

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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“As we enter a new world where the UK aims to be a major player in global trade, and our farmers will be facing much more competition from imports, now is the time to drive our agri-food exports.” NFU president Minette Batters.

Free range and organic hens will be allowed to roam outside from May 2 with the lifting of a mandatory housing order imposed to restrict the spread of avian influenza. Free range eggs will be back on the shelves but producers’ plight continues as supermarkets show reluctance to increase prices to help meet extra costs of production. Robert Gooch, chief executive of the British Free Range Egg Producers Association said: “There are clear and obvious cost increases being heaped upon farmers, and retailers simply aren’t sufficiently adjusting the retail price. Any increases being made are too little and too slow. They are suffocating businesses. We’ve asked every major retailer to increase the price of free range eggs by at least 40p per dozen – organic eggs need an increase closer to 80p per dozen. Only two retailers had the decency to acknowledge our request, and not one has done enough to meet the additional costs of producing eggs during this crisis.”

Fen Farm Dairy, Bungay, was named Manufacturer of the Year at the BizX Forum and Awards ceremony. Owners Jonny and Dulcie Crickmore said: “The judges loved the fact that we undertook a challenging product to make - French brie – in a country that wasn’t France and have been able to not only grow but have consistently made a great product while increasing the size of production.” *East Anglian Daily Times*

Farmers are being warned again to increase security of diesel and oil storage tanks as reports increase of organised gangs siphoning-off fuel. Fertiliser stores are said to be another target.

Market returns for pig producers have been rising in recent weeks – but still fail to cover cost of production. The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board reported that for week ending April 9 pig farmers returns were 157.7p/kg while costs totalled between 203p/kg and 216p/kg – meaning producers face ‘some very difficult decisions.’

Parliament’s Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has concluded that Covid and Brexit have had a ‘huge impact’ on the sector. The committee was told that industry organisations had issued warnings since spring 2021. But government delays had ‘led to a serious impact on animal welfare, food security and the mental health of workers.’

Pea crops could be expanding. The demand for pea protein is on the rise and the UK is leading the way with the largest uptake in Europe. China and Canada are now primary suppliers but the pattern could change in favour of UK farms.

Farmers are moving back to grow oilseed rape. The price paid for the crop is rising as retailers look to balance shortages caused by the war in Ukraine.

The RABI is offering grants of up to £1,500 as part of its fuel poverty response. The money can be spent on energy costs or work to improve home energy efficiency.

LEAF’s Open Farm Sunday is set to return this year on Sunday 12 June. The Suffolk Show - 31 May and 1 June.

Pig farmers have been put on alert to the increased risks of incursions and secret filming by animal activists ahead of the Pig and Poultry Fair in May. Zoe Davies, chief executive of the National Pig Association, said the organisation has seen an ‘elevation of animal rights activity’ and urged farmers to be extra vigilant.

The Grundisburgh Dog Delicatessen has been named the best farm shop/deli in East Anglia just eleven months after opening. The shop began as a side project of The Dog at Grundisburgh during the 2020 lockdown. Owner Eilir Rogers said: “It’s so lovely to receive recognition for the hard work we have put in. It’s a seal of approval on what we are doing.”

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.

