

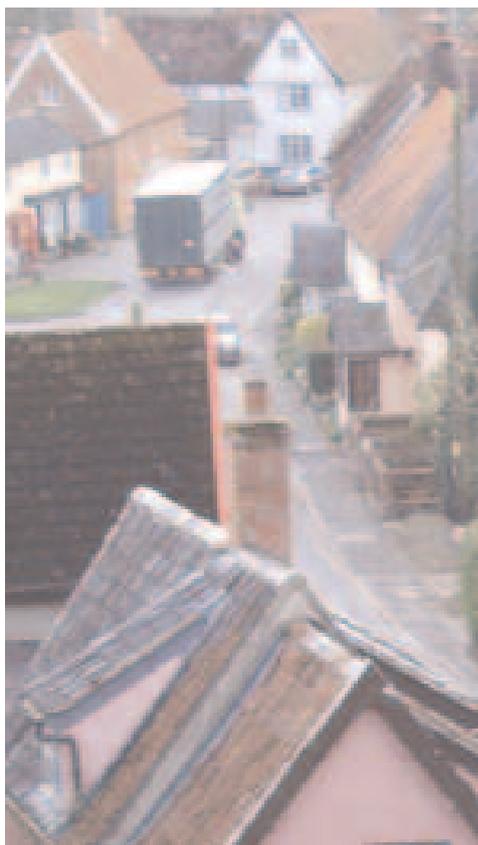
Rural Report

A monthly newsletter focusing on issues of rural life and farming of relevance to the work of the Church of England in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

Information is drawn from organisations connected with the countryside (in its widest sense) within Suffolk and beyond.

The newsletter will produce brief reports giving factual information on a range of issues. Items may be of general interest or provide opportunity for prayer.

If more details are needed on any of the topics mentioned, please contact Brian Chester at bc@bcnewslink.com or call 01379 669157



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■ **Early August** brought little sign of improvement to the 'stop-go' harvest. Crops of barley and oil seed rape have been gathered in between the showers but much of the wheat remains in the field.

■ **The expected** debate on the future of farm subsidies moved up a notch with Environment Secretary Michael Gove delivering a clear message at the Royal Norfolk Show that farmers will be expected to earn their subsidy payment rather than receive 'handouts' for the amount of land they farm. The NFU responded by placing renewed emphasis on the importance of home-grown food; the Country Land and Business Association announced a new policy framework which, it says, would use public money in a way that 'rewards farmers for managing land for the benefit of the whole of society'.

■ **Farm standards** needed to qualify for the Red Tractor logo have been upgraded after a routine review. Standards for antibiotic use across all livestock sectors have been tightened and changes made to the fresh produce scheme to reduce the risk of food safety scares. <https://www.redtractor.org.uk/what-we-do>

■ **An NFU** investigation has emphasised the human impacts of rural crime. The *Combating Rural Crime* report looks beyond the £42.5 million annual costs of such offences to show how farming families have experienced fear, intimidation and threats of violence. Offences including vehicle theft, hare coursing and fly-tipping are under reported and the lack of standard protocols across police forces has led to 'criminal tourism', the report finds. "With significant and varied differences across police forces, safety in rural areas has become a postcode lottery," said NFU deputy president Minette Batters. In 2015, Suffolk saw a 14% rise in the cost of rural crime - from £943,595 to £1,080,200. <https://www.nfonline.com/news/featured-article/nfu-launches-combatting-rural-crime-report/>

■ **Did you know** that a Raspberry Breeding Consortium is running a raspberry breeding programme in which 10,000 fruit seedlings are grown a year; over 150 different types of raspberry are produced to compare size, colour and taste and 70-100 crosses are made every second year, producing 150 seedlings per family. The programme, at the James Hutton Institute, began in 2014 and will run to 2024 with a £2.1m investment from AHDB.

■ **John Plumb**, chairman of the Agricultural Christian Fellowship and Christopher Jones, national coordinator, have written to church leaders setting out ways to meet the challenges and uncertainties now facing UK farming. <http://agriculturalchristianfellowship.uk/wp-content/uploads/Farming-in-2017-Final.pdf>

■ **Morrisons** and Sainsburys have both stepped up to the 'home-grown' plate with pledges on lamb. Morrisons is to stop imports from New Zealand and Australia; Sainsburys is to switch to 100 per cent British for new-season lamb.

■ **More than 6,000** rural households became homeless last year, according to the Institute for Public Policy Research. Record numbers of rural families are in bed and breakfasts, it says in a report *Right To Home? Rethinking homelessness in rural communities*.

www.rsnonline.org.uk/community/hidden-crisis-of-rural-homelessness

■ "We're very aware of the global threat antimicrobial resistance poses to human and animal health, and the UK veterinary profession is committed to the responsible use of antibiotics. Medicines should never be used to compensate for poor husbandry practices and routine habitual prophylactic use in healthy animals to prevent disease is a no-go. An article in the *British Medical Journal* suggests that antibiotics should be used for as short a period as possible, and that we should move away from the concept of following a predetermined course. This may indeed be a very important advance, but it is far too early to determine how this would work in veterinary practice. We need to clearly establish the evidence supporting it." British Veterinary Association junior vice president John Fishwick.

This newsletter is prepared under the guidance of the Diocesan Rural Affairs Group set up as a means of identifying emerging rural issues and considering how the church should respond.