

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 108: March 2022

■ *“Suffolk is a highly productive county agriculturally and I think our farm businesses are in a strong position. The key is going to be fitting in the aspirations of how to achieve public money for public goods with this highly productive base. It’s important that we actively engage in the process to ensure we do meet some of those challenges, while remaining productive. One of the things I’ve been saying, for about 20 years, is we need to start farming as our grandfathers used to farm, rather than having an over heavy reliance on artificial inputs. I think everyone is starting to appreciate that.”* Andrew Blenkinsop, new chairman of the Suffolk NFU.
East Anglian Daily Times

■ **According to the Cambridge Dictionary**, rewilding is ‘the process of protecting an environment and returning it to its natural state, for example, by bringing back wild animals that used to live there’. Rewilding, as initially envisaged in North America, was focused on the three Cs – protecting large wilderness cores, wildlife corridors and enabling the recovery of large carnivores. It was about large-scale restoration of self-regulating ecosystems. As the practice of rewilding has globalised and been transported across borders and continents, it has evolved to suit the specifics of a location. *Savills*

■ **A YouGov poll** commissioned by the animal protection charity Open Cages has found that 78% of British people oppose factory farming practices which cause animals pain or suffering as a means of producing affordable food.

■ **Arthur Rank Centre’s** three-day rural ministry course begins on Tuesday June 16 at the King’s Park Conference Centre, Northampton. The course is designed for lay and ordained church leaders across the denominations entering a rural appointment for the first time, and those already in rural ministry who feel the need for a refresher’. <https://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/ruralministrycourse/rural-ministry-course-booking-form>

■ **Researchers** at the universities of Reading, Exeter and Sheffield, have concluded that while Covid-19 led to worsening mental health among farmers, those surveyed said that they were already struggling before the pandemic. Changes to the basic payment system to support farmers following Brexit were a major factor for worsening mental health, alongside heightening issues such as isolation, bureaucracy, and climatic conditions.

■ **The Russian invasion** of Ukraine sent wheat prices to new highs amid uncertainty in the commodities markets. Grain traders across East Anglia saw standard feed wheat prices rise by £16/t on the day of the invasion - on top of £8 on the eve of the Russian advance. "Grain prices have absolutely flown through the roof," said grain trader Ben Schadla-Hall. "We have not had a chance to catch a breath yet. Phones have been ringing off the hook - it's pretty insane." *EADT*. *In each of the past five years, Russia and Ukraine combined have exported between 50m and 60m tonnes of wheat, accounting for more than 25% of world wheat trade.*

■ **The NFU president** has launched a scathing attack on the ‘contradictory nature’ of Government policy, branding its handling of the pig crisis a ‘disgrace’ and a ‘disaster’ and demanding that it comes up with a coherent plan that delivers for British farming. Speaking at the National Farmers Union Conference in Birmingham, Minette Batters said the past year had been a ‘rollercoaster’ and that it was the Government’s duty to pre-empt crises rather than ‘repeatedly running into them’. Mrs Batters said that a series of failings in the pig sector had seen 40,000 healthy pigs culled. “This, truly is, an utter disgrace and a disaster for the pig industry.” *Farmers Guardian*

■ **The Suffolk Show** will go ahead this year after being cancelled for two years due to coronavirus crisis. Show organisers report that the event (planned for May 31/June 1) has a sound financial base largely due to the performance of investments.

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.

