

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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Young people are pessimistic about future opportunities to live and work in rural areas and believe the pandemic will continue to affect their prospects in the long-term, according to a study by the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs. Affordable housing, connectivity and available youth services were among the challenges faced by today's rural young people who take an active part in their local communities. They want information and advice on topics ranging from mental health and wellbeing to housing, farming, training and skills. *Rose Regeneration* <http://ofi.direct/1.20100521>

The NFU is urging the government to provide immediate clarity on how fruit, vegetable and flower businesses will be able to recruit seasonal workers next year. The NFU's 2020 Horticulture Seasonal Worker Survey shows that despite the Pick for Britain campaign, UK residents made up only 11% of the workforce this year.

A Sustainable Food and Farming Scheme has been launched by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust alongside other rural organisations including the NFU and LEAF. It proposes a flexible approach to environmental land management, urges policymakers to seize the opportunity to reinvent the national approach to agriculture and conservation and recognises that the greatest chance of conservation success is by engaging with those who can make a difference on the ground.

<https://www.foodandfarmingfutures.co.uk/Library/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ZWVhNzBIY2QtZWJjNi00YWZiLWEIMTAtNWExOTFiMjJOWU1&rID=MjQzNDI=&slD=MQ==&bckToL=VHJlZQ==&qcf=&ph=VHJlZQ==>

Just 19% of farmers plan on full retirement and, those that do, retire at a later age than the wider population. Over a quarter of farmers (27%) have not discussed later life plans with anyone. The smaller the farm the less likely the farmer will retire and 21% of farmers plan to never give up. *FarmingOnline* <https://www.foodandfarmingfutures.co.uk/Library/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ZWVhNzBIY2QtZWJjNi00YWZiLWEIMTAtNWExOTFiMjJOWU1&rID=MjQzMTU=&slD=MQ==&bckToL=VHJlZQ==&qcf=&ph=VHJlZQ==>

If free range egg production continues to expand at the current rate it will create a significant oversupply, driving down the price paid to farmers and reducing profitability still further. That is according to the British Free Range Egg Producers Association following the publication of an independent report into the impact of retailer cage-free 2025 commitments. Free range production has increased by 14% since 2017 to nearly 25m hens.

Nursery World has reported on warnings from English councils that, without further government support, up to one in ten childcare providers could close this winter and that as many as one in four are at risk in rural areas. The report is based on a survey by the County Councils Network.

RABI has launched an online wellbeing community and counselling service for farming people across England and Wales as a result of increased challenges and uncertainty brought by 2020. Against a backdrop of continuing strains and demands, this new online initiative is seen as a significant step in RABI's plans to evolve its services, to better meet the changing needs of farming people. "We believe early intervention and one-to-one support are essential to ensuring good mental health and tackling the root causes of poor wellbeing. We believe that providing confidential, easily accessible, free online support can make a real difference to a wide audience," says Alicia Chivers, RABI's chief executive. *CPM Magazine* <https://rabi.org.uk/kooth>

A disappointing sugar beet crop looks set to add to a year of struggle for East Anglian farmers. An influx of aphids has hit yields and quality - with some crops only just edging above the 16% sugar content required. Poor weather has also hindered harvesting.

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