



CHAVEREYS

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MONTHLY FARMING UPDATE

October 2023



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I Policy issues

- 1 The Government has announced it is to introduce amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill at Third Reading, enhancing Protected Landscape Management Plans and placing a strong requirement on public bodies and local authorities to contribute to their delivery.
- 2 The Scottish Government is considering putting targets for nature recovery into law, in line with those for climate change, and is seeking views on its plans to accelerate nature restoration and regeneration. The consultation sets out the key elements of Scotland's overall Biodiversity Framework, including:
 - Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy.
 - The first 5-year Delivery Plan to implement this strategy.
 - A set of principles to guide the delivery of key commitments to conserve 30 per cent of land for nature by 2030 and expand 'nature networks' across Scotland.
 - Proposals for the upcoming Natural Environment Bill, including the introduction of statutory nature recovery targets which will be binding on the Government.
 - Changes to National Parks legislation to strengthen the leadership role of National Parks in tackling the climate and biodiversity crises.
- 3 Defra is in 'serious discussions' with the Home Office on extending the seasonal workers scheme visa.
- 4 The Scottish Government has published the Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill which is intended to reform how food and farming production is supported.
- 5 The Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform has launched its global framework for regenerative agriculture. The project involves over 30 agricultural cooperatives and corporates including Nestle, Danone, ABF Sugar and PepsiCo.

II Reform

- 1 Farmers with a live Sustainable Farming Initiative agreement before the end of the year will receive their first quarterly payment by the end of the year with payment usually being made within the first month of commencement of the agreement.
- 2 As required by the Agriculture Act 2020, Defra has published the Farming and Countryside annual report for the year to 31 March 2023.

III Grants/regulations/legislation/environment

- 1 The RSPB has published its 'State of Nature Report 2023'. It claims that 19 per cent of the UK species studied have declined since 1970; 16 per cent of species are threatened with extinction in Great Britain; 151 species out of 10,008 studied have become extinct since 1500; and in Northern Ireland, 12 per cent of assessed species are at risk of extinction. Invertebrates, such as insects, spiders and millipedes, have been found, on average, in 13 per cent fewer places than in 1970. Pollinators, such as bees, hoverflies and moths, have decreased by 18 per cent on average whilst predatory insects, such as the 2-spot ladybird which help control crop pests, have declined by 34 per cent. Since 1970, 54 per cent of flowering plants and 59 per cent of bryophytes have decreased in where they are found.

- 2 Defra has announced that 19 projects developing automation and robotic technologies will share in funding of £12.5 millions to boost productivity, food security and sustainable farming practices. Projects funded by the Farming Futures Automation and Robotics competition include a system to accurately predict and enhance the quality of strawberry yields, reduce waste and optimise labour and harvesting schedules; a system to digitally map and monitor vineyards using drones, robots and sensors; and a navigation system for field-based robotic vehicles to improve accuracy and reliability and enable safe navigation in farmyard and field operations.
- 3 During September, there have been 10 sightings of Asian Hornets in Kent, 2 in Hampshire, 2 in Yorkshire, 2 in East Sussex and 1 each in London, Surrey and Essex.
- 4 Scotland's councils, with funding from the Scottish Government, will invest £5 millions this year to develop Nature Networks across the country. The funding will develop new woodlands, hedgerows, wildflower meadows and ponds as well as restoring existing natural habitats that are important for wild plants and animals.
- 5 Defra has announced funding of £25 millions to support natural flood management schemes that use techniques such as planting trees and creating wetlands to slow and store water to reduce the risk of flooding.
- 6 The Scottish Government has published the Bee Health Improvement Partnership, an Implementation Plan which complements the 10-year Honey Bee Health Strategy (2022-32).
- 7 As a result of unprecedented demand, Defra has increased by £1 million the funding of training courses in forestry and arboriculture.
- 8 From 17 October, the use of snares and glue traps will be illegal in Wales.
- 9 The Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland is to distribute £36 millions to 27 projects across Scotland to help them scale up their conservation work.

IV Other matters of farm finance and tenure

- 1 Total Income from Farming in the regions of England in 2022 has been published. TIFF increased in all regions by an average of 15 per cent; the main contributors were the East at 19 per cent and the South West at 17 per cent; the lowest contributors were the North East at 5 per cent and the North West at 7 per cent; the East has had the highest TIFF in 6 of the last 10 years and has been second highest in the other 4; the North East has had the lowest TIFF in each of the last 10 years; and the largest increase in TIFF was in the South West, up 21 per cent to £979 millions.
- 2 As at 1 June 2023, the utilised agricultural area in England was 8.8 million hectares, 68 per cent of the total area. The croppable area was unchanged at 55 per cent of the total or 4.9 per cent million hectares. However, permanent grassland fell by 2.9 per cent to 3.5 million hectares. The area of arable crops fell by 1.3 per cent to 3.7 million hectares. The area of owned agricultural land fell by 0.5 per cent to 6.2 million hectares while rented land fell by 0.9 per cent to 2.9 million hectares.
- 3 The number of people working on agricultural holdings in England on 1 June was 292,000, down 2.9 per cent on 2022. Farms, business partners, directors and spouses fell by 0.6 per cent to 179,000, regular workers fell by 4.2 per cent to 65,000 and the number of casual workers fell by 11 per cent. Of the principal farmers and holders, 12 per cent were female but in the 16-24 age group this rose to 26 per cent. Not surprisingly, 35 per cent of principal farmers and holders were aged 65 or more, only 16 per cent were under age 45.

- 4 The Agricultural Price Index for July shows a fall of 3.1 per cent for outputs, compared to a year earlier, but the index was unmoved compared to June. For inputs there were falls of 12.2 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively.
- 5 A survey conducted by Virgin Money has revealed that over 80 per cent of participants said farmgate prices had not kept pace with higher input costs and 70 per cent thought they may need to consider reducing levels of production.
- 6 The Scottish Government has sought help from the UK Government after having been fined £5.6 millions by the EU for failures in the administration of Common Agricultural Policy payments to farmers. It claims the fine should be reduced by £2.4 millions.

V Product prices

A Market background

- 1 Sterling fell back against the Euro and the US Dollar this month but recovered marginally against both as the month ended. Having opened against the Euro at 85.5p, Sterling fell steadily for most of the month, reaching a low of 87.2p, after a minor recovery it closed at 86.7p per € (1.2p weaker). Sterling opened against the US Dollar at 78.9p and weakened for all but the final few days of the month; its low point of 82.5p was shortly before the month end but a small recovery resulted in a closing rate of 82.0p per \$ (3.1p weaker).
- 2 The gold price had a volatile September; falling back marginally in the first half, then climbing significantly before falling sharply to close 1 per cent down overall. Opening at £1,532 per troy ounce, the average reached a peak of £1,574 before falling back to close £15 down at £1,517 per troy ounce.
- 3 Crude oil prices strengthened materially this month as OPEC's plan to reduce output, despite the climbing demand, played out. Brent Crude, opening at \$86.8 per barrel, hit a month high of \$96.5 (its highest since November 2022) before falling back marginally to close at \$95.3 per barrel, up \$8.5 overall.

B Crops

- 1 The cereals markets have felt pressure from the keenly priced Black Sea wheat being exported from Ukraine despite Russia ending the Black Sea Initiative, although crop concerns in Australia and Argentina have countered this to leave a relatively neutral market. The combination of a plentiful global maize crop, and crops destined for milling not making the grade, suggest that feed prices may fall further, whilst average milling premiums are expected to remain punchy; still reaching £70/tonne in selected areas. Feed wheat futures fell back before climbing steadily, albeit closing slightly below the month highs; the longer-term futures saw slightly larger gains. By late September, deliveries for November 2023, 2024 and 2025 were £192/tonne (+5), £202/tonne (+4) and £203/tonne (+6) respectively. Oilseed rape prices fell back but subsequently recovered most of the fall within the month. The oilseed market sentiment remains flat, as the effects of the reduced Australian yield forecast, progress of the Canadian harvest, the rising crude oil price and the plentiful soyabean supply cancel each other out in a generally well-supplied market. The long-term outlook remains uninspiring. Average spot prices in late September (per tonne ex-farm): feed wheat £184 (+9); milling wheat £246 (+2); feed barley £163 (+5); oilseed rape £354 (-5); feed peas £211 (+6); feed beans £216 (+7).

C Livestock

- 1 The average live-weight cattle prices, for both steers and heifers, had a volatile but ultimately negative month. The average steer price initially fell from its opening average of 265p/kg lw to a low of 259p/kg, then returned to 265p/kg, only to fall again and close at 261p/kg lw (down 4p to sit 18p/kg above the average a year earlier). The average finished heifer price followed a similar path: falling from an opening position of 277p/kg lw to 272p/kg before recovering to 277p/kg and falling to a closing average of 271p/kg (down 6p, to sit 14p above the average a year earlier). The average dairy cow price improved and remained strong for much of the month but fell back in the final weeks. Climbing from the opening position of £1,386 per head to peak at £1,438, it went on to fall back to a closing position of £1,232 per head (down £154 to sit £222 below the average a year earlier).
- 2 The new season average finished lamb price (SQQ live weight) fell back in the early stages of the month, from the opening position of 255p/kg lw to 251p/kg, and then held level for the remainder; closing at 251p/kg, down 4p/kg to sit 22p/kg above the average a year earlier.
- 3 The average UK all pig price (APP) fell back this month, albeit marginally. Opening at 225p/kg dw, the average price fell back steadily to close the month at 223p/kg dw (down 2p to sit 19p above the closing average a year earlier).
- 4 UK milk prices continue to fall. The UK average 'all milk' price for July was 35.67ppl; 0.81ppl down from the June average; 10.92ppl below the price a year earlier but still 1.56ppl above the rolling 5-year average of 34.11ppl. First estimates of August's average milk price, however, show an increase of 0.55ppl. The EU average for July was 39.22ppl; 0.55ppl below the June average and 6.01ppl below the price a year earlier.

VI Other crop news

- 1 AHDB has released its final harvest report for Great Britain for the 2023 season.
 - Winter wheat yields are estimated at 7.8-8.2t/ha, around the 5-year average.
 - Winter barley yields are 6.2-7.2t/ha, around the 5-year average.
 - Spring barley yields are 5.2-5.5t/ha, below the 5-year average.
 - Winter and spring oat yields are 5.0-5.4t/ha.
 - Winter oilseed rape yields are 2.8-3.0t/ha, below the 5-year average.
- 2 AHDB has published latest UK cereals supply and demand estimates. In 2022/23, UK imports of wheat fell by 648,000 tonnes to 1.346Mt while exports rose by 1.074Mt to 1.586Mt; total availability rose by 1.28Mt to 18.674Mt; domestic consumption fell by 146,000 tonnes to 14.603Mt; and closing stocks rose by 165,000 tonnes to 1.953Mt. Barley imports fell by 1,000 tonnes to 88,000 tonnes while exports rose by 359,000 tonnes to 1.123Mt; total availability rose by 329,000 tonnes to 8.437Mt; domestic consumption fell by 189,000 tonnes to 6.137Mt; and closing stocks grew by 316,000 tonnes to 1.28Mt. Imports of oats were static at 18,000 tonnes while exports rose by 49,000 tonnes to 172,000 tonnes; total availability fell by 106,000 tonnes to 1.182Mt; domestic consumption fell by 137,000 tonnes to 870,000 tonnes; and closing stocks fell by 17,000 tonnes to 140,000 tonnes. Maize exports fell by 84,000 tonnes to 2.123Mt; total availability fell by 46,000 tonnes to 2.371Mt; domestic consumption fell by 4,000 tonnes to 2.031Mt; and closing stocks fell by 122,000 tonnes to 126,000 tonnes.

- 3 The June Survey of Agriculture reveals that the area of wheat in England fell by 5.3 per cent to 1.58 million hectares; the barley area increased by 2.2 per cent to 799,000 hectares with winter barley up 5.2 per cent to 391,000 hectares while spring barley fell by 0.5 per cent to 408,000 hectares; the oats area fell by 4.2 per cent to 134,000 hectares; and the oilseed rape area increased by 7 per cent to 339,000 hectares. The biggest fall in the wheat area was 6.3 per cent in the West Midlands; the largest increase in the barley area was 3.8 per cent in Yorkshire and Humber; and the largest increase in the oilseed rape area was 12 per cent in the North East.
- 4 The Agricultural Price Index for July shows increases of 77.5 per cent for potatoes, compared to a year earlier, 23.2 per cent for fresh vegetables and 29 per cent for fresh fruit but there were falls of 32.6 per cent for wheat, 29.9 per cent for barley, 11.4 per cent for oats, 46.3 per cent for oilseed rape and 11.4 per cent for forage plants. Compared to June, there were increases of 0.1 per cent for wheat, 4.1 per cent for oats, 3 per cent for fresh vegetables and 22.8 per cent for fresh fruit but falls of 1.5 per cent for barley and 0.6 per cent for oilseed rape.
- 5 Scientists at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh have developed PALM-ALT, a food oil made from linseed by-product fibre and rapeseed oil as an alternative to palm oil. The new oil has 25 per cent less fat and 88 per cent less saturated fat than palm oil. The product is allergen free, coconut free, has no added sugar, flavouring or colour. All the ingredients can be grown in the UK. The project was part funded by Innovate UK.
- 6 Severn Trent's Environmental Protection Scheme is offering match funding and free advice to farmers drilling cover crops this autumn as part of its attempt to limit nitrates reaching watercourses.
- 7 A consortium including Emerald Research, Dyson Farming, Bangor University, The James Hutton Institute and Light Science Technologies have been awarded Innovate UK funding for the Transformative Reduced Inputs in Potatoes (TRIP) programme to explore innovative regenerative approaches aimed at revitalising farm soil organic matter. It also aims to find solutions to tackle the environmental challenge posed by greenhouse gas emissions in the potato farming industry.
- 8 The Canary Islands have imposed a ban on all UK seed and ware potatoes from the UK following the discovery of Colorado beetles in Kent and Hampshire. The UK is responsible for more than 80 per cent of the potatoes supplied to the islands.
- 9 British Sugar has announced an Early Delivery Allowance capped at a maximum of £4 per tonne for beet delivered between 4 and 11 September decreasing by 20p per day to £0.20/t on 30 September.
- 10 British Sugar has reported that early beet liftings are showing diluted levels of sugar, at about 16 per cent, as a result of larger root weights.
- 11 British Sugar has confirmed its offer for the 2024/25 season as being a minimum price of £37.50 per tonne.
- 12 Bayer is to acquire the strawberry assets of NIAB.
- 13 The International Blueberry Organization has published its 2023 State of the Global Blueberry Industry report. It forecasts that more volumes will be shipped from the southern hemisphere in October/November than in July. Peru has become the leading exporter growing more than 286 tonnes and is the largest source of overseas blueberries in the UK at 14.74 tonnes. UK production grew by 1.7 tonnes in 2022 but the report states that a combination of factors may mean the UK crop will become unsustainable.

- 14 ADAS has launched HortZero, a new tool which will allow fruit, vegetable and ornamental growers to calculate the carbon footprint of their business and its produce and report to retailers, their consumers and regulatory bodies. The tool is able to calculate emissions produced from container systems and protected environments.
- 15 OneFarm, a vertical farming facility in Suffolk, has seen its Dutch parent company call in administrators.
- 16 The Summer Berry Company has reached agreement with Italian breeder Berrytech for the production and distribution of Amalia Rossa raspberries. The Summer Berry Company will have the exclusive right to market Amalia Rossa, grown in Portugal, in the UK and will also establish a minimum of 75 per cent new planting areas in Portugal.

VII Other livestock news

- 1 Defra has opened a consultation with a view to a new bovine electronic identification system where a beast's ear tag can be scanned to access its digital record, make changes and report births, movements and deaths. It will no longer be necessary for a separate on-farming holding register to be maintained or manually updated passports. The consultation closes on 15 November.
- 2 The June Survey of Agriculture has revealed livestock populations in England on 1 June. The total number of cattle and calves fell by 0.5 per cent to 5.1 million head; the breeding herd fell by 1.8 per cent to 1.7 million head; the beef herd fell by 3.6 per cent to 627,000 head; and the dairy herd fell by 0.7 per cent to 1.1 million head. The pig herd fell by 12 per cent to 3.6 million head, the lowest since 2011, with all categories registering declines apart from gilts in pig which increased by 8.9 per cent to 31,000 head. The sheep and lamb flock fell by 3.2 per cent to 14.5 million head; lambs fell by 4.9 per cent to 7.1 million head; and the female breeding flock fell by 1.6 per cent to 7 million head. The number of poultry fell by 6 per cent to 131 million birds; and the number of breeding and laying fowl fell by 1.1 per cent to 32.2 million birds.
- 3 In the year to June, the number of new herd bovine TB incidents in England fell by 16 per cent, compared to the previous year, with falls of 18 per cent in the High Risk area and 14 per cent in the Edge area but an increase of 7 per cent in the Low Risk area. In Scotland there was an increase of 65 per cent but a fall of 6 per cent in Wales. The number of herds not officially TB free fell by 18 per cent in England with falls of 20 per cent in the High Risk area and 10 per cent in the Edge area but a rise of 1 per cent in the Low Risk area. There were increases of 75 per cent and 1 per cent in Scotland and Wales respectively.
- 4 A study published in Environmental Research has provided significant evidence that Global Warming Potential should be adopted instead of Life Cycle Assessments when considering the environmental impact of foods. It suggests that current methodology fails to recognise the distinct nuances within agricultural systems, particularly the characteristics of biogenic methane released by livestock which, unlike CO₂, is short-lived, dispersing in the atmosphere after 12 years. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has acknowledged that current accounting for methane is incorrect.
- 5 The number of calf registrations in the first 6 months of 2023 fell by 2.1 per cent to 1.53 million head, compared to the same period in 2022. The greatest fall was in dairy male calves, down 19 per cent. The number of calves available for beef production fell by 1.8 per cent to 1.3 million head. Reductions continued in Limousin X, Charolais X and Simmental X but breeds such as Aberdeen Angus X, British Blue X and Hereford X continued to grow.

- 6 The Agricultural Price Index for July shows increases of 2.9 per cent for cattle and calves, compared to a year earlier, 17.6 per cent for pigs, 18.3 per cent for poultry and 37.4 per cent for eggs but falls of 1.4 per cent for sheep and lambs and 22.5 per cent for milk. Compared to June, there were increases of 0.8 per cent for pigs and 0.3 per cent for milk but falls of 5.8 per cent for cattle and calves, 7.5 per cent for sheep and lambs and 2 per cent for poultry.
- 7 During August, UK prime cattle slaughterings fell by 3.9 per cent, compared to a year earlier, to 161,000 head; beef and veal production fell by 4 per cent to 72,000 tonnes; sheep slaughterings rose by 2.3 per cent to 1,019,000 head; mutton and lamb production rose by 2.7 per cent to 24,000 tonnes; pig slaughterings fell by 6.1 per cent to 876,000 head; and pigmeat production fell by 4.2 per cent to 81,000 tonnes.
- 8 Further outbreaks of Epizootic Haemorrhagic Disease in cattle have been reported in Italy, Spain and Portugal.
- 9 July figures show the GB milking herd having fallen by 0.6 per cent, compared to a year earlier, to 1.62 million head. Youngstock fell by 1.2 per cent to 929,000 head. Only the 2-4 year age group saw an increase in numbers, by 21,800 head.
- 10 A Rabobank report suggests that Chinese milk production has tripled over the past 20 years to 39.3Mt aided by significant live imports of dairy cattle, 232,000 alone in 2022 from Australia and New Zealand. The number of dairy herds with more than 1,000 cattle increased from 24 per cent in 2015 to 44 per cent in 2020 and this is expected to grow to 56 per cent by 2025. However, there is expected to be an import deficit of 11.9Mt in 2023 rising to 15Mt by 2032.
- 11 Barber's has reduced its milk price by 1.6ppl to 35.15ppl.
- 12 Lloyds Fraser, one of the UK's largest milk hauliers, has entered administration, affecting Muller, Arla, Meadow, Lactalis and Wyke Farms in the Midlands, Cheshire and North Wales.
- 13 During August, average butterfat increased by 1.1 per cent compared to July, to 4.17 per cent, and by 2.3 per cent compared to a year earlier. Average protein increased by 1.9 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively to 3.37 per cent.
- 14 A number of multiples reduced their milk price during August with M&S down 1.41ppl, Sainsburys down 0.21ppl and Co-op down 0.07ppl.
- 15 During the past month there have been five further outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza HPAI H5 in the UK, one in Stafford with 1,750 pheasants, one in Cheshire with 750 pheasants, two on the Isle of Lewis, one with 180 chickens and the other with 213 laying hens and 31 ducks, and a commercial premises in Aberdeenshire housing 221,000 chickens.
- 16 During August, UK commercial layer chick placings rose by 12 per cent to 2.7 million chicks; broiler chick placings rose by 1.4 per cent to 93.3 million chicks; turkey chick placings fell by 10 per cent 1.4 million chicks; turkey slaughterings rose by 6.7 per cent to 600,000 birds; broiler slaughterings rose by 1.7 per cent to 87.8 million birds; and total poultry meat production rose by 1.5 per cent to 154,400 tonnes.
- 17 African Swine Fever in wild boar has been reported for the first time in Sweden.

VIII Inputs/Supply businesses

- 1 UK produced ammonium nitrate rose by £17 per tonne in August to £370 per tonne while imported product rose by £18 per tonne to £362 per tonne. Granular urea rose by £20 per tonne to £417 per tonne, the highest price since April.

- 2 'Why nitrogen matters in livestock production', a report published by the Centre for Innovation Excellence in Livestock, has identified that the industry can make better use of nitrogen by improving on-farm practices.
- 3 The European Union has proposed extending approval for the use of glyphosate by 10 years.
- 4 The Agricultural Price Index for July shows increases of 14.9 per cent for chemicals, compared to a year earlier, 4 per cent for veterinary services and 6.1 per cent for equipment maintenance but falls of 2 per cent for seeds, 22.1 per cent for energy and lubricants, 51.7 per cent for fertilizers, 8.3 per cent for animal feedingstuffs and 2.9 per cent for buildings maintenance. Compared to June, there were increases of 0.5 per cent for veterinary services and 0.1 per cent for animal feedingstuffs but falls of 0.2 per cent for seeds, 4.9 per cent for energy and lubricants, 2.6 per cent for fertilizers and 1 per cent for chemicals.
- 5 Eurofins Agro UK has opened a new agricultural testing facility in Needham Market, Suffolk to test soil, slurry, compost and forage.

IX Marketing

- 1 In the 4 weeks to 6 August, grocery price inflation fell by 2.2 per cent to 12.7 per cent. Take home grocery sales increased by 6.5 per cent over the same period, down from 10.4 per cent in the previous month. Own-label goods grew by 9.7 per cent while branded products fell by 6.4 per cent. Sales at Aldi rose by 21.2 per cent, Lidl by 19.8 per cent, Tesco by 9.5 per cent, Sainsbury's by 9.3 per cent, Asda by 7.7 per cent, Waitrose by 4.4 per cent, Co-op by 3.4 per cent and Morrisons by 2.3 per cent. Market shares are now Tesco 27 per cent, Sainsbury's 14.8 per cent, Asda 13.7 per cent, Aldi 10.2 per cent, Morrisons 8.7 per cent and Lidl 7.7 per cent.
- 2 Exports of wheat, barley and oats in July were all below the same period a year ago but were up on the 5-year average. Wheat exports totalled 31,600 tonnes compared to 40,700 tonnes in 2022 and the 5-year average of 26,800 tonnes; barley exports totalled 79,100 tonnes compared to 105,800 tonnes and 56,200 tonnes respectively; and oats exports totalled 7,900 tonnes compared to 15,700 tonnes and 4,400 tonnes respectively.
- 3 A survey for Riverford Organics has revealed that 49 per cent of farmers feared they were going out of business because of unfair pricing by the big six supermarkets.
- 4 The latest edition of Family Food, covering 2022, has been published. The average household spend on food and drink, excluding alcohol and meals eaten out, was £41.11 per person, per week, an inflation adjusted 0.1 per cent fall on the previous year and down 17 per cent on 2019. Eating out expenditure rose by 159.3 per cent in real terms compared to 2021 but was 41.3 per cent down on 2019.
- 5 In the 4 weeks to 6 August, retail beef volume sales increased by 1.7 per cent. Demand for burgers fell by 23.7 per cent but this was compensated by mince, up 12.4 per cent, roasting joints, up 7.5 per cent, and steaks up 3.4 per cent. However, over a longer timescale, volumes are down 1.1 per cent over the 12 weeks to the same date and by 2.9 per cent over the past year.
- 6 Value-for-money supermarket own-label products made up only 7.7 per cent and 2.4 per cent of red meat and dairy volumes respectively in the year to 6 August, according to Kantar, yet volumes of such red meat sales rose by 36.6 per cent in the period while dairy volume sales rose by 47.7 per cent. Mince volume sales rose by 179.8 per cent, milk products by 56.3 per cent and cheese products by 56.7 per cent.

- 7 Sales of glasshouse vegetables increased by 9.8 per cent in value terms in the year to 6 August to £1.7 billions but fell by 4.4 per cent in volume terms. Only tomatoes saw falls in both value and volume terms.
- 8 Nielsen retail sales data indicates that volume sales of cheese fell by 2.6 per cent in the year to 12 August although branded product cheddar sales rose by 8 per cent in the latest 12-week period.
- 9 In the year to 12 June 2022, outdoor bred pork volumes accounted for 14 per cent of pigmeat sales according to Kantar, but this has fallen to 8 per cent in the year to 11 June 2023. Year-on-year, outdoor bred pork volume sales have fallen by 11 per cent while total pigmeat sales only fell by 3 per cent and primary pork volumes by 4 per cent. Organic pork volumes fell by 17 per cent over the same period.
- 10 The 'Feed your Family for Less with British Pork' campaign began on 2 October.

X Miscellaneous

- 1 Innovate UK is working with Crop Health and Protection, the Centre for Innovation Excellence in Livestock and the Agricultural Engineering, Precision and Innovation Centre to create a new integrated facility.
- 2 The Countryside Alliance's latest Rural Crime Survey found that 97 per cent of respondents said rural crime was a 'significant' issue in their community while 49 per cent did not think police took it seriously. Two-thirds who had experienced crime had not reported it on the grounds it was 'a waste of time'.
- 3 Croydon North MP Steve Reed has been appointed Shadow Defra Secretary.

Postscripts

Thank goodness the hot weather is over. Some reports from the Suffolk Gazette.

Man with ginger hair turns to dust on hottest day of the year!

Local ginger-haired man Steve Walshe has perished after ill-advisedly stepping outside on the hottest day of the year. Mr Walshe, 39, from Woodbridge, turned to dust as his red hair and pale skin succumbed to the heat. His devastated partner Lorraine Fisher, 34, found the tell-tale pile of ginger dust on the patio by the back door. She called the ambulance service but there was nothing they could do to save Steve. 'I always told him to wear a hat and long trousers when the sun comes out' Lorraine said tearfully. 'He only popped into the garden to put some washing out – now he has gone. The wind even blew some of him away before I had finished collecting with the dustpan and brush.' All red-headed people were urged to keep out of the sun.

The Government has asked offshore wind farms to switch their giant fans into reverse to create a cooling breeze for sweltering Britain. Rather than turning clockwise to harvest the wind for energy, bosses will switch the turbines to anti-clockwise for three days. Once they get up to speed, it is expected that much of Britain will feel a breeze within hours. Inland areas will be an hour later. Government renewable energy minister, Lorraine Fisher, 34, said "We have plenty of electricity stockpiled currently."

With enough power to keep the lights on, it makes sense to reverse the turbines and use them as giant fans. The relief should be felt within hours, dipping temperatures by a few degrees. There are many wind farms around the coasts, with Suffolk having several within easy reach, including the recently completed East Anglia ONE project. Bosses have been told to press the switch that allows all the wind farm turbines to swivel so that all of Britain gets a fair amount of breeze’.

A huge wind farm off the posh Suffolk coast is actually a series of massive fans designed to keep out bad smells from Essex, a whistleblower has revealed. For years everyone assumed the Greater Gabbard, 14 miles off Suffolk, was generating ‘green’ energy through its 140 turbines. But the Suffolk Gazette can reveal the white eyesores are actually specially designed fans to keep the air fresh at up market seaside resorts such as Aldeburgh and Southwold. For many years wealthy residents had turned their noses up at the terrible smells coming from down the coast in the common county known as Essex. Now a whistleblower has decided to reveal the truth via the Suffolk Gazette because he has moved to Essex and quite likes it there. He said ‘About 20 years ago a secret group of Aldeburgh and Southwold residents, many of them second homeowners from London, came up with this idea to keep the stifling fumes from Essex away. They had had enough of sitting on the beach at Aldeburgh trying to listen to open-air Benjamin Britten opera performances while the stale smell of Essex kebabs and chips hung in the air. And rich yachting types joined in as well because the Essex smells were stronger out at sea. They all chipped in to build the Great Gabbard and fool everyone that the project was, in fact, just a wind farm. It was very expensive but these sorts of people can afford it. The technology works well and since completion in 2012, Aldeburgh in particular has been beautifully fragrant. But since moving to Essex I can reveal people there have been noticing the smells are worse as if the wind ain’t getting rid of it. People deserve to be told the truth.’ Jeremy Farquar-Smythe-Pisslethwaite, 62, a retired City banker who now lives close to the Aldeburgh seafront said ‘We don’t really care what those common Essex people think. We pay a premium to live in a nice part of the country and don’t see why we should breathe in their filth’.

Monthly Farming Update

Now there should only be two parties in a divorce!

When divorce occurs, it is a difficult time for all concerned. Everyone's a loser, or so they think, but, until now, there has often been one winner – HM Revenue & Customs.

Married couples have long been used to assets passing between themselves without have to worry about a tax charge arising. Indeed, many have not given it a second thought. However, this is not always the case.

Where an individual transfers an asset to a third party, that is a Capital Gains Tax disposal akin to a sale. Where the parties are 'connected', in layman's terms related, the transfer takes place at market value and a taxable gain will most likely arise. However, a specific exemption afforded to spouses and civil partners overrides this position.

Until now, 'spouse / civil partner' for this purpose has meant living together and not in a separation which is likely to be permanent; in addition, no gain can arise in the year of permanent separation. So, if Jack and Jill 'consciously uncouple' on 6 April, they have until the following 5 April to transfer the relevant marital assets between them without a tax problem arising. But if Jack and Jill split on 4 April, they have only 24 hours to do the deal and transfer the assets. So, apart from the horror of losing prized assets in a settlement, they have the added horror of a Capital Gains Tax liability!

This ridiculous situation has been addressed by the Government. The ability of divorcing couples to avoid a Capital Gains Tax liability has now been extended to transfers made on or before the day a court order is made or the last day of the third tax year after the couple cease living together. There is also no time limit for disposals under a formal separation agreement.

At last, some common sense applied to legislation!

We welcome feedback on the MFU.

Does this issue raise any questions in your mind?

Would you like more information on a particular item?

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The MFU was edited from 1991 to 2006 by John Nix, Emeritus Professor of Farm Business Management at Imperial College London



CHAVEREYS