



LEAF helps farmers supplement their soils knowledge!

Improving the performance, health and long term sustainability of soil was the focus of this year's LEAF stand at Cereals.

Farmers were encouraged to brush up on their soils skills by adopting Six Simple Steps to soil management, looking at structure, drainage, compaction, soil organic matter status, soil pH and nutrients and biological health. These steps to help improve soil performance are featured in LEAF's new 'Simply Sustainable Soils' brochure, developed in partnership with Asda.

Caroline Drummond, LEAF Chief Executive said:

"It was great to meet with farmers, hear their concerns about keeping their soils healthy and see where the gaps lie in their knowledge. Listening to the issues they are facing like water shortages and climate change, and the pressures of food security, it is clear that effective soil management is key. By helping farmers take up more integrated farming systems and providing them with practical training and resources, like our new Simply Sustainable Soils brochure, LEAF is equipping farmers with the latest know-how to address these challenges head on."

Leading soils expert, Dr Alastair Leake, Chairman, Soil Management Initiative, joined the LEAF team to answer soil related questions on the stand. He said:

"There has never been a more important time for farmers to look at their soil structure and condition more carefully. We need to jump down from the tractor cab and spend a bit of time getting to know our soils again. Taking Six Simple Steps to improve soil structure and increase Soil Organic Matter will be an excellent long term investment in the future productivity of the farm."

A survey of visitors to the stand indicated that farmers needed to learn more about their soil. For example:

- Just under 60% did not know the key indicators of soil quality
- 64.5% regularly dig soil pits to assess compaction but many were unaware of the many other observations that can be taken from a soil pit
- Just under 40% did not carry out soil testing every year
- 39% were unaware of the optimal number of earthworms needed to indicate high quality soil (10+ worms)
- 93% of farmers were aware of the benefits of minimum tillage but only 67% said they used it on a rotational or occasional basis.

Press Release

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LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) promotes and develops Integrated Farm Management (IFM). It does this by developing practical guidelines and promoting the LEAF Audit.

LEAF also helps create a better public understanding of farming through a nationwide network of demonstration farms and the LEAF Marque.

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Speaking on the new brochure, Pearce Hughes, Agricultural Development Manager at Asda concluded:

“We were delighted to work with LEAF on this excellent resource. What farmers need is practical and realistic solutions to soil management. ‘Simply Sustainable Soils’ aims to inspire and encourage farmers to get the most out of their soils for the benefit of their farming businesses, the environment and the long term sustainability of our land.”

Copies of the ‘Simply Sustainable Soils’ brochure can be downloaded from the LEAF website at www.leafuk.org. <[www.leafuk.org/resources/000/595/601/LEAF-Simply Sustainable Soils.pdf](http://www.leafuk.org/resources/000/595/601/LEAF-Simply_Sustainable_Soils.pdf)>

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Notes to Editors:

1. LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) promotes environmentally responsible farming. We support farmers to produce good food, with care and to high environmental standards, identified in-store by the LEAF Marque logo. We build public understanding and trust of food and farming in a number of ways, including Open Farm Sunday and visits to our national network of Demonstration Farms. For more information on all LEAF’s work and activities, visit www.leafuk.org or contact LEAF, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LG Tel: 024 7641 3911 Fax: 024 7641 3636
2. ‘Simply Sustainable Soils’ has been produced in partnership with Asda. It is a practical, hands-on guide offering farmers Six Simple Steps to improve the performance, health and long term sustainability of their land. Looking at soil texture, structure, drainage and compaction through to nutrients and biological health, the guide helps farmers to get the best out of their soil and monitor changes in soil health. It is being sent to all Asda farmers and is available as a downloadable pdf on the LEAF website [www.leafuk.org/resources/000/595/601/LEAF-Simply Sustainable Soils.pdf](http://www.leafuk.org/resources/000/595/601/LEAF-Simply_Sustainable_Soils.pdf)
3. A high resolution of image of Caroline Drummond, LEAF Chief Executive, Pearce Hughes, Agricultural Development Manager at Asda and Dr Alastair Leake, Chairman, Soil Management Initiative is available [here](#)

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