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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■ **An arable farmer** plagued by hare coursers has said daily incidents have caused nearly £30,000 in damages. Matthew Register has logged nearly 200 incidents in the past eight months. Among the most frightening was being prevented from leaving his grain store while hare coursing took place. Mr Register, of Great Easton, near Dunmow, said: "They were staring directly at me. I was told not to phone the police or do anything to stop them or I would suffer the consequences." *East Anglian Daily Times*

■**Jonny Crickmore** of Fen Farm Dairy, Bungay was named Entrepreneur of the Year at the 2026 BizX Awards attended by 1200 business leaders. Jonny and wife Dulcie diversified into making a brie-style cheese Baron Bigod in 2012.

■**Field margins** where hedges have been planted attract twice as many insects as those without hedges. This holds true even in agricultural areas that already contain plenty of natural habitat. Flower strips can also help, but not as much as hedges. *Phys Org (2026)*

■**More than 30 farmers** and landowners joined in a Suffolk meeting to discuss the potential of onshore wind turbines to generate alternative income streams. Members of the Upper Deben and Blyth Valley farm clusters met representatives from renewables advisor Caeli, as part of a series of discussions with farms across the region.

■**Alistair Kerr** from a family of three generations of farmers in east Suffolk has spoken of how neighbours and villagers no longer speak to him after he submitted plans to turn land into a solar farm. 'Stop Deben Solar' posters and leaflet boxes have appeared around the farm and in neighbouring villages. Mr Kerr said: "I would like to think I look at things quite fairly. I have been very surprised at the amount of personal hostility - but equally, having three young children, we have a massive responsibility to look at their future." *East Anglian Daily Times*

■**Aldi is to invest** £1.1 billion into British egg production over five years. The supermarket sells more than 1,500 tonnes of British eggs a week sourced from farms across the country. M&S has announced a £2.1bn investment in a new 10-year contract for beef and lamb producers to secure high-quality produce.

■**White Park** cattle have been moved into the Rare Breeds Survival Trust 'Priority' category, with new figures showing registrations of calves fell by 36.3 per cent between 2022 and 2025. *FarmingUK (2026)*

■**East Anglia's sugar** beet growers will be offered payments to adopt greener farming practices under a rewards scheme backed by British Sugar. The voluntary initiative will pay beet farmers for making positive changes which 'help to drive the transition to more sustainable farming practices'. It was launched in partnership with the Soil Association Exchange which will assess environmental improvements.

■**Polyculture** (growing a variety of species in the same space) in insect farming is emerging as a powerful solution for sustainable protein production. By raising multiple edible insect species within one integrated system, farms can transform food waste, agricultural by-products, and plant residues into high-quality protein, animal feed, and natural fertilizer. *Ecolonomics (2026)*

■**The UK's maize acreage** is on the rise and predictions suggest that climate change will drive this further. Prolonged wet weather has become a regular feature of UK winters which is challenging the growth of traditional cereals. *Kelvin Cave Ltd (2026)*

■**British farmers** and other industry contributors have completed delivery of 38 pick-up trucks and vans to Ukraine – the 26th successful mission by UK charity *Pick-ups for Peace* as part of the resistance against the invasion by Russia. The latest convoy arrived in the west Ukrainian city of Lviv on April 24 with the vehicles handed over to various Ukrainian organisations. *Farmers Weekly*

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.