



LEAF Marque Assurance Programme

The LEAF Marque Assurance Programme states the procedures that ensure the effective delivery of the LEAF Marque System. These procedures ensure that LEAF Marque has a consistent and effective approach that maintains the integrity of the LEAF Marque System.

The LEAF Marque Assurance Programme has been designed in compliance with the requirements of the [ISEAL Assurance Code v2](#). LEAF Marque Ltd is a full member of the [ISEAL Alliance](#), which is the global membership organisation for credible sustainability standards.

The LEAF Marque Assurance Programme is subject to review at a minimum of every 5 years. The review may be conducted more frequently if required following completion of the annual Assurance System Programme Review, in response to an issue raised, or at the request of the LEAF Marque Board. LEAF Marque informs all Certification Bodies (CBs) and LEAF Marque certified businesses of any changes to its Assurance Programme via changes to the published LEAF Marque Standard and/or through email communication. Any significant changes to the Assurance Programme must be approved by the LEAF Marque Board considering recommendations from the LEAF Marque TAC.

1. LEAF Marque System Scope

LEAF is responsible for the implementation of the LEAF Marque System and therefore the LEAF Marque Assurance Programme. The LEAF Marque System is underpinned by the LEAF Marque Standard, which is the only Standard in the LEAF Marque System.

The LEAF Marque Standard has a whole-farm approach and is based on the principles of Integrated Farm Management (IFM). Therefore, LEAF Marque certification enables recognition of those delivering more sustainable food and farming. The LEAF Marque Standard is a global Standard that is additional and complementary to other farm assurance systems, such as Red Tractor Assurance and GLOBALG.A.P.. LEAF Marque reviews the relevant of baseline certification systems, and list those that are approved in the [LEAF Product List](#). It applies to all LEAF Marque audits regardless of country or enterprise, and is reviewed on a regular basis (see the [Standard Setting Procedure](#)). The effective version of the LEAF Marque Standard is available from the [LEAF website](#), and the date effective is published in each version of the Standard.

Any business which is a legal entity is eligible to undertake a LEAF Marque audit. In order to be LEAF Marque certified, the business must achieve compliance with all Essential Control Points within the effective version of the LEAF Marque Standard, unless the business fits the criteria for Not-Applicable. Compliance with Recommended Control Points is preferable and may become Essential Control Points in the future, but they are not a requirement for LEAF Marque certification.

Stakeholder engagement is central to all LEAF activities, including development of the LEAF Marque System. Stakeholders are able to provide comment on the LEAF Marque System by contacting info@leafmarque.com.

Relevant Document:

- [Standard Setting Procedure](#)
- [LEAF Product List](#)



2. Assurance Providers

LEAF Marque certification is third party verified by LEAF Marque approved CBs. CBs must apply to be a LEAF Marque approved CB by completing the [Certification Body Application Form](#). The application process involves agreement to Certification Body Requirements and the Certification Body Licence Agreement, which includes:

- Maintenance of ISO 17065 accreditation against relevant baseline certifications systems.
- Extension of scope of ISO 17065 accreditation for LEAF Marque within 18 months of certification commencing of their first LEAF Marque audit. Following this, extension of scope following revision to the LEAF Marque Standard must be obtained within 9 months of the first LEAF Marque audit against the new version
- Accreditation delivered by an Accreditation Body (AB) that is a 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.
- Completion of all compulsory training delivered by LEAF Marque, and delivery of in-house training to ensure the competency of auditors.
- Delivery of LEAF Marque certification in accordance with procedural requirements.

A member of the LEAF Marque secretariat reviews the application form and supporting evidence such as the CBs accreditation certificate(s), scheme manager qualifications, evidence of being a legally incorporated entity, list of personnel, and the quality manual (or equivalent management system documentation). Once a CBs eligibility is confirmed, the CB signs the Certification Body Licence Agreement, and the CB is recommended to the LEAF Marque Board for approval.

2.1 Staff Competency

CBs are responsible for ensuring auditors and other relevant staff carrying out activities concerning LEAF Marque are qualified and meet the requirements for training and maintenance of competency. In addition to providing in-house training, CBs must engage with training delivered by LEAF Marque, completing training modules at least annually. These requirements are stated in the Certification Body Licence Agreement and Certification Body Requirements document.

CBs are responsible for ensuring they have qualified auditors who can communicate using the most appropriate language. 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, translations of the LEAF Marque Standard are available in French, Italian, and Spanish. If a translator is used during an audit, CBs are required to use translators who are independent from the business, and the name and affiliation of these experts must be included in the audit report.

Certification decisions are not made by the individual who delivered the LEAF Marque audit. The certification decision maker is another member of CB staff who is appropriately trained and able to make an impartial decision.

Training records for all CB staff must be kept and regularly updated. Training records are reviewed during Oversight Assessments.



2.2 Appeals and Complaints

All CBs have a formal complaints procedure as required by their ISO 17065 accreditation. In addition, the LEAF Marque System Rules describes the procedure for appeals from LEAF Marque certified businesses, for where an appeal is not satisfactorily resolved by the CB, or beyond the scope of the CB.

Relevant Documents:

- Certification Body Licence Agreement
- Certification Body Requirements
- [LEAF Marque System Rules](#)
- [Certification Body Application Form](#)

3. LEAF Marque certification process

3.1. Individual businesses

Businesses apply for LEAF Marque certification through a LEAF Marque approved CB. CBs are responsible for creating and renewing LEAF Marque membership, which is determined by the contract between the CB and client. LEAF Marque membership is independent of LEAF Marque certification and must be renewed annually.

CBs charge their clients for the cost of the audit and for other certification services provided. As this fee is variable depending on the size and complexity of the business, and the number of baseline certification systems being audited, the CB is responsible for charging clients a reasonable fee.

LEAF Marque audits are completed on an annual basis by a LEAF Marque approved CB. CBs and their clients are together responsible for scheduling a LEAF Marque audit. LEAF Marque audits can take place either at the same time as baseline certification systems, or as a stand-alone audit.

CBs are responsible for calculating the time needed to conduct a LEAF Marque audit. This methodology is made available to LEAF Marque on request and includes consideration of:

- Size, number and geography of the site, complexity of business, any other baseline certifications systems being assessed as part of a joint audit.
- Assignment of time for on-site office-based audit and on-site non-office-based audit.
- Consideration of appropriate duration of audits for LEAF Producer Groups.

The LEAF Marque certification cycle runs on an annual basis, but if the CB requires to see a business' operations at different times of year, the audit can take place 4 months prior to or after the certificate 'valid to' date. The certification cycle would remain the same regardless of the audit date. If the business wishes to align their LEAF Marque baseline certification system certification cycle, the LEAF Marque audit can take place at any point prior to the 'valid to' date in order to enable this. The business can have different certification cycles for different certification systems.

CBs assign an auditor to undertake the LEAF Marque audit, and in most cases, audits are completed by a single individual. During an audit, the auditor completes an audit report which outlines the evidence observed for each Control Point. LEAF Marque certification applies to the whole farm business, and the auditor visits the site to assess compliance with all Control Points in the LEAF



Marque Standard. If a Control Point states a Not-Applicable (N/A) compliance option, the auditor will assess whether the criteria stated is met. Observational, verbal, and documentation evidence is reviewed as is appropriate to the Control Point and business. Other than corrective evidence or information accessible from Certify Online (for example, assessing completion of the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review), all evidence is gathered by the auditor during the audit.

Auditors are not permitted to give advice to businesses during an audit. However, they are permitted to share information to ensure that businesses understand the LEAF Marque Standard.

Once the audit is completed, auditors will inform the business of any non-conformances (NCs) raised. Within 7 days of the audit, the CB inputs information on the conformance level against each Control Point in the LEAF Marque Standard onto Certify Online. The business must send corrective evidence for each NC to the CB within the required time:

- New LEAF Marque members have 3 months to resolve NCs
- Re-certifying businesses have 28 days to resolve NCs

Certification decisions are independent. They are made by a qualified member of CB staff who is able to make an impartial decision based on the audit report and any additional evidence as necessary. The LEAF Marque Standard defines the required levels of conformity to ensure certification decisions are applied consistently. Compliance with all Essential Control Points is necessary for LEAF Marque certification to be awarded, unless the criteria for N/A is met. Within 7 days of the certification decision, the CB uploads the certificate information onto Certify Online.

LEAF Marque does not conduct a risk-based approach at certificate level; all LEAF Marque certified businesses are audited on an annual basis. Sampling is only conducted for a LEAF Producer Group audits, via the square root method (see 3.2 LEAF Producer Groups).

3.2 Producer Groups

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. “LEAF Producer Group” signifies the operator of the Quality Management System (QMS). This is the legal entity which is certified. 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.

For LEAF Producer Groups, the audit process is very similar to that of individual businesses, involving an annual, third party audit against the LEAF Marque Standard by a LEAF Marque approved CB. The audit process corresponds with that of GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2, and the appropriate GLOBALG.A.P. regulations must also be met.

Prior to the audit, the CB reviews the LEAF Producer Groups QMS, against the requirements defined in the [LEAF Marque Certification of “LEAF Producer Groups” Quality Management System \(QMS\)](#). CBs operate a sampling protocol for auditing LEAF Producer Groups. At a minimum, the square root of the total number of producers in the LEAF Producer Group is audited. The sample group takes into account such items as crops grown, location from the main site, size of unit, internal auditor(s) and external influences. If the producers in the LEAF Producer Group are a subset of a larger group, the calculation is based on the number in the LEAF Producer Group.



3.3 LEAF Marque Protocols

LEAF Marque may release protocols that adapt the certification process in response to unforeseen events that impact on the LEAF Marque System, or the safety of those involved. Any protocol will state the date in which it is effective, who it is relevant to, and the amended procedure that ensure the continued robustness of LEAF Marque audits. Such protocols can include procedures to facilitate remote auditing, which would include auditors assessing documentary evidence prior to an audit, and audits taking place via video call technologies.

Relevant Documents:

- Certification Body Licence Agreement
- Certification Body Requirements
- [LEAF Marque System Rules](#)
- [“LEAF Producer Groups” Quality Management System \(QMS\) Requirements.](#)

4. LEAF Marque certificates

CBs are responsible for issuing certificates. A positive certification decision follows an audit that identified compliance with all Essential Control Points in the LEAF Marque Standard, unless the criteria for N/A is met.

LEAF Marque certificates are valid for 12 months and apply to the whole farm business. Information stated on LEAF Marque certificates includes: LEAF Marque number; LEAF Marque Standard Version; Name of Business; Date of Issue; Valid From date; Valid Until date; CB information/signature, and certified products. The [LEAF Product List](#) includes a list of all products eligible for LEAF Marque certification. The only instance in which a business' product is not listed on the LEAF Marque certificate is if it meets the exemption criteria stated in Control Point 1.2. These products must meet the requirements of the LEAF Marque Standard and cannot be sold or marketed as LEAF Marque certified.

CBs are responsible for managing businesses LEAF Marque certificate status. Valid certificates are those that have a 'Full' certification status. Invalid certificate either have 'Suspended' or 'Withdrawn' certification status.

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

Suspended: The business must submit evidence to close a NC or remedy an issue within a deadline set by the CB. If the evidence is insufficient or not received, the status will change to 'Withdrawn'.

Withdrawn: The certificate cannot be reverted to 'Full' and the business must reapply to the CB.

Each CB has the right to refuse, withdraw or amend the certification status of a member when it considers that it is necessary to do so to prevent the LEAF Marque System from being brought into disrepute, or based on information – from audits, surveillance, or any reliable sources – that indicates any of the following:

- The business is not maintaining the requirements of the LEAF Marque Standard
- The business' baseline system certification is suspended or withdrawn
- Any regional or national laws have been broken
- Requirements and legislation requiring food safety have not been achieved
- False or misleading statements were made on application and/or renewal documentation, during an audit or any other communication. This may exclude the business from future membership.



Only businesses with a valid LEAF Marque certificate can claim to be LEAF Marque certified. This can be demonstrated by proof of certificate, confirmation with the CB, or via the LEAF Marque Checker. The LEAF Marque Checker is available to all LEAF Charity members and provides live LEAF Marque certification data.

Relevant Documents:

- [LEAF Marque System Rules](#)
- [LEAF Product List](#)
- Certification Body Licence Agreement

5. LEAF Marque Claims

A LEAF Marque claim is either or both of the following:

- Use of the LEAF Marque logo at point of sale
- A sustainability claim directly referencing LEAF Marque

A LEAF Marque claim can only be made in reference to a product that is LEAF Marque certified. LEAF Marque claims are regulated by LEAF Marque Claims & Labelling (C&L), in which a C&L Licence is needed to make a LEAF Marque Claim. Relevant C&L Licence Holders are either primary suppliers into retailers/food service, or Brand Owners.

All C&L License Holders agree to comply with the [C&L Licence Agreement](#) and the [LEAF Marque Claim Rules](#). This ensures that LEAF Marque claims are made correctly, and that the business has implemented an appropriate traceability system.

Businesses who are not the relevant C&L Licence Holder must comply with the logo use requirements in the [LEAF Style Guidelines](#), as required in the [LEAF Marque System Rules](#).

The information provided in the Licence Agreement enables LEAF Marque to undertake Surveillance of LEAF Marque claims. This involves checks to ensure that Licence Holders:

- Comply with the LEAF Marque Claim Rules
- Products are included in the C&L Licence
- Products making a LEAF Marque claim have valid certification and effective traceability.

The C&L Surveillance strategy is two-fold, including both randomised database checks and 'Secret Shopper' monitoring. Licence Holders agree in the Licence Agreement to facilitate these checks and to provide information to LEAF Marque on request in an agreed timeframe. The information requested will be dependent on the nature of the claim, but can include evidence of: the LEAF Marque claim, traceback checks that demonstrate the product is LEAF Marque certified, and the implementation of a traceability and complaints system. Any business is subject to surveillance checks, which will be calculated on both a risk-based and random basis.

The LEAF Marque logo has a trademark registration in the UK and Europe. This provides additional protection against misuse of the LEAF Marque logo. If there are any issues around fraudulent claims, stakeholders can contact LEAF by phone (+44 (0)2476 413911), email (info@leafmarque.com), or as a [complaint](#).



Relevant Document(s)

- [LEAF Marque Claim Rules](#)
- [LEAF Style Guidelines](#)
- [Claims & Labelling Licence Agreement](#)
- [LEAF Marque System Rules](#)

5. Oversight

LEAF Marque is the Oversight Body which implements the methodology stated in the [LEAF Marque Oversight Programme](#). This programme is part of the approach taken by LEAF Marque to ensure the integrity, transparency, and credibility of the LEAF Marque System. The Oversight Programme involves monitoring and review of all aspects of CB performance and compliance with the Certification Body Licence Agreement. This is reported on an annual basis following completion of an Oversight Assessment. The LEAF Marque Board has overall responsibility for the Oversight Programme and approves CBs or set sanctions following findings of Oversight Assessments.

CBs are dependent on ABs to achieve accreditation. As accreditation is an aspect included in the Oversight Programme, ABs have an important function within this. LEAF Marque delineates responsibility for all aspects of CBs accreditation to ABs, including the undertaking of accreditation assessments for LEAF Marque CBs, authority of accreditation decisions, and ongoing management of CBs accreditation status. This can include both/either ISO 17065 accreditation for baseline certification systems, and/or LEAF Marque. ABs delivery of LEAF Marque accreditation is reviewed in the Oversight Programme, by assessment of CBs compliance with the Certification Body Licence Agreement. The Certification Body Licence Agreement requires that CBs must receive accreditation from an AB that:

- is ISO 17011 accredited
- is part of either the European Accreditation, Multilateral Agreement on Producer Certification, or members of the International Accreditation Forum which have been subject to a peer evaluation in the product certification field and have a positive recommendation in its report.

The requirements within the Licence Agreement ensures that CBs only receive accreditation from ABs that can deliver their services effectively. ISO 17011 acts as proxy evidence for the necessary accreditation attributes.

Relevant Documents:

- LEAF Marque Oversight Programme
- Certification Body Licence Agreement

6. Risk Management

6.1 Risks to Assurance

Risks to Assurance is LEAF Marque's risk management plan. It outlines the process in which risks are calculated and quantified, and mitigation/management strategies identified and reviewed.

On an annual basis, various risk assessment sources are reviewed. This is used to inform updates to the risks identified in the context of the LEAF Marque System. Each risk is assigned a risk category,



based on the probability of occurrence and consequence. The risk category informs the risk management strategy and the timeline of its implementation.

The effectiveness of risk management strategies is reviewed on an annual basis during the LEAF Marque Assurance Programme Review. LEAF Marque will continue to develop its approach to risk management to minimise the risk element.

Risks to Assurance reviews includes consideration of any conflicts of interest or impartiality risks. This includes review of procedures in place to address this, including Terms of Reference for the LEAF Marque Board and LEAF Marque Technical Advisory Committee, and CB adherence with ISO 17056 accreditation.

6.2 Complaints and Reporting

Stakeholders are able to submit complaints or report potential misrepresentation or corruption through a number of means:

- Submit a [complaint](#)
- Respond to post-audit feedback emails, sent after every audit.
- Contact LEAF by phone (+44 (0)2476 413911) or email (info@leafmarque.com),

All complaints follow the [LEAF Complaints Procedure](#), and any issue will be followed-up to ensure appropriate action has been taken.

Relevant Documents:

- LEAF Marque Assurance Programme Review
- Risks to Assurance
- LEAF Marque Board Terms of Reference
- LEAF Marque Technical Advisory Committee Terms of Reference.
- [LEAF Complaints Procedure](#)

7. LEAF Marque Data

LEAF Marque has a variety of governance mechanisms to ensure effective collection, management and analysis of LEAF Marque data. These governance mechanisms were developed in accordance with [ISEAL's Assurance Code of Good Practice](#), which sets out guidelines for achieving effective data management.

Data relevant to the LEAF Marque System is obtained directly from individual members and from CBs. Each source of data or information has been mapped and reviewed to ensure that the appropriate access rights, storage, legal compliance, ownership and management responsibilities are clearly defined and implemented.

Analysis of LEAF Marque data is an important attribute of the LEAF Marque System and forms an integral part of LEAF's Monitoring & Evaluation. Analysis of LEAF Marque data adheres to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018, the [LEAF Marque System Rules](#), LEAF's Data Protection Policy, LEAF's [Privacy Policy](#), and the Certification Body Licence Agreement.



LEAF Marque data is used to:

1) Inform the development of the LEAF Marque System

Information from CBs, Oversight Assessments and stakeholder comments are reviewed by the LEAF Marque secretariat to help inform internal decisions regarding the LEAF Marque System. Performance results from Oversight Assessments may be published in some circumstances. LEAF Marque System developments are also informed by LEAF Sustainable Farming Review data, as progress against metrics indicates the sustainability improvements of members and if the requirements of the LEAF Marque Standard are set at the right level.

2) Recognising progress towards achieving the Intended Impacts of LEAF Marque

A large amount of information has been generated about LEAF's impacts through the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review (formally the self-assessed LEAF Audit), surveys, case studies (with the businesses consent), and stakeholder comments. Data is anonymised and presented in aggregate unless prior consent has been sought from the business. A summary of this analysed data is published in the annual [Global Impacts Report](#). LEAF Marque stakeholders can use the Global Impacts Report to communicate the impact of LEAF Marque to relevant individuals. All data analysis is completed by the LEAF Marque secretariat following the methods described in the [Global Impacts Report Full Appendix](#). LEAF has additional reporting activities as outlined in our [LEAF Public System Report - Impacts Code](#).

3) Demonstrate LEAF Marque certification status

Market recognition for LEAF Marque certification results in industry demand for information regarding LEAF Marque certified businesses. Certification information is accessible by:

- A list of LEAF Marque certified businesses is publicly available on the LEAF Website. Updated biannually.
- LEAF Marque Checker is accessible to LEAF Charity members and provides a database of LEAF Marque certified businesses name, LEAF Marque Number, postcode, certification status, and products. Live data.
- Status Checking, an opt-in service which provides the client with notification of changes to defined data sets.

Relevant Documents:

- [LEAFs Privacy Policy](#)
- M&E Framework
- [LEAF Marque System Rules](#)
- Public System Reports: [Impacts](#) and [Assurance](#)



8. Document Control Procedure

Delivery of the LEAF Marque System is defined in a number of procedures and documents. The procedure or document relevant to each aspect of LEAF Marque Assurance is stated in each section of this document, under '*Relevant Documents*'. The location, revision schedule, and individual responsible for management of this document is recorded in the LEAF Marque Document Control Procedure.

LEAF Marque ensures that the relevant stakeholders are promptly informed following updates to documents or procedures. LEAF Marque regularly communicates updates to CBs and ABs, and LEAF Marque certified businesses are informed directly by email or LEAF's social media platforms of any changes to the LEAF Marque System.

Relevant Documents:

- LEAF Marque Oversight Programme
- Certification Body Licence Agreement
- LEAF Marque Document Control Procedure

Version History	Date
Version 1	November 2016
Version 2	April 2017
Version 3	July 2018
Version 4	July 2020