

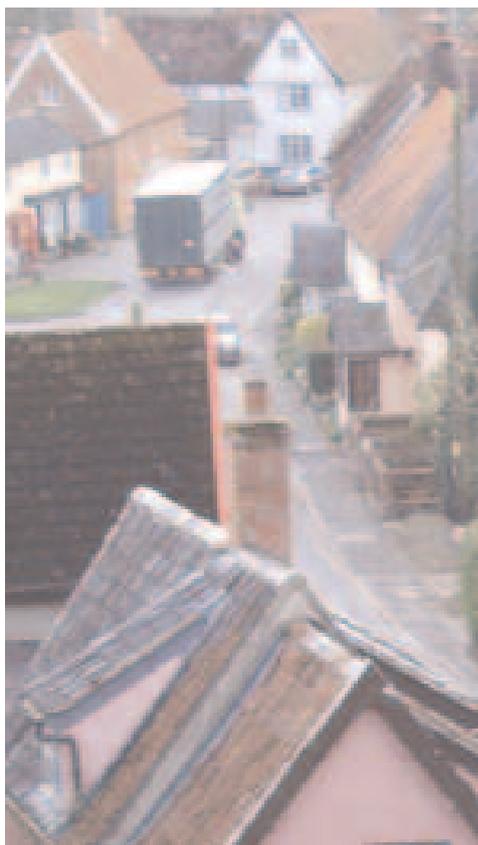
Rural Report

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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■ **Twenty one people** died as a result of accidents in agriculture in 2019/20 – 18 less than the previous year and nine less than five-year average – but agriculture still has the highest rate of fatal injury of all the main industry sectors; 18 times higher accounting for around 20% of worker fatalities. Over 65s suffered a fatal injury rate that was nearly six times higher than the 16-24 age group.

■ **Weather induced** challenges that hampered the drilling and growth of this year's cereal crops, continued with a hit and miss start to the harvest. Combines gathering early barley crops were stopped by intermittent rain. Farmers will welcome a run of dry weather to give them some relief in what has been a difficult year although cereal yields are still expected to be down.

■ **Although not** a common sight in Suffolk, the sheep which bear the county's name rank high in popularity among sheep farmers seeking to boost the quality of their flock. Two pedigree rams recently sold at Lanark fetched the impressive totals of 50,000 and 32,000 guineas!

■ **The National Trust**, which manages over 780 miles of coastline and 250,000 hectares of mainly open access land, has reported a huge increase in what it dubbed as 'fly camping', where vast quantities of litter and sometimes tents are left behind by illegal campers. Many campsites and caravan parks in popular areas are already close to capacity throughout the rest of the summer. This is leading to concerns that more people could resort to camping without permission on public or private land. *The Guardian*.

■ **The Country Land and Business Association** has called for the countryside code to be taught in schools to help people enjoy the outdoors safely. The organisation warns that a lack of education in relation to the countryside code has 'left a generation without a basic understanding' of how to behave in the rural environment.

■ **Public backing** of British farmers has grown to a record high as a result of farmers' efforts to keep the nation fed throughout the coronavirus pandemic, says the NFU. A survey revealed that 75% of people had a positive view of UK farming. The NFU's #YourHarvest campaign is also helping arable farmers to reach out to the public and MPs through social media.

■ **Thirty-eight** of the UK's largest organisations involved in the production and sale of meat have declared an ambition to halve the amount of meat that goes to waste each year and help the UK achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions under 'new collective action'. The Waste and Resources Action Programme estimates that each year around 380,000 tonnes of the meat intended for consumption goes uneaten - much of this discarded in the home.

■ **The Rural Services Network**, along with the Rural Housing Alliance, the National Housing Federation and Acre, have written to Secretary of State for Housing Robert Jenrick to highlight the needs of rural communities and the valuable role they will play in the country's future. The letter says: 'Funding more affordable homes will offer somewhere secure for low income households and essential workers. Rural housing associations stand ready to lend their skills, knowledge and investment to help build these homes'.

■ **According to Defra** the area of land managed organically in the UK grew slightly in 2019 but is 34% lower than the peak recorded in 2008.

■ *"We have lulled ourselves into a false sense of security, in thinking that things had changed in the retail food market. Whilst there has been a greater degree of interest in provenance, food standards and food quality from consumers, retail barons are still fixated with driving down prices to unsustainable levels. These price battles go to the heart of the reason why we need legislative protection for our high environmental, animal welfare and food safety standards, as we enter trading arrangements outside the historical links with the EU."*

Tenant Farmers Association chief executive, George Dunn.

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.