

MEDIA RELEASE

3rd May 2018

LEAF Launches Two New Network Sites

- NIAB EMR launches as a LEAF Innovation Centre

- Blackbird Farming launches as a LEAF Demonstration Farm

LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), the leading organisation promoting more sustainable farming, has today (3rd May) announced the addition of two new sites – both operating in the fruit sector – to its network of demonstration farms and research establishments. NIAB EMR has been named as a LEAF Innovation Centre, while Blackbird Farming has become a LEAF Demonstration Farm. Both sites have been recognised for their outstanding research and demonstration capabilities and their commitment to supporting farmers and growers with the latest skills and know-how to address current sustainability challenges.

The LEAF Network consists of Innovation Centres, leading research establishments pioneering new approaches to LEAF's Integrated Farm Management (IFM) through research and development; and LEAF Demonstration Farms, working farms committed to promoting sustainable farming best practice to farmers and wider groups such as politicians, industry groups, and students.

Speaking at the launch, Alice Midmer, IFM Manager at LEAF, said: "The LEAF Network of Demonstration Farms and Innovation Centres plays a critical role in driving forward the uptake and development of more sustainable farming and horticulture. The pioneering research and knowledge exchange activities carried out at our Innovation Centres, coupled with showing how new approaches to science and technology applies at farm level on our Demonstration Farms, represents a powerful catalyst to bring about real and lasting change to more sustainable farming systems. We are delighted to welcome NIAB EMR and Blackbird Farming to the LEAF Network and look forward to working alongside them to share best practice examples of more sustainable fruit farming."

NIAB EMR – LEAF Innovation Centre

Based at East Malling in Kent, NIAB EMR is the UK's largest horticultural research and development organisation, with an emphasis on perennial and clonally propagated crops.

NIAB EMR joins a select group of ten LEAF Innovation Centres, made up of some of the country's most prestigious education and research organisations, set up to support the research, development and promotion of LEAF's IFM to help deliver more sustainable food and farming.

Bill Clark, NIAB Technical Director, said: “This is a vitally important time for crop innovation, with a rapidly advancing knowledge base and interest in productive, efficient agriculture, driven by the challenges of global food security, climate change and resource protection. We are hugely excited by the opportunities being a LEAF Innovation Centre will offer NIAB EMR in terms of driving forward knowledge exchange and communication to enable us to translate our internationally renowned expertise in crop genetics, agronomy, environmental and data science into practical horticulture.”

Blackbird Farming – LEAF Demonstration Farm

Blackbird Farming (the trading name of G H Dean and Co Ltd) – a family business located near Sittingbourne in Kent – farms 1,780 hectares including arable, grassland for sheep, apples, pears and cherries.

The business, which takes a science-based approach to adopting innovation and technology, practices IFM. Key areas of focus include improving soil biology, creating sustainable rotations and enhancing biodiversity.

Blackbird Farming joins over thirty-five commercial farms as a LEAF Demonstration Farm.

Dr Oliver Doubleday, Director, Blackbird Farming, said: “We are extremely proud to be launched as a LEAF Demonstration Farm. We are keenly aware of the wider social obligations that accompany land ownership and look forward to being part of a network of farms that seek to produce wholesome food while preserving the environment for the future.

“While early adoption of new techniques is desirable, judgement is needed to discriminate between technology that is proven, unproven or flawed. Science is the best guide to inform such decisions and we are therefore very much science-based in our approach to adopting innovation and new technology.”

NIAB EMR and Blackbird Farming were launched as LEAF Network sites at special events that took place at each location today (3rd May). Blackbird Farming was officially launched by Richard Ashworth MEP.



LEAF and Blackbird Farming gratefully acknowledge the following for their support to Blackbird Farming as a LEAF Demonstration Farm: Agri Intelligence, AHDB, Crop Management Partners and Norton Folgate.

For more information on LEAF's network, visit: <https://leafuk.org/>

ENDS

For interview opportunities or further information please contact:

Simon Colvan / David Gough
LEAF Press Office - Ceres
T: 01189 475 956
E: leaf@ceres-pr.co.uk

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 delivers more sustainable farming. IFM uses the best of modern technology and traditional methods to deliver prosperous farming that enriches the environment and engages local communities.
- **LEAF Innovation Centres** are research organisations whose work supports the research, evidence, development and promotion of Integrated Farm Management. They investigate and communicate practices which underpin the continual improvement of the Integrated Farm Management approach to help deliver more sustainable food and farming. The network of LEAF Innovation Centres includes a range of research and education organisations across the UK.
- **LEAF Demonstration Farms** are commercial farms which show the beneficial practices of IFM to a broad range of audiences, through organised visits. They communicate an understanding of IFM in order to encourage uptake by farmers, support from the industry and political awareness of sustainable food and farming. The network of LEAF Demonstration Farms includes a range of farm businesses across the UK. They work alongside the LEAF Innovation Centres.
- **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. Next year's LEAF Open Farm Sunday will take place on 10th June 2018. Alongside LEAF Open Farm Sunday, farms across Britain also host **LEAF Open Farm School Days** which run throughout June. They provide thousands of school children with the opportunity to visit a farm to learn more about where their food comes from and how it is produced.
- In June 2017, LEAF merged with **FACE (Farming And Countryside Education)** and is now leading a collaborative approach within the industry for better education and public engagement among consumers, children and young people.