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”.
1. Assurance System Structure

The LEAF Marque Assurance System is underpinned by the LEAF Marque Standard. This is the only Standard in the LEAF Marque System, and it is applicable globally, to all enterprises. The LEAF Marque Standard has a whole-farm approach and is based on the principles of Integrated Farm Management (IFM). It is supplementary and complementary to LEAF Marque approved baseline certification systems (listed in the LEAF Product List) which ensure risks relating to food safety, animal welfare and environmental legislation are minimised. LEAF Marque certified businesses are entitled to make a LEAF Marque claim. This is either/both the use of the LEAF Marque logo at point of sale, or a sustainability claim that directly references LEAF Marque. LEAF Marque claims identify LEAF Marque certified products and/or businesses as delivering more sustainable farming. This claim is commensurate to their implementation of IFM and compliance with the LEAF Marque Standard.

LEAF is responsible for the implementation of the LEAF Marque System, including the LEAF Marque Assurance Programme. LEAF Marque certification is third party verified by LEAF Marque approved Certification Bodies (CBs), who are responsible for certification audits, decisions, and data management. Businesses apply to CBs for LEAF Marque certification and they are together responsible for scheduling an audit. The cost CBs charge their clients for delivery of certification services is determined by the size and complexity of the business, and the number of baseline certification systems being audited. CBs conduct LEAF Marque audits to assess compliance with the current version of the LEAF Marque Standard. Certification decisions are made independently of the audit by a qualified member of CB staff. Certificates are issued to businesses who achieve compliance with all Essential Control Points in the LEAF Marque Standard (unless appropriate Not-Applicable(s) are recorded). For a business’ first LEAF Marque audit, they have 3 months to resolve any non-conformance. For non-conformances in any subsequent audits, the business has 28 days to rectify non-conformances. If non-conformances against Essential Control Points are not resolved within the appropriate timeframe, LEAF Marque certification will not be awarded. CBs have the right to suspend or terminate LEAF Marque certification if necessary. CBs record LEAF Marque certification data on the LEAF Marque database.

CBs comply with a Certification Body Licence Agreement. This ensures effective delivery of LEAF Marque procedures and reduce risks. CBs are ISO 17065 accredited for relevant baseline certification system(s). Extension of scope for the LEAF Marque Standard must be obtained within 18 months of the first LEAF Marque audit, or 9 months of the first LEAF Marque audit against a new version of the LEAF Marque Standard. Accreditation must be obtained from an Accreditation Body (AB) that is part of the European Accreditation, Multilateral Agreement on Product Certification, or members of International Accreditation Forum which have been subject to a peer evaluation in the product certification field and have a positive recommendation in its report. Failure to do so entitles LEAF Marque to terminate the LEAF Marque Certification Body Licence Agreement. A list of LEAF Marque approved CBs can be found on the LEAF website.
In addition to being the Standard Setter, LEAF Marque is the Oversight Body responsible for monitoring CB performance (see 4. Oversight). ABs are involved in the Oversight Programme due to CBs accreditation being an important aspect of assessing CB performance. LEAF Marque delineates responsibility for all aspects of CBs accreditation to ABs.

Continual improvement is a key feature of the LEAF Marque Standard, but it is also integral to the LEAF Marque System. Management reviews, data analysis and assessment of risks occur on an annual basis and are scheduled to enable learning and improvement within the assurance system. In Quarter 1, Monitoring & Evaluation data analysis and the annual schedule of Oversight Assessments are completed. This informs updates to the Oversight Programme and completion of the Assurance Programme Review in Quarter 2, both of which inform update to the LEAF Marque Risks to Assurance in Quarter 3. In addition to this improvement feedback loop, a variety of data sources are considered during revision to procedures, including stakeholder feedback, complaints, research projects, and data analysis.

LEAF Marque engages with a range of stakeholders and receives technical recommendations from the LEAF Marque Technical Advisory Committee and LEAF Marque Board. LEAF Marque welcomes comments on the LEAF Marque System at any time and has contact information available on the LEAF website. All LEAF Marque certified businesses receive an email following an audit requesting feedback. Complaints can be submitted via the LEAF website, which are processed following the LEAF Complaints Procedure.

2. Certification Body Competency

CBs are responsible for ensuring auditors and other relevant staff carrying out activities concerning LEAF Marque are qualified. Auditors must meet the training requirements and competencies defined in the Certification Body Licence Agreement and Certification Body Requirements. These requirements supplement those associated with baseline certification systems and ISO 17065 accreditation. Baseline certification system requirements address farm assurance (food safety/quality auditing) training and experience, administrative capacity, and IT competence with data requirements. ISO 17065 accreditation ensures auditor competency, on-site witness audits, and the implementation of procedures which address any reports of poor performance.

All LEAF Marque auditors must receive initial in-house training in LEAF Marque and ongoing training on an annual basis by a qualified individual. Auditor calibration programmes must be implemented, maintenance of auditor competencies verified, and witness audits for LEAF Marque auditors completed at least once every four years. In addition to the baseline certification system competencies, all LEAF Marque auditors must demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the LEAF Marque Standard, awareness of the Intended Impacts of LEAF Marque, and relevant qualifications and knowledge of the sector.

LEAF Marque recognises that auditor competency is essential for the effective delivery of the LEAF Marque System. In addition to CBs in-house training schedules, LEAF Marque delivers ongoing Training Modules for CBs. Auditor training and competency is reviewed during Oversight Assessments, and CBs informs LEAF of any new LEAF Marque auditors. LEAF Marque keeps CBs informed of all revisions to the LEAF Marque Standard and provides guidance on any updates to rules or procedures.

3. Assessment

All LEAF Marque audits are conducted by a LEAF Marque approved and accredited third-party CB. Audits take place on-farm and are performed annually. If the CB requires to see the business operations at different times of
year, the audit can take place 4 months prior to or after the certificate ‘valid to’ date, without disrupting the certification cycle. LEAF Marque audits assess compliance of the whole farm business to the LEAF Marque Standard, and cannot be defined to a selection of crops or enterprises. The time required to conduct an audit is calculated by the CB and is dependent on the business’ size, number and location of sites, complexity, and the number of other certification systems included in the same audit.

CBs use a combination of the following types of verification during LEAF Marque audits:

- 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.

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

- Essential (E) – compliance is compulsory.
- Recommended (R) – compliance is preferable but not required to be LEAF Marque certified.
- Not-Applicable (N/A) – business meets criteria stated in the Control Point.

CBs’ ISO 17065 accreditation requires that CBs identify any conflicts of interest. Auditors are not permitted to give advice to businesses during an audit, but they are permitted to share information that ensures that businesses understand the LEAF Marque Standard. If a translator is used at an audit, the CB must ensure the translator is independent from the business being audited or records the constraints that prevent this.

A LEAF Producer Group is a group of producers who hold a GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2 certificate and is the legal entity which is certified. “LEAF Producer Group” signifies the operator of the Quality Management System (QMS). 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. A LEAF Producer Group is required to have in place a rigorous internal QMS which ensures that all members of the group are meeting the requirements of the LEAF Marque Standard. Prior to the audit, the CB reviews the QMS. The auditor then completes on-site audits for, at a minimum, the square root of the total number of producers in the LEAF Producer Group. Audit scheduling accounts for crops grown, location from the main site, or LEAF Producer Group size of unit, internal auditor(s) and external influences.

4. Oversight

The LEAF Marque Oversight Programme protects the integrity, transparency and credibility of the LEAF Marque System by evaluation CBs performance. The LEAF Marque Oversight Programme employs the same approach taken by similar sized systems whereby CB performance in monitored remotely, in addition to the Oversight Mechanism implemented through ABs. LEAF Marque is the Oversight Body which implements the Oversight Programme and puts forward recommendations regarding CB approvals and sanctions to the LEAF Marque Board. The LEAF Marque Board has overall responsibility for the Oversight Programme.

The LEAF Secretariat reviews new CB applications to assess eligibility and obtain CBs signature on the Certification Body License Agreement. A list of LEAF Marque approved CBs is available on the LEAF website.
Oversight Assessments involves the LEAF Secretariat evaluating CBs performance on an annual basis using information submitted from the CB, producer feedback, and evidence collected through the course of the year. CP performance is scored against the following Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s):

- Compliance with the LEAF Marque Certification Body Licence Agreement
- CASI online portal – data and management decisions
- Performance Observations
- Auditor Training and Competence
- Feedback and Complaints
- Communication and Issue Management

The KPI’s are collated into a report which includes actions and recommendations. CBs are given opportunity to comment on the proposed actions, following which the report is amended accordingly. The final report is presented to the LEAF Marque Board for approval or with recommended sanctions. In case of failure to demonstrate improvement from previous assessments, the LEAF Marque Board will determine the appropriate next steps, which may include increased frequency of assessments or sanctions.

CBs accreditation status is reviewed during Oversight Assessments. 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.

5. Claims & Labelling

LEAF Marque Claims & Labelling (C&L) protects the integrity of the LEAF Marque System by regulating LEAF Marque claims. To make a LEAF Marque Claim, the relevant individual must hold a C&L Licence. The C&L Surveillance strategy is two-fold, including evidence requests to demonstrate LEAF Marque certification, and ‘Secret Shopper’ activity. The effectiveness of C&L is periodically reviewed and used to inform development of scrutiny and market surveillance strategies.

If there are any issues around fraudulent claims, stakeholders can contact LEAF by phone, email or on the LEAF website (through an enquiry and/or as a complaint). In addition, the LEAF Marque logo is a trademark registration in the UK and Europe which affords certain protection against misuse of the logo.

6. Value and Accessibility

LEAF Marque System eligibility, certification processes, and available LEAF Marque data is described in the LEAF Marque Oversight Program. Performance insights are available in LEAF’s annual Global Impacts Report, which demonstrates the value of LEAF Marque and any other relevant Monitoring & Evaluation findings. Stakeholder engagement is central to all LEAF activities, including development of the LEAF Marque System. Stakeholders are welcomed to provide comments by contacting info@leafmarque.com.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version History</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version 1</td>
<td>November 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version 2</td>
<td>July 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version 3</td>
<td>July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version 4</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>