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**Measuring and Marketing the
Environmental Costs and Benefits
of Agricultural Practice**

at the Hilton Hotel, Basingstoke

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Measuring and Marketing the Environmental Costs and Benefits of Agricultural Practice

INTRODUCTION

Can consumers trust 'green' and/or 'ethical' sourcing claims? There is increasing consumer interest in food produced in more environmentally friendly ways. Even in highly processed foods, where many of the intrinsic product attributes are only weakly related to those of their ingredients, consumers are asking questions which relate directly to agricultural management. Can we provide clear answers? Modern agri-food systems are complex and highly heterogeneous. Agriculture has shaped the UK countryside and has a range of visible and invisible impacts on the environment. Not all of these impacts and benefits are easy to measure or to link clearly to food products. Many trade-offs and interactions take place throughout the food chain; do some matter more than others?

This conference provides a critical opportunity for researchers and practitioners concerned with environmental management in the food chain to consider

- 1) how the costs and benefits of agricultural practices can be measured in practice
- 2) how such information can be used to support marketing claims.

The conference will bring together researchers and practitioners to share experiences, highlight new approaches, review the success of initiatives currently in place and look for new opportunities. Oral presentations will draw together principles and practice; posters will illustrate key case studies and throughout there will be plenty of opportunity for discussion.

During the first afternoon of the conference there will be a field trip to visit The Leckford Estate, Hampshire, which was purchased by John Spedan Lewis of Oxford Street in 1928 as his private estate, was converted into a limited company in 1929 and is now an important part of Waitrose. Leckford Farm is a working farm producing arable crops including high quality bread-making wheat which is used to make a range of Leckford label flour. The farm also supplies milk, apples, pears, apple juice, cider, free range eggs and mushrooms as well as free range Le Poulet d'Or chickens to Waitrose branches. The environmental richness and biodiversity of the estate is recognised by the designation of five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by Natural England to conserve both environmental and archaeological sites. The Estate actively manages the sites to ensure their environmental uniqueness is maintained, from reed bed cutting to maintenance of water meadow biodiversity to management of riverine woodland and through their farm management practices.

Leckford was launched as a LEAF Demonstration Farm in 2004 and they are also LEAF Marque accredited.

Papers and posters from the conference will be reproduced in a volume of *Aspects of Applied Biology*, which will be available to delegates at the conference. The organisers will also identify key papers to be submitted for publication in *Annals of Applied Biology*.

Elizabeth Stockdale, Wayne Martindale and Caroline Drummond
(AAB Convenors - Cropping and the Environment and Food Systems groups,
and Chief Executive, LEAF, respectively)

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