

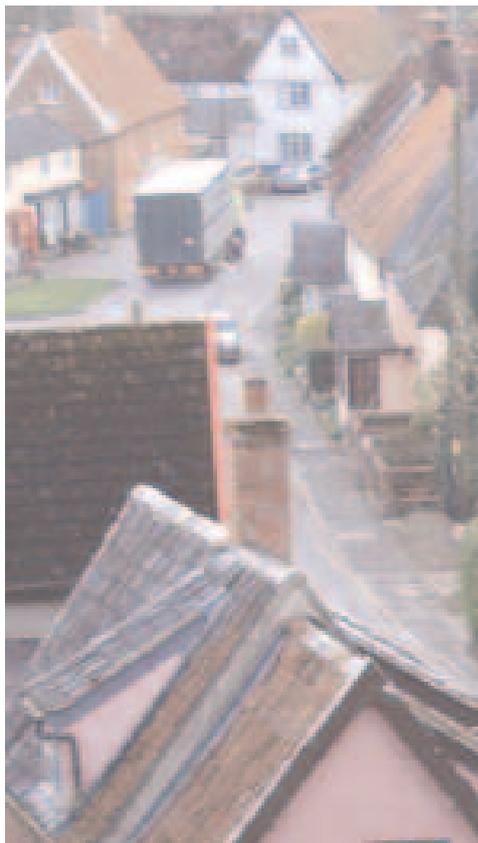
# Rural Report

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](mailto:bc@bcnewslink.com) or call 01572 757600



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**In a timely boost** for British agriculture, a report by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board has revealed a surge in support for farmers who have been battling the multiple threats of the coronavirus, Brexit trade uncertainty and disruption, flood devastation and the anti-meat and dairy agenda. Two-thirds (66%) of the 1,500 consumers quizzed said they felt very or somewhat positive about British agriculture. Farmers continue to command the deepest trust within the food supply chain – driven by their expertise and shared values around animal welfare and protecting the environment.

*Farmers Weekly*

**By mid-January** almost 250 farmers had signed up to an interactive map launched by the NFU to recognise the work being done across the country by farmers seeking to make their farms net-zero for greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. <https://www.nfuonline.com/news/latest-news/achieving-net-zero-meeting-the-climate-change-challenge>

**The RABI** has launched an extensive research project in England and Wales to assess the wellbeing of 'farming people'. The survey will consider, for the first time, the relationship between physical health, mental wellbeing and health of farm businesses. The aim is to gather 26,000 responses. RABI chief executive Alicia Chivers has appealed for widespread support for the project. "The data that's collected will enable RABI and our partners to develop effective tools and support strategies for farming people in years to come," she said.

**The government** has granted emergency use authorisation for a neonicotinoid on the sugar beet crop in 2021 to control aphids that can carry the disease Virus Yellow. NFU president Minette Batters said that, unfortunately, UK growers had no other way of controlling the aphids and there was no treatment for Virus Yellow once a crop was infected. The damage caused in 2020 had forced many to question their future growing sugar beet.

*"Two quotations which are relevant to soil health and the ways it is influenced by human activities. One made by a former US President more than 80 years ago: 'The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself.' The other, pointedly relevant to the health and functioning of agricultural soils: 'Sustainable agriculture is not a luxury. When an agricultural resource base erodes past a certain point, the civilisation it has supported collapses. There is no such thing as a post-agricultural society.'"*

David Powlson, Rothamsted Research

**UK pork processors** have experienced significant issues in exporting products to the EU, bringing part of the industry to a standstill, risking knock-on impacts on farms, according to the National Pig Association. Processor members have reported that excessive bureaucracy, associated with new paperwork requirements, has caused delays at Dover, Calais and other ports. With pork being a perishable product, these delays are making UK shipments unattractive to buyers in the EU, with consignments rejected and future orders cancelled.

*"The Terra Carta (Earth Charter) offers the basis of a recovery plan that puts nature, people and planet at the heart of global value creation – one that will harness the precious, irreplaceable power of nature combined with the transformative innovation and resources of the private sector."* The Prince of Wales unveiling a project that aims to provide a 'roadmap to 2030 for businesses to move towards an ambitious and sustainable future'.

**The NFU** has called for urgent action to ensure food growers can cope with water issues ranging from floods to droughts. Severe flooding this winter has proved the urgent need for a 'joined-up' strategy to protect farmland and water resources, said farming leaders. It is a particularly important issue in East Anglia, where the low-lying, fertile soils and dry, warm climate make it a vital region for UK food production - but also vulnerable to winter flooding and summer droughts. *East Anglian Daily Times*

*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.*