

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



Issue 146: June 2025

■ **The Soil Association** reports that organic farming in England has been stuck in a rut for over a decade. Despite growing public support for sustainable, nature-friendly food, farmers lack the support they need to make the switch. It's a missed opportunity for our health, our environment, and our countryside, says the association.

■ **RABI has announced** the planned launch of FarmersAid, a pioneering initiative that will provide farmers with trauma guidance to use in the crucial moments following a serious on-farm accident. Launching in January, the first phase of FarmersAid will centre around a free, easy-to-use smartphone app. The app offers step-by-step instructions for treating the most common life-threatening injuries on farm – such as crush incidents, falls from height, and severe bleeding – enabling users to act effectively before emergency services can reach the scene.

■ **Scientists** at the James Hutton Institute in Scotland have found that a fungus hiding inside common grasses could play a major role in helping UK farmers tackle some of their toughest challenges including natural pest protection and increased drought resistance.

■ **A Chelsea Flower Show** exhibit - *Grow the Rainbow* – gained a gold medal for the Capel St Mary heirloom seeds business She Grows Veg run by Kate Cotterill and Lucy Hutchings. The exhibit featured 450 vegetables, microgreens and seeds with every colour 'offering different health benefits'.

■ **This year's** Open Farm Sunday is on June 8. Visit <https://farmsunday.org/> for details of opportunities across the region.

■ **A poll** among young adults named Sir David Attenborough as 'best placed' to represent the Great British Countryside with Jeremy Clarkson (Clarkson Farm) taking second spot.

■ **Turkey producers** across East Anglia are hoping to reverse a move towards cheap imports by adapting to consumer trends and embracing a new campaign. Paul Kelly of Kelly Turkeys - which runs a hatchery at Danbury in Essex - says the industry is planning a major campaign next year to coincide with the 500th anniversary of the first turkeys arriving in the UK from America. Producers need to give butchers "an offer not to compete with imports on price, but on provenance and quality and welfare", he said. *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ **As momentum builds** for a more sustainable farming sector, there is compelling evidence of the essential role of livestock, says the Sustainable Food Trust. "Regenerative farming systems – those that support the health of both people and planet – depend on crop rotations with grasses and legumes that naturally improve soil health. Cows and sheep can convert grasses into highly nutritious foods and, in doing so, make a vital contribution to the UK's food security," says the Trust.

■ **The National Farmers' Union** used the Suffolk Show to re-state its concerns over the future of UK farming. NFU vice president Rachel Hallos said farmers were having to deal with much uncertainty. "They don't quite know what direction they are moving," she said. The NFU was trying to encourage farmers to become as resilient as possible but uncertainty wasn't helped by global events - and climate change. EADT

■ **Alistair Mackintosh**, new chairman of the farm assurance scheme Red Tractor, has vowed to rebuild farmer trust, ease audit pressures, and improve communication at a time of significant scrutiny of the UK's most widely used farm assurance scheme. Speaking to *Farmers Weekly*, he admitted that Red Tractor had lost farmer support and made serious mistakes, including the poorly handled rollout of an environmental bolt-on module (now scrapped). "We didn't consult properly with the wider industry. Farmers felt it was being forced on them without adding value. We hold our hands up," he said.

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.