

# 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, contact [brianrobertchester@gmail.com](mailto:brianrobertchester@gmail.com) or call 01572 757600



## Issue 144: April 2025

■ **A survey for Food Waste Action Week** has found that, despite being a nation of food lovers, an estimated 510,000 tonnes of potatoes go to waste each year - 46 per cent of all potatoes bought. The largest and longest running survey of its kind, has shown that self-reported food waste has increased to 21 per cent bread, milk, potatoes and chicken. A reason could be the easing of several key pressures that had kept food waste in check over recent years, including food price inflation and concerns about the cost-of-living and food availability. *Love Food Hate Waste* says one reason is that packaged fresh food denies shoppers a chance to buy an amount closer to their needs.

■ **Grange Farm Shop**, in Hasketon, Woodbridge, has been shortlisted for the Small Farm Shop and Best in Region categories, in the annual Farm Shop and Deli Awards which celebrate some of the best specialist retailers in the UK.

■ *"With rapid advancements in robotics and AI, the line between science fiction and reality continues to blur. At the heart of this innovation lies a breakthrough: drones designed to solve pressing global challenges, from pollinating crops to navigating wildfire zones."* Madison Seckman, University of Colorado

■ *"Drones have become an increasingly common sight in the countryside, used for a variety of purposes. From children's toys and social media content creation to farming, wildlife management, surveillance, and law enforcement, drones offer many benefits. However, their growing presence also raises concerns, particularly regarding privacy, wildlife disturbance, and criminal activities."* Countryside Alliance

■ **Recent survey figures** undertaken by the British Survey of Fertiliser Practice show significant reductions in the use of all three main inputs, Comparing usage in 2023 to 2003 nitrogen usage has dropped by 30 per cent; phosphorus and potassium each by 70 per cent.

■ **New technology** has been developed to separate the fibres in the sugar beet pulp left after sugar production. Part of the fibre can be used as a nutritional supplement due to its anti-inflammatory properties and beneficial effects on our gut flora. Another part of the fiber, the cellulose, can be made into components to replace plastic. Phys Org (Technical University of Denmark).

■ **The Game and Wildlife** Conservation Trust's Allerton Project is working with the Environmental Farmers Group to create a Knowledge Hub for farmers looking to enhance their understanding of private and public funding for environmentally conscious farming; for guidance on sustainable land management and the latest innovations in nature friendly farming. The hub aims to ensure that farmers can gain knowledge on a wide range of environmental farming practices and engage confidently with new sources of funding. Environmental Farmers Group (2025)

■ **Fairfields Farm**, Wormingford, Essex, gained the Net Zero Award in the East Anglia Clean and Green Awards. Fairfields is a family-run business that specialises in growing potatoes and producing hand-cooked crisps. The award was sponsored by Ørsted's Hornsea 3 Offshore Wind Farm.

■ **The UK's four main** farming unions have issued a joint call for the government to stand up for UK agriculture in any trade negotiations with the US, following media reports of an imminent trade deal aimed at avoiding tariffs on agricultural exports. The unions are urging the government not to compromise on food safety, animal welfare and environmental standards.

A joint statement read: "With the UK farming sector already under huge strain, with confidence at an all-time low and investment dropping day by day, it cannot deal with another trade deal which sells out domestic food and farming."

■ **According to several scientific** studies, three-quarters of all insects have disappeared in the last 30 years. To counter this decline, scientists from 13 countries are collaborating on a new approach which aims to make crops, rather than the environment, more attractive to pollinators such as wild bees and butterflies.

*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.*