

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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■ **Farmers are keen** to secure a more financially and environmentally sustainable future for their businesses. But many say they don't know where to begin, according to a *Farmers Weekly* survey, and have no idea how their business will survive when the annual basic payment is phased out. The survey has revealed that a third of farm income can come from the payment. Some 52% of farmers receive up to £30,000; while 5% receive no basic payment, for one in ten it represents more than 75% of their income.

■ **An East Anglian** landowners' leader says helping farms plan for the post-Brexit loss of subsidies is her top priority as she returns from maternity leave. Cath Crowther, regional director for the Country Land and Business Association, says a key concern is the phasing out of the Basic Payment Scheme, to be replaced with a new system of green incentives called the Environmental Land Management scheme, which is still under development. *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ **The NFU** has received reports of severe storm damage to crops in East Anglia and the Cambridgeshire area. While the impact is said to be localised, one grower has estimated a yield loss of six tonnes per hectare in a crop of winter barley.

■ **A trial by** the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board has shown that, by following guidelines set by 'Best Available Techniques' and 'Associated Emission Levels', pig producers can both reduce ammonia emissions and so avoid environmental mitigation costs amounting to £15.3m.

■ **Members of the county branch** of the National Farmers' Union held a farm walk at the Euston Estate in west Suffolk on June 25 to mark the organisation's centenary. NFU county chairman Glenn Buckingham said: "It's fantastic that we have finally been able to celebrate our centenary at such a wonderful venue. It was definitely worth the wait." *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ **Visiting the British** countryside has improved the physical and mental health of people living in towns and cities across Britain over the past year, according to a survey by Censuswide. Of the 2000 responses, 87% said visits to Britain's farmed landscape had improved their wellbeing; almost half (47%) said they valued the British countryside and farmland more since the pandemic began; of those, 84% agreed their visits had made them appreciate the role farmers play creating iconic rural landscapes. *Farmers Guardian*

■ *"This food strategy should act as a wake-up call for us all that we need to value the food we eat. We need to put balance back in our diet and have a renewed emphasis on eating natural, whole foods; the kind British farmers produce in abundance. I agree that we should be supporting everyone to eat more fruit and veg, something our farmers can support by growing more, and there should be more focus on educating our children about valuing and understanding the food they eat and how it has been produced."* NFU president Minette Batters responding to the release of Henry Dimbleby's *National Food Strategy*

■ **Agriculture** is the most dangerous industry in the UK, measured by fatality and injury rate. According to the Health and Safety Executive, in the year to March 31, farm deaths rose by 60% with 34 fatalities. A survey has shown that stress and fatigue are a significant factor.

■ **Olly Spiers**, 20, who works for the Spearhead Group and Deben Farms, Shottisham, has been named Suffolk's agricultural apprentice of the year. Runner-up was 17-year-old Tom Reily from Elmsett, who works for Marst Agri having originally been with Brad Farm Machinery in Hadleigh.

■ **Nine leading** rural organisations have announced the launch of a partnership to promote the conservation and community benefits provided by the countryside. *Aim to Sustain* has been formed to highlight the role that sustainable game shooting plays in delivering biodiversity net gain through preserving and protecting rural landscapes and wildlife.

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.

