



LEAF Marque Assurance System Public System Report

LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) Marque is an environmental assurance system recognising more sustainably* farmed products. It is based on LEAF's Integrated Farm Management (IFM) principles. All LEAF Marque certified farms are independently inspected.

Integrated Farm Management

Integrated Farm Management (IFM) is a whole farm business approach that delivers sustainable* farming. IFM uses the best of modern technology and traditional methods to deliver prosperous farming that enriches the environment and engages local communities.

*"LEAF's sustainable farming - is an approach that works to deliver a site-specific farming system that supports the integration of and needs of the environment, farm economic viability and society over the long term".





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1. Assurance System Structure

The LEAF Marque Assurance System applies to the LEAF Marque Standard, LEAF's only Standard. LEAF Marque Standard version 14.1 is effective until 31st December 2019. The LEAF Marque Standard is an established global environmental standard. The LEAF Marque Standard is additional and complementary to other farm assurance schemes (including Red Tractor Assurance for Farms, GLOBALG.A.P Integrated Farm Assurance (I.F.A)).

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 certified by an Accreditation Body (AB). The AB must be 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 evaluation in the product certification field and have a positive recommendation in its report. For example, [UKAS¹](https://www.ukas.com/), [DAKKS²](https://www.dakks.de/en/startseite).

The CB must achieve accreditation to ISO 17065 through extension of scope for the LEAF Marque System within 18 months of the date of commencing LEAF Marque certifications or the issue of 30 certificates if this occurs within 18 months. Failure to do so entitles LEAF Marque to terminate the LEAF Marque Certification Body Licence Agreement (LMC8).

CBs must initially apply to LEAF Marque, providing supporting evidence, to be considered as a LEAF Marque approved CB. The LEAF Marque Secretariat assess all applications and make recommendation to the LEAF Marque Board who make the final decision.

All LEAF Marque approved CBs sign a LEAF Marque Certification Body Licence Agreement (LMC8) with LEAF Marque. This requires the CB to follow the requirements and obligations of LEAF Marque for CBs including training.

All LEAF Marque certificates are issued by individual CBs to producers who have met the requirements of the LEAF Marque Standard following annual on-farm audit. Where producers have non-conformances, a certificate will be issued if the CB is satisfied by all corrective evidence supplied within the timescale set out in the LEAF Marque Certification Standard System Rules (LMC5). The results of the audit and detail of certificates issued are sent to LEAF Marque either via a data feed or via the Certify Online Portal. Through an intranet system, there is daily tracking of certification decisions.

¹ <https://www.ukas.com/>

² <https://www.dakks.de/en/startseite>



A list of the approved LEAF Marque CBs is provided on the LEAF website³

LEAF Marque has identified its risks to assurance and it has a strategy to improve risk management practices and guidance. The Certification Body Licence Agreement (LMC8) binds CBs into a contractual relationship which addresses certain risk issues and obligations for both parties. LEAF Marque aims to continually improve their approach to risk in the Assurance System through regular review (annually and dynamically) of the risks and implementation of actions identified to manage these risks.

Stakeholder engagement is central to all LEAF Marque 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.

LEAF has a complaints procedure in place to deal with complaints submitted from anyone, at any time, about LEAF Marque certification and/or other areas. The complaints form can be found on the [LEAF website](#)⁴. Each LEAF Marque approved CB, under accreditation requirements, must also have a complaints procedure.

2. Personnel Competence

All LEAF Marque approved CBs must comply with LEAF Marque CB requirements. 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 for 'Conformity assessment -- Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services'. ISO17065 addresses the need for auditors and certifiers to be competent in delivering audits to Standards. 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.

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

CBs inform LEAF Marque of new auditors and trainings as appropriate.

To ensure competence to inspect and certify farms against the LEAF Marque Standard, additional training is required. At least one in-house trainer, responsible for LEAF Marque certification, from each CB must satisfactorily attend a LEAF Marque IFM & 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, certification decision makers 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.

Further to this, 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 Agreement (LMC8), it is essential that the CB continues to abide by its requirements.

³ <https://leafuk.org/farming/leaf-marque/certification-partners>

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



3. Assessment

All LEAF Marque audits are conducted by LEAF Marque approved and externally accredited third-party CBs on an annual basis on-farm for every certificate issued. This will include the following types of verification of the business:

- Verbal - e.g. interview with business staff and/or management and/or contractors.
- Observe - e.g. observation of activities, practices and environment.
- Record - e.g. a printed or electronic copy of a record or document.

In most cases, audits are carried out by individuals.

The time required to conduct an audit is calculated by the CB taking in to consideration the size of the site, number and geographical location of the sites, complexity of the business and any other baseline schemes being inspected as part of a joint audit. LEAF Marque requires that baseline systems around food-safety are held by the business also and therefore whilst LEAF Marque audits can be carried out as stand-alone audits, they often occur in conjunction with other audits (e.g. Red Tractor Assurance, GLOBALG.A.P.).

There is requirement within the accreditation process prohibiting all CBs from providing consultancy services and identifying any conflicts of interest. Auditors are permitted to sharing information to ensure that businesses understand the LEAF Marque Standard.

Each LEAF Marque producer must complete a self-assessed LEAF Sustainable Farming Review every year. They must have the performance profile and their targets for action; this can be printed from the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review as well as a Record of Completion. LEAF Producer Groups need to complete one LEAF Sustainable Farming Review for their LEAF Producer Group.

LEAF Marque certification covers the whole farm business, 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.

Each Control Point within the LEAF Marque Standard is classified as either:

- **Essential (E)** – all certified businesses must comply with ALL Essential Control Points.
- **Recommended (R)** – compliance with these Control Points is preferable but non-compliance is acceptable.

Some Control Points may be Non-Applicable (N/A) to some businesses, as determined within the LEAF Marque Standard.

All new LEAF Marque members have 3 months to resolve any non-conformance. Re-certifying businesses with a non-conformance for a Control Point of more than 28 days after the audit will lead to the LEAF Marque certificate being withdrawn.

LEAF Producer Groups

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

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



4. Oversight

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

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.

The elements of the programme are:

- The requirements for CB personnel involved with the delivery of the LEAF Marque System in terms of competence, initial and ongoing training.
- 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
 - communication.
- The process for new application, approval and re-approval of CBs and the possible sanctioning of CBs 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.
- The annual review of CB performance will be discussed with each CB.
- LEAF Marque can liaise with ABs and CBs to ensure understanding of the requirements of ISO 17065 is maintained.

5. On-going Scrutiny

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

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.

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

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.



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

If there are any issues around fraudulent claims, stakeholders can contact LEAF by phone or email or on the LEAF website (through an [enquiry⁵](#) and/or as a [complaint⁶](#)).

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

LEAF Marque also undertakes an informal review of producer’s websites to check for LEAF Marque certification claims and producers are required to amend their website accordingly.

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.

6. Version History

Version	Issue Date and Reason for Change
1	November 2016
2	July 2018 Revision of Oversight Programme

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

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