

# 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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■ **Rumours of a wholesale** revision of farm support caused anxiety among environmental groups that schemes to aid the recovery of wildlife could be put in jeopardy. The Bishop of Norwich, the Church of England's lead bishop on the environment, added to the cries of concern over the future of 'long-established (and fought for) protection'. Defra has since denied that the schemes would be scrapped but confirmed that a rapid review of farm support would be held 'in light of the pressures farmers are facing'.

■ **Avian flu has returned** with a protection zone being declared across the east of England. The latest outbreak (September 29) was close to Lowestoft. Previously, a total of ten cases had been reported in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex.

■ **A national study** by the University of Exeter and Farming Community Network has revealed that many farmers feel lonely, disconnected from the wider public and have been subjected to abuse. The *East Anglian Daily Times* reported that while charity workers in East Anglia agree that farmers in this region are under huge strain, they believe the public is more sympathetic to farmers' plights than the national study suggests. At the same time, they accept there could be gaps in knowledge about the problems those in the industry face with farmers feeling undervalued which is not helped by lack of understanding from the general public about what is involved in farming and its unique pressures.

■ **Matt Hubbard**, people director and East of England ambassador for Lloyds Banking Group, is quoted as saying that mounting challenges were putting pressure on farmers - in particular those involved in livestock. "Often dubbed the 'Breadbasket of England' and famed for pig and poultry farming, the East generates millions for the local economy each year," he said. "The sense of pride and love for agriculture is clear, yet the pressure to sustain businesses, jobs, and traditions, all while preparing for a changing world, is felt by many."

■ *'While 'conventional' farming typically relies on fossil fuel-derived fertilisers and chemical sprays, agroecology minimises synthetic inputs and works instead with nature. As the most established example of agroecology, organic farming demonstrates that livestock can support nature and contribute to climate goals.'* Soil Association

■ **The summer drought** has delayed the harvest of East Anglia's sugar beet crop resulting in British Sugar putting back the opening dates for its factories. Bury St Edmunds and Cantley in Norfolk will open later than usual this year, on October 5 and 20 respectively.

■ **Growers in eastern** regions of England, including East Anglia, are reporting high levels of flea beetle on winter oilseed rape. One prediction is that 20 per cent of plantings could be lost. Early reports also indicate a reduction in potato yields as a result of the drought.

■ **Thefts of farm** pickup trucks have more than doubled as the value of second-hand vehicle continues to rise, according to rural insurer NFU Mutual. Monthly figures comparing this year with 2021 show that older trucks with less-sophisticated security are most likely to be stolen. Toyota Hiluxes and Mitsubishi L200s are the most regularly targeted pickup models. *Farmers Guardian*

■ **A group of farmers**, including Jeremy Clarkson, has told the government it must slash the 'mountains of regulations which seek to micromanage every acre' by half before the next General Election.

■ **The Bat Conservation Trust** is continuing to seek support for its protest campaign to prevent any weakening of legislation to protect wildlife. The government is reported to be reviewing the Habitats Regulations which could lessen restrictions that presently protect bats. Kit Stoner, chief executive of the Trust said: "The positive results we are recording via the National Bat Monitoring Programme indicate that strong legal protection works, and conservation action to protect and conserve bats is achieving success. It is vitally important that this continues."

*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.*