

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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■ **Low prices and rising costs** mean profitability in the combinable crop sector is projected to fall below its long-term trend. Livestock sectors are performing relatively well, based on high prices and low feed costs but with much less profit from subsidy. Some farmers will need to rely more heavily on their diversified income this year and others should build their businesses to prepare for when it is needed more. This is one finding from the newly published Nix Farm Management Pocketbook. *The Andersons Centre (2025)*

■ **Chris and his wife Debi Edwards** have stepped away from farming land at Corton (north-east Suffolk) to focus on a new venture to secure their future. The couple have opened the gates of Woburn Farm in Stirrups Lane, Corton, offering a space for live entertainment, mountain bike enthusiasts, and private events. The idea was founded in 2018 when Mr Edwards was told they would be losing land from both Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils due to development plans. "It was a survival plan - I thought we need to secure a future," he said. "We currently get a lower price for barley or wheat than my father in the late 1980s." *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ *'If consumers want affordable food in the long run, it's time to stop asking how to keep prices low and start asking how to keep food supplies secure. That means fairer treatment of farmers, smarter use of resources and consumers willing to accept some short-term price volatility. Otherwise, the next bad year will not be the exception, it will be the rule.'* Mnoj Dora, Anglia Ruskin University

■ **A £3m reservoir** is nearing completion on a major East Anglian farm in a bid to safeguard water supplies during increasingly hot and dry summers. The 22,500-acre Elveden Estate, near Thetford, is making the 'strategic investment' to store up to 500,000 cubic metres of water - equivalent to 200 Olympic-sized swimming pools. The reservoir will be filled from November onwards using licensed winter water abstraction from the River Lark. *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ **Waitrose** has committed to selling only 100% free-range own-label British pork by 2027, in partnership with Pilgrim's Europe and UK pig farmers.

■ **The balance between** food production and environmental schemes continues to be a major discussion, particularly as just over half of farms in England reduced cropping for harvest 2025 to take part in such schemes. Insights from the recently released AHDB *Spring 2025 Planting and Variety Survey* sheds light on how these incentives are shaping farmer decisions and land use. According to the survey, just over half (56.1%) of English farmers have made a modest reduction to their cropped arable area to take part in agri-environment schemes.

■ *'Scientific evidence increasingly refutes the alarmist narrative that our farmland bird and insect populations are disappearing due to intensive agriculture. In fact, total bird and insect numbers in Britain have been stable for the past 30 years. Freshwater insects are thriving. Many of the organisations behind these misleading claims of ecological collapse have built their campaigns, and their fundraising strategies, on such fear-mongering. In doing so they risk undermining the very causes they claim to represent.'* Peter Button, Daniel Pearsall and Matt Ridley.

Science for Sustainable Agriculture

■ **Suffolk potato farmers** are reporting damaging price falls. Chris Suckling of Holbrook on the Shotley Peninsula, and Russel Abbott of Tattingstone, Ipswich, say the price they are getting is so low it no longer covers their costs. Retail prices are three times higher than the price they received, they say.

East Anglian Daily Times

■ **If you would like to keep a duck**, the Rare Breed Survival Trust wants to hear from you. There are 16 native duck breeds on the RBST Watchlist, all of which means there is real concern for their future. The conservation of these breeds is a priority to the RBST.

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.