



Press Release

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LEAF Farming as Way Forward to Improve Competitiveness of Scottish Farming

The Scottish Government is supporting farmers to join LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), and carry out the tried and tested LEAF Audit and add value to their produce through LEAF Marque.

Through the Scotland Rural Development Programme, the Scottish Executive is keen to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector. By taking up **Option 2** under the Land Managers Options and carrying out an extensive Business Audit, such as the LEAF Audit, it offers farmers a great opportunity to proactively plan and develop their business. This includes objectively taking the time to undertake an environmental health check of their current business arrangements and benchmark their performance against others.

Commenting on the announcement Edward Baxter, the LEAF Chairman for Scotland said,

“This development offers a real ‘leg up’ for farmers to do something practical for their business that can make a real difference to the environment and to their bottom line. Also, by tracking the data over time, the LEAF Audit provides clear evidence of the public goods farmers are delivering. I thoroughly recommend farmers sign up for this Option and join LEAF. They will be surprised by the benefits it offers their business.”

Option 8 also offers substantial benefits for farmers looking to add value to their produce through the market place. This option recognises the growing demand for quality produce both in Scotland and internationally. LEAF Marque is one of the fastest growing sectors in the market place offering farmers the opportunity to demonstrate where they have gone the extra mile for the environment, while improving their business performance.

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LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is a national organisation helping farmers produce good, quality food with care for the environment, whilst working with their local community.

A company limited by guarantee,
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Membership of food quality assurance schemes, certified to EN45011 level, not only improves the quality of produce but also provides reassurance to consumers that food is being produced to a high standard. The Scottish Government will pay 50% of the joining fee or ongoing membership subscriptions of a food quality assurance scheme up to a maximum of £150.

Scottish LEAF Marque farmer, Allan Stevenson added,

“With concerns growing about the availability of food as well as its provenance and sustainability, it is increasingly important for us all to ensure that we have a productive farming system that enhances the environment too. Integrated Farm Management is key to delivering this in my business and now that I am LEAF Marque accredited I am pleased that my customers are increasingly recognising and rewarding me for this, for example, by giving me the Tesco/Greenvale Scottish Grower of the Year Award for the 2007 season for potatoes. The Scotland Rural Development Programme offers some tangible business benefits for our land managers and I highly recommend that farmers take up the option to become LEAF Marque accredited.”

Farmers wishing to join LEAF or become LEAF Marque accredited should contact the LEAF office on 024 7641 3911 or visit the website www.leafuk.org

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Full details of the **Scotland Rural Development Programme: Rural Development Contracts: Land Managers Options, including how to apply** are available on:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/03/28151549/7>
2. LEAF is the leading organisation in the UK promoting and developing Integrated Farm Management (IFM). LEAF encourages the uptake of IFM through the development of practical guidelines and the promotion of the LEAF Audit.
3. LEAF's activities include:
 - **Demonstration Farms and Innovation Centres** - A nationwide network of Demonstration Sites which host visits for a broad range of groups – from the Women's Institute through to Government officials. LEAF **Innovation Centres** research or pioneer new approaches in sustainable land management. They are not typical working farms, but push forward the boundaries of IFM through research and practical demonstration.
 - **LEAF Marque** – a label on food giving consumers greater assurance that the food they buy has been produced in an environmentally responsible way. Visit www.leafmarque.com for more information.
 - **Open Farm Sunday** – the farming industry's annual open day organised by LEAF. It is held in June every year. This year's Open Farm Sunday will be held on the **1st June 2008**. Go to www.farmsunday.org for more information.
 - **Speak Out** – a “self-help” CD-Rom, audio cassette and work booklet to help farmers with communications skills and know how to bridge the gap between farming and the public.
4. Further information about LEAF and LEAF Marque can be obtained from LEAF, The National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire Tel: 024 7641 3911 Fax: 024 7641 3636 email: enquiries@leafuk.org www.leafuk.org

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