

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 01572 757600

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Warnings from across industry echoed in the ears of MPs as they voted their opposition to a no-deal Brexit – not least among the cries of caution being that of the NFU. Its director of policy Andrew Clark said: “A no deal Brexit would be catastrophic for Britain’s farming sector. There is a very real risk that a no-deal Brexit could lead to an effective trade embargo on the export of animals and animal products to the EU, causing considerable disruption. The Government could also choose to unilaterally lower import tariffs on food. This could lead to our market being open to imports of food produced to lower standards than those upheld by British farmers.”

A report by the EAT-Lancet Commission has suggested substantial global dietary shifts to reach a ‘healthy diet’ by 2050. Consumption of fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes would be doubled and consumption of foods such as red meat and sugar reduced more than halved. The report concludes that a diet rich in plant-based foods and with fewer animal source foods would carry both improved health and environmental benefits.

“We are seeing criticisms from welfare campaigners, rewilders, climate change campaigners, and health campaigners – but all these ignore the fact that UK sheep farming works very much in harmony with our environment, our landscapes, and our human ecology – creating a countryside the majority of the public love and producing a food product that is healthy and nutritious within a balanced diet.”

National Sheep Association chief executive Phil Stocker. *Farmers Guardian*

Tension between livestock producers and vegan campaigners has increased with the launch of a ‘Project Calf’ website showing the location of UK dairy farms and encouraging protest about dairy practices.

Harry Goring from Halesworth, Suffolk has won the independent John Innes Foundation bursary which supports undergraduates, from a non-farming background, preparing for farm management and crop production careers. Harry is studying a Foundation degree in Agriculture and Farm Management at the Royal Agricultural University following a course at Easton and Otley College.

Bishop Martin has appointed the Revd Canon Sally Gaze as Archdeacon for Rural Mission. Bishop Martin said: “As Dean of Rural Mission Consultancy, Sally has been working with us to strengthen and develop church life in our rural communities. She will now take on expanded responsibilities, including the director for ‘Growing in God in the Countryside’ project’ with the support of national church funding.”

Farmers across the country are being urged to take part in the Big Farmland Bird Count, which starts on 8 February. Sponsored by the NFU, the nationwide project calls on farmers, land managers and gamekeepers to spend 30 minutes between 8 and 17 February recording bird species on their land. The results will aim to distinguish which farmland birds are thriving due to good conservation efforts while identifying those in need of most help.

For a comprehensive and revealing analysis of extent of ‘hidden hunger’ in the UK – including rural areas – go to <https://rsnonline.org.uk/hidden-hunger-how-can-we-tackle-food-poverty-and-insecurity-in-rural-areas>

More working farmers and their families are needing charity support as low income, debt, illness, evictions, extreme weather and problems with farm subsidy payments continue to beset the industry, the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution says. RABI saw a 47% rise in the amount it paid out to working farmers, farmworkers and their dependents last year compared to 2017 – and expects that trend to continue. In Suffolk the charity paid out £136,116 to a total of 41 farmers and their families compared with £125,786 in 2017. *Eastern Daily Press*

Savills’ latest Farmland Market report has shown a 1.8 per cent fall in value for prime arable land across the east of England, taking it to £8,770 an acre. Across Britain values dropped by 2 per cent to an average £8,760 per acre.

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.

