

Natural Environment White Paper – The Natural Choice: Securing the value of nature case study

Environmentally sensitive farming

Jon Hammond is a fourth generation fresh produce grower based in Nottinghamshire. Their 690 hectare farm produces cereals, potatoes, carrots, leeks, parsnips, a range of brassicas and rhubarb. The Hammonds are also founder members of Sherwood Produce, an eight-member producer group farming 6,500 hectares across the East Midlands and having a packing house based on their farm. It supplies ASDA, Morrisons, Tesco and other retailers.



The farm has always been managed in an environmentally-responsible manner, mainly driven by Jon's father, Bill Hammond, who believes farmers have an important role as stewards of the land. The Hammonds have worked to improve the natural environment on their land, including: hedgerow and pond regeneration and woodland planting across the farm. They are also currently in the Entry Level Stewardship scheme.

All farmers involved in the Sherwood Producer Group are LEAF Marque certified. This means that they follow the principles of Integrated Farm Management, producing crops to the very highest standards of environmental care. The externally, independently verified LEAF Marque certification is a benchmark across the whole producer group and was made a prerequisite for joining in 2005.

LEAF membership has made Jon more sympathetic to the environment, particularly at certain times of the year. For example, previously he would have ploughed up all his winter cabbage at the end of harvest in March/April. Now, he leaves the last field of 10-12 ha of cabbage stalks to allow them to re-grow and flower into the second year before ploughing, which provides a food source and shelter for insects and birds. He also leaves some of the heavier land in the middle of the farm in fallow for longer to provide a habitat for lapwings.

A recent RSPB bird survey found 63 birds species on the farm, nine of which were on the RSPB's Red List (the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action). Jon believes that some of the 63 species can be attributed to the way they operate the farm following LEAF's Integrated Farm Management. He explains:

"LEAF has helped us to find the harmony between commercial farming and environmental protection".

For more information see: www.leafuk.org