

Around 70% of the UK land mass is farmed. There are a whole range of farming systems and enterprises in place to produce nutritious food for us all to enjoy, crops for commodity markets, managing the environment for wildlife, enhancing our natural resources for future generations, and managing the countryside sustainably for us all to enjoy!

Sustainable farming is all about taking a whole farm approach, using the best of modern techniques alongside tried and tested traditional methods. In 1991 the charity LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) was set up to support farmers to farm sustainably. The LEAF model is called **Integrated Farm Management (IFM)** which is a site-specific farm business approach. Attention to detail is key; appropriate and efficient use of inputs, smarter approaches to business planning and the adoption of innovations and new technologies, all contribute to increasing productivity whilst protecting and enhancing valuable resources for future generations.

### The IFM wheel explained

The IFM wheel is made up of nine sections, which together address the entire farm business. Each of the nine sections is interrelated and an understanding of how they work together is essential for the effective implementation of IFM.

### **IFM = Sustainable Farming**



## Overview of the nine IFM sections



Landscape and conservation are becoming increasingly important in agriculture. It is important to remember that landscape and wildlife are like any other product of the farm; what is achieved depends on the starting conditions, the capability of the land and the work put in.



It is essential to communicate what you are doing and why to everybody who works on or around the farm, including the local community. Not only does it help them to better understand farming and the rural environment, but it also addresses their concerns, needs and expectations of the countryside and food production.



This includes animal welfare, grassland, forage and crop management and the attention to detail demanded to ensure sound animal husbandry techniques, environmental responsibility and an economically viable farming business.



Energy is often a significant on-farm cost and so requires constant monitoring. Careful use of inputs, appropriate tillage, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and striving for optimum instead of maximum yields will all help improve energy efficiency and contribute towards maximum return in the long run.



Soil is the basis of all agricultural production and the conservation and improvement of this valuable resource must be of the highest priority. This allows produce to be grown on healthy and biologically active soil with an optimum level of organic matter, a good physical structure, chemical balance and sufficient fertility.



IFM uses and encourages continual improvement in pest control measures that have minimal impact on the environment and human health and which promote sustainability and profitability. A well established and managed crop will be more competitive with weeds, more resilient to attack from pests and diseases and should require fewer plant protection products.



Water is an important resource which has a financial and environmental cost to farm businesses. Better and more effective water management is at the heart of LEAF's approach to IFM. Managing water wisely as well as assessing and enhancing the efficiency of on-farm water use saves money and helps plan for future needs.



Good organisation and planning is key to IFM. As a starting point it is important to identify the short and long term objectives of the farm business, reflecting on the key question of where do I want my business to go?



Well organised pollution control and by-product management will help avoid pollution, save money and plays an important part in protecting water, energy, biodiversity and soil management. In many cases farm 'wastes' are a valuable resource if used appropriately

## **Sustainable farming posters**

Download and print our five sustainable farming posters available in pdf format on the Countryside Classroom [website here](#). The posters feature: sustainable farming; soil management; water management; biodiversity; energy efficiency.

## **Video clips about IFM – sustainable farming**

Click on these links to view videos of LEAF farmers explaining the different aspects of the IFM wheel to give a snapshot of sustainable farming in the UK today – produced with support from the Crop Protection Association.



### **LEAF Landscape and Nature Conservation**



### **LEAF Community Engagement**



### **LEAF Animal Husbandry**



LEAF Education is part of Linking Environment And Farming  
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## LEAF Energy Efficiency



## LEAF Soil Management and Fertility



## LEAF Crop Health and Protection



## LEAF Water Management



## LEAF Organisation and Planning



## LEAF Pollution Control and By-Product Management

## IFM in action across the UK

LEAF Demonstration Farms are working, commercial farms practising Integrated Farm Management (IFM). LEAF Demonstration Farmers communicate, discuss and demonstrate IFM best practice amongst other farmers and also have a critical role in promoting sustainable farming to wider groups such as politicians, industry and students.

[Click here to see IFM case studies on farms across the UK](#)



For more information visit:

[www.leafuk.org](http://www.leafuk.org)