



Outcome-Based Biodiversity Approaches

Summary Report

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Background

Over the past 3 months LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) has embarked on a pioneering new project to look at **including outcomes in the LEAF Marque Standard**. The transition would be towards a hybrid approach, having outcomes included alongside the existing practice-based approach. The primary area to consider for transition was **biodiversity**, with plans to consider soil management, water management and energy efficiency in the future.

Moving towards an outcome-based standard creates the opportunity for LEAF to communicate more closely on the impacts of implementing the LEAF Marque Standard, **measuring outcomes directly** rather than proxying them with practices. This will enable LEAF to tell our story more effectively and demonstrate the value of LEAF Marque. It also facilitates **continual improvement** and **stimulates innovation and flexibility**, key elements of Integrated Farm Management.

LEAF has been working with sustainability consultants NewForesight together with a diverse group of stakeholders to conduct desk research, several interviews and a workshop, ensuring a balanced dialogue between innovation and the practical implications of this transition.

The interviews and workshop discussed topics such as the difference between practices and outcomes; opportunities and challenges when moving towards the inclusion of outcomes; the outcomes to be included in the LEAF Marque Standard; and system implications of measuring outcomes.

These discussions highlight that moving towards the inclusion of outcomes will have 3 main implications on all parts of the LEAF Marque assurance system: the outcomes to include in the standard, how to monitor them, and assuring the outcomes.

Measuring Outcomes

Our stakeholders outlined two outcomes within biodiversity:

- The indicator **species** which have been locally negotiated.
- The percentage of land managed for **habitat**, appropriate for native biodiversity;

These outcomes were proposed as they will ultimately support the achievement of one of LEAF Marque's intended impacts – *Improve and enhance the management of native habitats biodiversity* - whilst being relevant and flexible.

Monitoring Outcomes

The process leading to the achievement of outcomes should be monitored to ensure that valuable information is not lost. Information resulting from monitoring provides primary producers, the supply chain, and auditors with the **ability to learn** from the process that was implemented. Monitoring the progress at different time intervals provides information which justifies the results which have been achieved.

LEAF plans to draw on its existing requirement on the Landscape and Nature Conservation and Enhancement Plan to encourage producers and producer groups to **outline the process steps** they have carried out in order to achieve the outcomes as well as who is involved in the process; followed by **visually monitoring** the results of these steps, such as through maps, photographic evidence, satellite images and smart technology.

The potential costs for implementing the monitoring requirements for individual producers has not been quantified. The monitoring technologies or equipment aimed at increasing efficiencies may require initial investment by the producers or producer groups but hopefully the long-term value will be recognised through the maintenance of, and/or increase in efficiencies.

Assuring Outcomes

Assuring these outcomes can be achieved by adopting a **system-based audit approach**. This adoption can lead to more information on the process that was implemented to achieve the results. It also provides a representation of the results beyond the audit on one particular day. For example, the continual monitoring of the indicator species will account for external influences; and farm type, time, location and method of the measurements should also be taken into consideration. Establishing a **baseline-measurement** will be important to account for continuous improvement.

A system-based audit will require the auditor to change the way the questions are asked and adopting a risk-based approach to assuring will possibly result in a change in audit frequency, changes that the current auditing system may not be globally equipped for.

Roadmap Towards Outcome-Based Approach

Including outcomes in the LEAF Marque system will be a **significant landmark achieved in a short timescale**. This transition will provide producers with **flexibility** and an incentive to **improve over time** alongside **bringing validity** to the LEAF Marque Standard. Still, significant challenges will surface in the future – **no voluntary sustainability standard has ever made a similar transition**.

One of the biggest challenges still to overcome is to ensure the global outcomes are relevant in a variety of local contexts. LEAF Marque operates in 34 countries with a high level of disparity between the different farms and producer groups, such as their level of access to technology, complexity of their business, biodiversity required and access to local expertise and guidance.

That said, the pacing of this transition will be crucial and with the LEAF Marque Standard revision currently underway, LEAF plans to include the first elements of this transition into v15 of the Standard, welcoming wider input from stakeholders through our consultation later this year.

To realise all the implications of this transition will take time, resources and much patience across the LEAF global stakeholder network. **It will be an evolution not a revolution, but LEAF is keen to lead the way.**

Acknowledgements

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Further information

More information can be found at:

LEAF Marque: www.leafuk.org/farming/leaf-marque

ISEAL Innovations Fund: www.isealalliance.org/about-iseal/our-work/innovations-fund

NewForesight: www.newforesight.com

Overview: LEAF, LEAF Marque and Integrated Farm Management

About LEAF

LEAF is the leading organisation delivering sustainable food and farming. We work with farmers, the food industry, scientists and consumers, to inspire and enable sustainable farming that is prosperous, enriches the environment and engages local communities. We do this through developing and promoting **Integrated Farm Management** in three core pillars:

- **Facilitating knowledge generation and exchange amongst farmers and researchers** through our network of LEAF Demonstration Farms and Innovation Centres; farm business management tools and events.
- **Developing Market Opportunities** through the LEAF Marque Standard.
- **Engaging the public in sustainable food and farming** through Open Farm Sunday, Open Farm School Days, resources and training.

Our Vision

A world that is farming, eating and living sustainably.

Our Mission

To inspire and enable sustainable farming that is prosperous, enriches the environment and engages local communities.

About LEAF Marque

LEAF Marque is an environmental assurance system recognising more sustainably farmed products. LEAF Marque certification covers the whole farm businesses and applies to all products from the business.

About Integrated Farm Management

The principles of Integrated Farm Management (IFM) underpin the requirements of LEAF Marque certification, as set out in the LEAF Marque Standard. IFM is **a whole farm business approach that delivers more sustainable food and farming**. It uses the best of modern technology and traditional methods to deliver prosperous farming that enriches the environment and engages local communities. A farm business managed to IFM principles will demonstrate site-specific and continuous improvement across the whole farm including: Organisation and Planning, Soil Management and Fertility, Crop Health and Protection, Pollution Control and By-Product Management, Animal Husbandry, Energy Efficiency, Water Management, Landscape and Nature Conservation and Community Engagement.





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