THE STUDY
This evaluation study was independently carried out by Mike Read Associates from November 2020 to March 2021. The objective of the study was to evaluate how LEAF Marque supports the 'enabling environment' for LEAF's broader work.

THE METHODOLOGY
Methodology included semi-structured interviews with farmers, suppliers, retailers, brands, government agencies, consultants and members of the farming media. Interviews with LEAF staff and ISEAL members, literature review and a workshop with LEAF staff.

LEAF Marque goes beyond being purely a certification system...

Growing LEAF’s Voice
Every aspect of LEAF’s work is supported by LEAF Marque, offering:
- Credibility
- Income
- Technical tools for farmers, supply chain actors & regulators, advocacy & public engagement

Growing Impact
Significantly contributes to farmers improving their farming practices, whether certified or not

Growing Awareness
Raises societal awareness and urgency of environmental issues

Growing Rewards
Delivers financially beyond market opportunities, for personal pride and for protecting the land:
- Increased gross margins
- Improved farm biodiversity, beauty and public image
- A community of growers supporting and learning from each other
- Commercially sensible, grows the long-term health and future productivity of farm
- Provides a story to tell, showcases best practice and demonstrates going 'the extra mile'
- Gives credibility and defensibility to good farming
- Strengthens farmer’s position and respect with retailers
- Enables earned recognition for environmental inspections

Growing Recognition
Helps with risk management, demonstrates due diligence and strengthens position around government support schemes ie. ELM

Growing Retailer Reputation
LEAF Marque quantifies and independently verifies continuous sustainability improvements and supports risk and reputation management

Growing The LEAF Community
Engaged farmers, brands & retailers respect the hard work & commitment to sustainable agriculture of the LEAF Team

Growing Value
Farmers who have a strong motivation to work with nature consider LEAF Marque to be of great value, especially for those with short supply chains. Brands value LEAF’s passion, expertise and consistency.

Growing Credibility
LEAF Marque offer a robust, holistic core to farmers’ improvements, with third party assurance giving credibility, excellent field standards and appropriate wildlife standards.

Growing Impact Growing The LEAF Community
Growing Awareness
Growing Value
Growing Credibility
Growing Recognition
Growing Retailer Reputation
Growing Rewards
Growing LEAF’s Voice
LEAF’S RESPONSE

“LEAF welcomes the outcomes of this evaluation, which confirm our belief that LEAF Marque certification goes beyond just creating market opportunities, but also underpins LEAF’s overall strategic objectives of delivering and promoting more sustainable farming and food through ‘beyond certification’ activities. The findings indicate that every aspect of LEAF’s work is supported, in one or more ways, by the existence of LEAF Marque, and the credibility, tools and income that it provides.

Many participants recognised that LEAF Marque certification allows businesses to credibly demonstrate their commitment to more sustainable farming and, crucially, to obtain the benefits associated with that certification. These include market access and retention, price premiums, earned recognition for environmental inspections and personal pride.

It is very encouraging to note that LEAF Marque certification is well regarded by farmers, retailers and brands. We are delighted that so many participants value what LEAF Marque represents in terms of independence, transparency and consistency as well as recognising its value with regard to the increased inspections that the E.L.M scheme is likely to bring. We are particularly pleased to note that, in spite of the challenging external conditions presented by the Coronavirus pandemic, LEAF Marque is able to quantify and independently verify continuous improvement and that it plays an important part of their risk and reputation management. This is particularly important for farmers in helping to secure market opportunities and in demonstrating sustainability credentials, resilience, and adaptability. For retailers, LEAF Marque is considered to help with risk management and due diligence.

The evaluation presents a clear reference point to monitor improvements. There were a number of learnings highlighted in the study – namely growing recognition of the logo and what it means, finding ways to streamline auditing burdens on farmers, building our carbon offer, facilitating wider market opportunities, building on the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review and offering harmonised metrics. We are addressing each of these areas by building on our management tools and resources, ongoing public consultation of the LEAF Marque Standard, discussions with policy makers and identification of strategic partnerships with retailers and brands. We are fully committed to continual improvement in all that we do and remain open and transparent about the progress we are delivering.”

Our Learnings...

Grow recognition of the LEAF Marque logo & what it means
Grow carbon reduction offer
Grow market opportunities
Grow benchmarking with other standards
Grow the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review offer
Grow harmonised metrics
Grow reach – sector, region, country