

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



Issue 114: September 2022

■ “Farmers will be worried by news that CF Fertilisers is temporarily suspending ammonia production. It’s a sign of the pressure the fertiliser and energy markets are under, pressure which is having serious impacts for farm businesses across East Anglia. Growers are already facing soaring costs for UK-produced fertiliser, up 158% year-on-year, with concerns about lack of availability of fertiliser for 2023. This added uncertainty is the last thing they need.” NFU East Anglia regional director Zoe Leach.

■ Farmers and growers are being urged to wave a flag for their industry on Back British Farming Day—September 14. MPs are asked to show their support by wearing a wheatsheaf lapel badge.

https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/back-british-farming-day-2022/?utm_source=b240822&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=bulletin

■ The UK's pig sector - including East Anglia's sizeable herd - is set for a massive reduction as farmers exit the industry, experts warn. With the cost of producing pigs outpacing the price farmers can achieve, many are due to leave, they say. Andrew Knowles, chief executive of Framlingham-based farm co-operative Fram Farmers described it as ‘Armageddon’ as up to a fifth of the herd goes. Bury St Edmunds pig consultant Peter Crichton said a massive shortage of pigs was predicted for the autumn as herds were reduced. “I don't think the supply chain has quite woken up to what's going on,” said Mr Knowles. “I think the shelves of pig meat in supermarkets could get smaller and they'll be replaced by more chicken.” *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ Suffolk farmer Sue Cross has spread more than 70 water trays across her land giving vital aid to wildlife during the drought. Many different animals and birds were drawn to the water on the farm near Bury St Edmunds.

Visit: <https://www.instagram.com/suecrosswildlife/?hl=en>

■ Suffolk was the fifth worst-hit county by cost of rural crime in 2021 with Essex second, according to rural crime claim statistics. A total of £1,178,428 was paid out in Suffolk; for Essex the figure was £1,683,052.

■ An international team of researchers from 16 laboratories conducting a long-term study has found that climate-friendly farming practices could lead to higher crop yields, reduced costs and improved local ecosystems.

■ Retailers must move away from rigid size and shape standards for produce, says the NFU. The public needs to know about all the food that's being wasted. “The modern consumer has been trained to buy things looking perfect but I think that's wrong,” said a spokesperson. “There is a lot that could be done in the supply chain to provide food at a reasonable cost to the consumer. There would be a lot less food waste if people were happy to have access to them.”

■ The supermarket Lidl has told farmer suppliers that drought-affected crops will be sold in its stores. The hot, dry weather has reduced yields and stunted growth, which would normally mean the fruit and vegetables might not meet supermarket specification. Carrots, onions, potatoes and apples are among the crops likely to be worst affected. But Lidl has acted to prevent ‘perfectly good, quality produce’ from going to waste.

“The impact of diet on learning is huge. In schools where they provide two quality meals a day, attention spans and learning ability increase dramatically. It’s so simple; we need to go back to the mentality of valuing the food on our plates and not wasting anything. As part of that, I think food and farming should be on the national curriculum. If we can educate young people, the adults of the future, about the pros and cons of various agricultural production systems, their environmental impact, and the benefits of a healthy diet then they will hopefully make the right choices. This will be from a reliable knowledge base rather than clever marketing schemes or social media campaigns.” Adam Henson, *Countryfile*, Cotswold Farm Park and farmer.

From the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust’s website *Working for Wildlife* <https://www.workingforwildlife.co.uk/>

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.