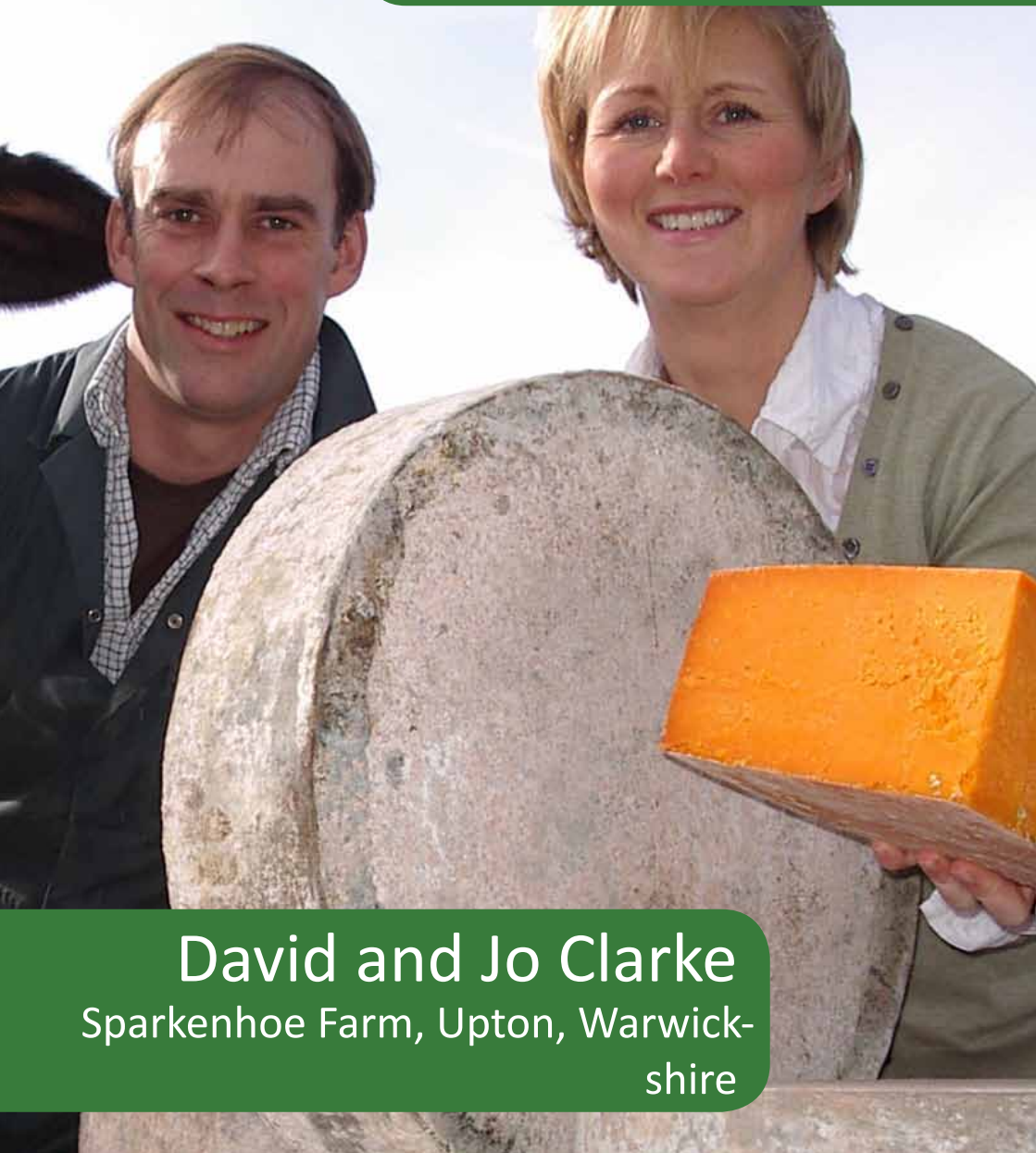


Case Study



David and Jo Clarke
Sparkenhoe Farm, Upton, Warwickshire

ARABLE  DAIRY BEEF SHEEP HORTICULTURE OTHER LIVESTOCK

David and Jo Clarke

Dairy farmers



Size
70 ha



Staff
3 full time



Yield
8,800
litres/cow/
year



Soil type
Marl clay
loam



The Clarks have been farming in Leicestershire for generations. David and Jo split away from the family farming partnership five years ago, and now run their own 70 hectare dairy farm near Market Bosworth. Most of the feed is grown on the farm and calving takes place all year round to ensure a consistent supply of milk.

- Milk
- Sparkenhoe Red Leicester cheese
- Bosworth Field cheese
- Battlefield Blue cheese

They diversified into cheese making in 2005 and currently, half their milk is used to make 50 tonnes of cheese, including Sparkenhoe Red Leicester, Bosworth Field and Battlefield Blue, which is all LEAF Marque certified.

“Being a LEAF member and having the LEAF Marque on our cheese gives us peace of mind when it comes to regulatory inspections – I think it makes a real difference.”

Why LEAF?

We're proud to be LEAF members and always tell everyone! It gives you a positive attitude, which rubs off on people. We certainly get some return from it. If people understand about LEAF and the fact that our cheese has been produced to the highest standards of environmental care, then people will want to buy it.

www.leafuk.org

Financial



The LEAF Marque is an assurance scheme developed by LEAF based on environmentally responsible IFM principles which support you in producing good food, with care and to high environmental standards.

We became members of LEAF five years ago. LEAF's promotion of a balanced, whole farming approach fitted exactly with our own views. We like the self-assessment approach as it allows us to make our own decisions that best fit our farm, its location and our business priorities. We've seen a number of financial benefits from our membership, particularly through doing the LEAF Audit and gaining LEAF Marque accreditation.

We were already supplying our cheese to Waitrose but we hope that having the LEAF Marque will help us secure our contract in the future. We also sell at local markets and shows, people really like hearing the story behind our cheese and having the LEAF Marque gives us a unique selling point. In fact, we

were the first cheese producers in the country to become LEAF Marque certified!

We are always looking at new ideas to improve on what we're doing on the farm. Completing the LEAF Audit helps keeps us on our toes! For example, it made us more aware of our energy efficiency and now we've stopped using a hot wash in the parlour in the afternoon, which has resulted in significant cost savings.

“ We really believe in the balanced approach to farm management that LEAF promotes. By being a member and becoming LEAF Marque accredited, we get an endorsement for the IFM practices we are already doing.” ”

Environmental

Looking after our wonderful countryside and ensuring we sustain it for future generations, drives everything we do on the farm. We are custodians of the countryside and it is our job to make sure our farming practices have a positive environmental impact.

“ We’ve always been environmentally aware, but being a LEAF member has helped change our attitude to the environment and cemented some of our ideas. ”

Being a member of LEAF and doing the LEAF Audit helps keep you abreast of new developments. Attending LEAF training and demonstration events with my staff helps them understand what direction I am taking the farm. For example, we listened to a talk on bumble bee plots. I know when I go back to the farm and put one in myself, they will understand why I want to do it!

LEAF’s Integrated Farm Management principles, have definitely had a positive impact on the farm’s biodiversity – we regularly see brown hares, buzzards, lapwings and sparrows. We have also seen a significant increase in bumble bees, particularly on clover flowers in our grazing paddocks, as well as beetles, grasshoppers, moths and other insects in our field margins.



Only available to LEAF members and included in your membership fee, the LEAF Audit provides a comprehensive health check of the farm and gives benchmarks and action plans to focus the business for the year ahead. Saving you time and money.



Social

We have always welcomed visits to Sparkenhoe Farm and have hosted school visits for many years. You never tire of explaining to a group of children where their milk comes from and how it's used to produce great tasting cheese.

LEAF's Speak Out training, available to members, gave us some great tips on how to tell our farming story, answer tricky questions and get some media coverage! LEAF also produces several handbooks which are packed with ideas on activities to help us put on fun and engaging visits.

One of the spin offs of doing the LEAF Audit was that it reinforced our policy of buying feed locally – we buy field beans and wheat from neighbours. By using field beans and vastly reducing our reliance on imported soya, we have helped the local economy, reduced our carbon footprint and maintained efficiency. We also believe that we produce better cheese from milk produced from cows fed on field beans.

“ There is an ever widening community of LEAF members – like minded farmers looking for innovative ways to move their businesses forward. We've met some really inspirational characters, who may be useful to know one day. ”

We have also attended a number of regional LEAF technical events, member's events and the annual conference. Our network within the farming community has definitely increased and we've met people we would not have normally come across – at one event, we even met BBC Masterchef host Greg Wallace!



Speak
Out

LEAF's 'Speak Out' initiative helps farmers improve their communication skills and provides them with the know how to explain 'what they do and why they do it'.

LEAF's IFM




LEAF's Integrated Farm Management (IFM) approach combines the best of traditional farming methods with modern technology, allowing farmers to manage their farms in an informed, professional and caring way. IFM encourages farmers to maintain the highest standards of food production with the minimum environmental impact.

Join LEAF today

TECHNICAL EVENTS • DEMONSTRATION FARMS • SPEAK OUT • LEAF MARQUE • LEAF AUDIT • GREEN BOX

Go to www.leafuk.org and join online!

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