, re-approvals and possible sanctions.

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<sup>2</sup><https://leafuk.org/farming/leaf-marque/leaf-marque-documents-and-downloads>



7.2 LEAF Marque has a Certification Body Licence Agreement (LMC8) with all its CBs to ensure that there is a formal contract between the two parties.

7.2.1 LEAF Marque ensure that the competence and consistent performance of each CB is periodically reviewed. LEAF Marque has specified the approach to be used in the Oversight Programme, ensuring that the mechanism is independent of the CBs being assessed.

7.2.2 LEAF Marque requires that all its CBs conform to the requirements of ISO 17065 and this is documented in the LEAF Marque Certification Body Licence Agreement (LMC8).

7.2.3 LEAF Marque can liaise with ABs and CBs to ensure understanding of the requirements of ISO 17065 is maintained.

7.3 LEAF Marque has an oversight programme within the assurance system to monitor and review the activities of the CBs delivering the LEAF Marque System and the requirements for ABs. The elements of the programme are:

7.3.1 The requirements for CB personnel involved with the delivery of the LEAF Marque System in terms of competence, initial and ongoing training.

7.3.2 The annual CB Performance Monitoring process and key performance indicators (KPIs) including compliance with the LEAF Marque Certification Body Licence Agreement (LMC8), continued accreditation to ISO 17065, adherence to certification timescales, accurate data input to the Certify Online Portal for CBs, evaluation of sample audit reports and documents associated with the certification process, producer feedback, complaints and issue management and communication.

7.3.3 The performance classification of each CB and the process for CB Re-Approval

7.3.4 The process for new CB Application and Approval

7.3.5 AB Requirements

7.3.6 The possible sanctions imposed where there is evidence a CB is not following LEAF Marque normative documents, procedures, the results of the CB monitoring programme or clauses of the signed Licence Agreement.

This is part of the system used to ensure the integrity, transparency and credibility of the LEAF Marque System.

## 8. Ongoing Scrutiny

8.1 LEAF Marque has a system in place to deal with any infringement of the LEAF Marque System.

8.1.1 LEAF and LEAF Marque take scrutiny and market surveillance very seriously as it is important to uphold the reputation of LEAF Marque within the supply chain.

8.1.2 The LEAF Marque logo has a trade mark registration in the UK and Europe which affords certain protection against misuse of the logo.

8.1.3 LEAF is currently re-developing its claims and labelling policy across all its activity and subsequent to this, plans to consider the need for further scrutiny.

8.1.4 For certified businesses, LEAF Marque holds the history of all LEAF Marque inspections and certification numbers on the LEAF Marque database. This allows interested stakeholders to verify certification information directly.

8.1.5 If there are any issues around fraudulent claims, stakeholders can contact LEAF by phone or email or on the LEAF website (through an enquiry<sup>3</sup> and/or as a complaint<sup>4</sup>).

8.1.6 Google Analytics also helps us to monitor any online activity with logo misuse.

8.1.7 LEAF Marque also undertakes an informal review of member websites to check for LEAF Marque certification claims.

<sup>3</sup> <https://leafuk.org/about-leaf/contact>

<sup>4</sup> <https://leafuk.org/farming/leaf-marque/feedback>



8.1.8 LEAF will use the learning from these feedback routes and feed into reviews of claims and labelling guidance and rules for logo use and other areas of the Assurance System as required.

## 8.2 Complaints and Appeals

8.2.1 If there are any issues around fraudulent claims, stakeholders can contact LEAF by phone or email or on the LEAF website (through an enquiry<sup>5</sup> and/or as a complaint<sup>6</sup>). Where appropriate, LEAF will record any complaints and aim to try and resolve the complaint, in an impartial manner, as quickly as possible upon receipt. If LEAF cannot resolve the complaint immediately, LEAF will send an acknowledgement after receiving the complaint and respond to it as soon as possible thereafter. Where a complaint needs more time e.g. where more detail or investigation is required, the LEAF will give an expected date of resolution. Under ISO 17065 all certification bodies are required to have a formal complaints procedure.

8.2.2 Within the LEAF Marque Certification Standard System Rules (LMC5), there is an appeal process that LEAF Marque producers can follow if they have an issue with the CB.

## 9. Stakeholder Engagement

9.1 Stakeholder engagement is central to all LEAF activities. In addition to the LEAF Marque Technical Advisory Committee, LEAF engages with a range of stakeholders. Additionally, stakeholders can engage through the complaints procedure<sup>7</sup>. LEAF Marque Stakeholders have been mapped (see LEAF Marque Stakeholder Mapping<sup>8</sup> for further detail).

## 10. System Review

10.1 LEAF Marque has a regular programme of review. This is at minimum every 5 years. The review may be conducted more frequently if required as a result of a particular issue raised or at the request of the LEAF Marque Board.

10.2 The LEAF Marque Assurance Programme review for 2018 is ongoing.

10.3 LEAF Marque informs all its CBs and producers of any changes to its Assurance Programme via changes to the published LEAF Marque Standard and/or through email communication.

10.4 Any significant changes to any aspect of the Assurance Programme must be approved by the LEAF Marque Board considering recommendations from the LEAF Marque TAC.

## 11. Version History

Version	Issue Date and Reason for Change
1	November 2016
2	April 2017
3	July 2018

<sup>5</sup> <https://leafuk.org/about-leaf/contact>

<sup>6</sup> <https://leafuk.org/farming/leaf-marque/feedback>

<sup>7</sup> <https://leafuk.org/farming/leaf-marque/feedback>

<sup>8</sup> <https://leafuk.org/farming/leaf-marque/feedback>