



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**16<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

## **Delivering More Sustainable Farming Across the EU Through On-Farm Demonstration**

**Leading sustainable farming organisation, LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) was one of 17 partners in 12 countries across the EU collaborating on a pioneering project examining the effectiveness of on-farm demonstration in driving forward more sustainable farming.**

The two-and-a-half-year project – PLAID (Peer-to-Peer Learning: Accessing Innovation Through Demonstration), led by the James Hutton Institute – a LEAF Innovation Centre concluded in June 2019. It brought together farmers, advisors, NGO's, industry representatives, researchers and policy makers across the EU to examine the 'what' 'how' and 'why' of the farm demonstration model in promoting learning by farmers, encouraging uptake of new innovations, providing networking and social connections and identifying how the demonstration model needs to develop in order to support the uptake of more sustainable farming.

Key outcomes of the project include:

- An **on-line inventory of demonstration events** across Europe – the [FarmDemo Hub](#), produced in collaboration with the [AgriDemo project](#) – allowing farmers to access events, register as demonstration farmers and find resources and support including case studies and videos.
- A **comprehensive guide** for on-farm demonstrations setting out six simple steps for designing an effective demonstration event, including setting objectives,

selecting the right farm, event set-up, promotion, learning methods and evaluation.

- **Case studies** from farmers across Europe involved in demonstration activities sharing their experiences and expertise.
- A set of **best practice recommendations** on effective on-farm demonstration to inform policy.
- [Virtual Demonstration](#) – a series of videos featuring LEAF Demonstration Farmers helping to further share expertise amongst the wider farming community.

Speaking on the project, Alice Midmer, LEAF Demonstration and Innovation Manager said:

“We have long known that farmers learn best from other farmers. This project has really drilled down into the specifics and addressed some challenging questions around the practical, social and theoretical aspects of on-farm demonstration. It has also delivered some tangible and practical resources and recommendations.

“Demonstration events are a smart investment that can help accelerate the adoption of game changing innovations. Learning through demonstration has the potential to revolutionise how we do things and address some of our most persistent challenges around the adoption of more sustainable farming.

“The outcomes of this project will help to transform the effectiveness of on-farm demonstration as a vehicle to drive forward more sustainable farming – not only in the UK but across the EU.

“We know more now about the specific ingredients of effective on-farm demonstration, we have better insights into how it can be used to promote learning and encourage adoption of new ideas and technologies, we have learnt more about what motivates farmers to host and participate in demonstration events and we have developed a clear road-map of how we want to take the demonstration farm model forward.

“We are hugely excited about the opportunities the results of this project offer our members and the wider farming community to boost their own learning and engagement at farm level.”

Caroline Drummond, LEAF Chief Executive added:

“It has been a privilege to be involved in this pioneering multi-disciplinary project. Knowledge generation and exchange amongst farmers is critical to build the resilience of farming systems across the globe. PLAID’s focus was on creating added value from the exchange of knowledge, actors, farmers and technical expertise between networks in order to boost innovation uptake and improve peer to peer learning and network connectivity between farmers across Europe. In the end, it all contributes to a more competitive, sustainable and climate-smart agriculture. We look forward to building on the outcomes of the project and to farmers using our tools and resources to reach out to each other as we work together to address shared global challenges.”

**-ENDS-**

More information on PLAID (Peer-to-Peer Learning: Accessing Innovation Through Demonstration), can be found at [www.plaid-h2020.eu](http://www.plaid-h2020.eu)



This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 727388 (PLAID)

#### **Editors’ Notes:**

- **LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming)** is a leading organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming. LEAF works with farmers, the food industry, scientists and consumers to inspire and enable sustainable farming that is prosperous, enriches the environment and engages local communities.
- **LEAF promotes Integrated Farm Management (IFM)**, a whole farm business approach that uses the best of modern technology and traditional methods to deliver more sustainable farming. IFM is made up of nine sections, which together address the entire farm business. These include soil and water management, pollution control, crop health and protection, animal welfare, community engagement, energy efficiency and landscape and nature conservation.
- **The LEAF Marque** is a leading global environmental assurance system recognising more sustainably farmed products. It is underpinned by the sustainable farming principles of IFM. **LEAF Marque** certified businesses are independently verified against the LEAF Marque Standard.

- The LEAF Network includes **LEAF Demonstration Farms** – commercial farms in England and Scotland, which show the beneficial practices of IFM to a broad range of audiences, through organised visits. They communicate an understanding of IFM to encourage uptake by farmers, support from the industry and political awareness of sustainable food and farming. The LEAF Network also includes **LEAF Innovation Centres** – research organisations from across the UK whose work supports the research, evidence, development and promotion of IFM.
- **LEAF Education** works to inspire future generations about farming, food and the countryside. It manages a number of industry and educational initiatives, including FaceTime a Farmer, Access to Farms, CEVAS (Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme), Countryside Classroom, Chef on the Farm and LEAF Open Farm School Days.
- **LEAF Education** provides teachers with curriculum focused training, tools and resources to help them deliver high-quality learning experiences about farming. It also helps farmers navigate the world of education and supports them in delivering inspiring and engaging on-farm and in-classroom activities.
- **LEAF** manages **Open Farm Sunday**, the farming industry's annual open day when farmers open their gates and welcome people onto their farms to discover the world of farming. Alongside LEAF Open Farm Sunday, farms across Britain also host **LEAF Open Farm School Days** which run throughout June. They provide thousands of schoolchildren with the opportunity to visit a farm to learn more about where their food comes from and how it is produced.

LEAF, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire. CV8 2LG t: 02476 413911 e: [enquiries@leafuk.org](mailto:enquiries@leafuk.org)  
[www.leafuk.org](http://www.leafuk.org) LEAF is a registered charity (No. 1045781) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England (No. 3035047).