

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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■ **The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI)** is launching a plan to provide 'life-saving early action' following serious on-farm accidents. RABI FarmersAid has been developed to support people during the first ten minutes after a serious injury. Farming remains one of the most dangerous professions in the UK, accounting for 20 per cent of workplace deaths despite representing just one per cent of the workforce. FarmersAid is designed to guide the people already on site – family members, colleagues or workers - during the most critical minutes.

■ *'While the industry grapples with ongoing recruitment and retention challenges, we were encouraged to learn from nearly half of young people we asked that they're not turning their backs on farming - they simply want clearer pathways. If we improve awareness and access, agriculture has a real opportunity to inspire the next generation to work in an already thriving industry.'* Harper Adams University (2026)

■ **The 2025 Suffolk Show** attracted 82,828 visitors over two days in May. Despite showers and a breeze on show days, it was seen as 'a great success and very well supported by volunteers and visitors.'

■ **Eighteen major hospitality** chains have stepped back from a chicken welfare pledge, prompting accusations of retreat just as momentum builds behind the higher standards. Better Chicken Commitment is a voluntary framework designed to improve broiler welfare through slower-growing breeds, lower stocking densities and enhanced living conditions. BCC chicken is already on the market but the reluctant companies say the move to slower-growing breeds will cause supply chain difficulties. *FarmingUK*

■ *'Artificial intelligence has moved well beyond experimental stages in most sectors and is well-integrated into our day-to-day lives. Across the agri-tech sector, all signs point to increasing use of AI enabled decision support and data analytics in farming.'* UK Agri-Tech Centre

■ **Morrisons is committing** over £1.6 billion to British agriculture and food production in 2026, underlining its position as British farming's single biggest direct supermarket customer. More than 2,500 farmers producing meat, fish, dairy and eggs are part of the 'partnership scheme'.

■ **Fresh food sales** at Tesco have climbed by 6.6 per cent on the previous year, according to its chief executive, Ashwin Prasad. Speaking at the NFU Conference in Birmingham, Mr Prasad said demand for 'fresh healthy British home-grown food' had never been stronger among its customers. *Farmers Weekly*

■ **Manure** is one of the most valuable resources produced on-farm. When managed well, it boosts soil health, cuts fertiliser bills, strengthens resilience and reduces environmental impact. The key is maximising the benefits while minimising the risks. *Farm Carbon Toolkit (2026)*

■ **Maize has the potential** to outperform many alternative arable break crops in financial return and rotational benefits such as improved grass weed control, according to a recent Limagrain Field Seeds webinar, attended by farmers from across the country. *Tillage & Soils (2026)*

■ *'We will not be satisfied until every child has a healthy and sustainable diet, until every forest is managed regeneratively, until every farm has a viable pathway to a resilient, ethical, nature and climate-positive future. These ambitions are not a pipe dream now, but within our grasp, if we work wisely and together.'*

Helen Browning, chief executive of the Soil Association.

■ **New figures show** that this region continues to be a 'regular dumping ground for fly-tipping'. In the East of England there were 100,727 incidents on public land and in the East Midlands the figure was 100,462. Across the country, councils dealt with 1.26 million fly-tipping incidents in 2024/2025, an increase of nine per cent on the previous year. These figures are just for waste illegally dumped on public land and reported – so the true number of incidents is far higher.

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.