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LEAF Marque celebrates 10 years

This month marks the 10th anniversary of the LEAF Marque, a global assurance system recognising sustainably farmed products. The LEAF Marque was first launched during the Wimbledon Championships in July 2003, giving recognition to farmers producing food to LEAF's sustainable farming practices.

During LEAF Marque's first year, over 150 farmers achieved certification representing some 10,000 hectares of fruit and vegetables. Members of the public wanting to buy products carrying the LEAF Marque were able to find them in Waitrose, which were the first supermarket to stock LEAF Marque products.

Over the last ten years, LEAF Marque has grown to become a globally recognised assurance system operating in some 40 different countries. Here in the UK, a quarter of all UK horticulture is LEAF Marque certified with 100 per cent of British grown leeks carrying the LEAF Marque logo, 73 per cent of peppers and 71 per cent of outdoor grown lettuce. When it comes to fruit, a quarter of UK grown strawberries, 33 per cent of raspberries and 29 per cent of apples are grown to the standard.

Waitrose's commitment to LEAF Marque continues with all of its UK grown fresh produce being LEAF Marque certified and the retailer has recently committed to sourcing 100 per cent of its UK grown oilseed rape and wheat from LEAF Marque growers. The LEAF Marque logo can also be seen today on a number of branded products including Florette salads and Burts Chips.

Jeremy Boxall, Director of LEAF Marque said: "Back in 2003, retailers and farmers identified a gap in the market for an assurance system which demonstrated that food had been grown to high environmental standards. The LEAF Marque offers farmers and the wider food industry a way to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable farming and for consumers to purchase food grown to these standards. We have been thrilled with the support and take up of the LEAF Marque. With growing pressure on resources, producing food in a sustainable way is more important than ever and we look forward to continuing our work with the food and farming industry to build on the success of the last ten years."

Marion Regan of Hugh Lowe Farms, the first official LEAF Marque grower in the UK added: “I became a LEAF Marque certified grower because I wanted to improve the efficiency of my business, both from an environmental point of view but also economically. I am reliant on the land and therefore taking care of it and our natural resources is vital. It was also important for me to have a tangible way of showing our customers that we grow to high environmental standards and our business is sustainable. The LEAF Marque does just this.”

The LEAF Marque is based on LEAF’s Integrated Farm Management (IFM) principles, 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. Farms are independently inspected in order to become LEAF Marque certified. In order to become LEAF Marque certified; producers are independently audited to ensure they meet stringent criteria to demonstrate that food is being produced to high environmental standards. These criteria include soil management and fertility, crop health and protection, pollution control and by-products, energy and efficiency, wildlife and landscape management and animal husbandry and the environment.

10 Key achievements since LEAF Marque launched:

2003: Over 150 farmers signed up for LEAF Marque, representing some 10 000 hectares of fruit and vegetables. LEAF Marque produce became available in Waitrose stores across the UK.

2004: LEAF buyers and suppliers directory launched to put likeminded suppliers and buyers in touch.

2005: Burts Chips became the first brand to use the LEAF Marque on pack.

2007: LEAF Marque became global and Marks and Spencer encouraged all of its suppliers to become LEAF Marque certified.

2011: LEAF Marque was recognised in Defra’s plans for food procurement. Cited as one of the ways the Government can meet its sustainability targets.

2012: Florette set out its commitment to source 100% LEAF Marque salad for its full salad range and Unilever committed to sourcing 100% of its oilseed rape from LEAF Marque growers through ADM.

2013 Waitrose announced it will source all of its UK grown oilseed rape and wheat from LEAF Marque growers.

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LEAF Editors' Notes:

- LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is the leading organisation delivering 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.
- The LEAF Marque is an assurance system recognising sustainably farmed products. It is based on LEAF's Integrated Farm Management (IFM) principles. All LEAF Marque certified farms are independently audited to ensure they meet stringent criteria to demonstrate that food is being produced to high environmental standards. These criteria include soil management and fertility, crop health and protection, pollution control and by-products, energy and efficiency, wildlife and landscape management and animal husbandry and the environment.
- Hugh Lowe Farms in Mereworth, Kent was the first UK LEAF Marque grower. It is the sole supplier of strawberries to the Wimbledon Championships through official caterers FMC Catering. All of its strawberries are LEAF Marque certified. For more information visit www.hughlowefarms.com For more information about LEAF please visit: www.leafmarque.com, email: enquiries@leafuk.org tel: 02476 413911. (Registered charity no: 1045781)