

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, contact brianrobertchester@gmail.com or call 01572 757600



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■ **Three Suffolk farmers** feature on the short lists of the Farmers Weekly Farmer of the Year awards. Tom Forrest, Frederick Hiam Ltd, Brandon Fields, Brandon and Ryan McCormack, Dennington Hall Farms, Woodbridge, are both contenders for the Farm Manager of the Year while Chris Fogden, Bridge Cottage, Fakenham Magna is a finalist for the Pig Farmer of the Year accolade. Final judging is now underway with the category winners – as well as the overall winner of the Farmer of the Year Award – being named at a ceremony at London's Grosvenor House hotel on Thursday 2 October.

■ **Self-driving tractors**, once a futuristic concept, are rapidly becoming a commercial reality, propelled by major manufacturers such as John Deere, CNH Industrial, and Monarch Tractor. With a growing emphasis on automation, precision agriculture, and sustainable farming practices, experts believe these AI-powered machines are set to dramatically reshape how food is produced worldwide. *Agritech Future*

■ **UK farm income** rose by 7.7 billion (26.4 per cent) in 2024. Average farm gate price for milk was 16 per cent higher against a five-year average; prime cattle prices were up by six per cent; lamb by 13 per cent; pigs saw a reduction of 7.6p/kg. Arable farms reported reductions on the value of wheat (down 26.9 per cent) and barley (14.1 per cent). *AHDB*

■ **A major** food waste-to-energy scheme for Suffolk has been given the green light. Southwold pubs and brewing group Adnams and its energy partner Bio Capital have got the go-ahead for a 49,000 tonne Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facility at Reydon, Southwold. The aim is to revive a closed AD plant originally built on site in 2010 to enable it to deal with all 30,000t of Suffolk's domestic food waste as well as brewery and restaurant waste. *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ **Brampton Plough Day** and Country Fayre, Beccles, on Sunday September 7 aims to show the 'the rich rural heritage of East Anglia'. Organisers say the event will celebrate rural life, skills and trades of the past – alongside a display of vintage farm machinery.

■ **'Communication, compromise and common sense'** are crucial for families seeking to safeguard the future of their rural businesses ahead of government cuts to inheritance tax relief. That was a key message from rural agency Savills and law firm Mills and Reeve during a rural seminar at the Jockey Club in Newmarket. Michael Horton, who is based in the Savills' Ipswich office and specialises in tax and generational planning, said: "To date, the government is maintaining its position on these changes and it's important steps are taken now towards planning for future liabilities. For the last seven months or so the telephone has been very busy, and estate and tax planning has been at the top of the agenda." *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ **Planting flower** strips in a field with at least two species can increase the number of natural enemies of pests by 70 percent. The more flower species, the better the effect, according to a new meta-analysis. *Science Daily*

■ **The concerning exodus** of dairy farmers from the industry has continued, with the total number of GB dairy producers falling to just 7,040 in April 2025, according to the AHDB's latest survey of milk buyers. This represents a 2.6 per cent fall on the previous year and indicates that a further 190 producers left the sector in the past 12 months. Much of this decline took place during the winter months, with 160 fewer farms in production now compared with last October. This is despite farmgate milk prices holding relatively strong throughout the past year. *Farmers Weekly*

■ **The UK** horticultural sector contributes £5 billion a year to the UK economy and employs 50,000 people. It accounts for nine per cent of the total contribution of agriculture to the economy but uses less than one per cent of the UK's farmland. Green Alliance is calling for support to help the sector grow.

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.