



CHAVEREYS

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS & FINANCIAL ALCHEMISTS



Monthly Farming Update

August 2025

Policy issues

1. The 2025 Finance Bill has been published and includes all the provisions concerning Inheritance Tax announced in the Autumn 2024 Budget. In a double insult to UK farmers, the draft legislation comments: ‘Furthermore, changes to reliefs would not be expected to impact the UK’s ability to source imports from international markets.’ So, the policy of this Government is to taketh with one hand and taketh with the other too.
2. Defra Secretary of State Steve Reed has advised that regenerative farming will have a major role to play in the future of British farming but that moving to a system that favours wildlife while maintaining production might lead to structural changes under the Land Use Framework.
3. Defra has launched the Good Food Cycle which identifies 10 priority outcomes such as providing greater access to healthy sustainable food and fairer supply chains. The outcomes cover:
 - Conditions for the food sector to thrive and grow sustainably, including investment in innovation and productivity, and fairer more transparent supply chains.
 - Food sector attracts talent and develops skilled workforce in every region.
 - Food supply is environmentally sustainable with high animal welfare standards and waste is reduced.
 - Trade supports environmentally sustainable growth, upholds British standards and expands export opportunities.
 - Resilient domestic production for a secure supply of healthier food.
 - Greater preparedness for supply chain stocks, disruption and impact of chronic risks.
 - Celebrated and valued UK, regional and local food cultures.
 - People are more connected to their local food systems and have the confidence, knowledge and skills to cook and eat healthily.

Reform

1. The Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme for 2024 has re-opened subject to restrictions:
 - Applications can only be made from farmers and land managers in the SFI Pilot, systems issues and ‘assisted digital’ or the applicant started an application after 12 January but had not submitted it by 11 March.
 - Applicants with an incomplete application must complete the application by 18 August.
 - Actions in the re-opened offer include those which do not require prior endorsement of specialist advice and also ‘endorsed’ SFI actions where endorsement is required from Natural England or Historic England.

2. A new round of the Capital Grants offer has opened with £150 millions available. New eligible items include assessing woodland condition, creating wildfire management plans, repairing drystone walls and hosting education visits. Following the opening of the Welsh Sustainable Farming Scheme, for the first time since 2022, financial support for organic conversion is available.
3. The Welsh First Minister has suggested that the benefit farming brings to the Welsh economy does not justify the support payments received by the industry.
4. The Welsh Government has published details of its Sustainable Farming Scheme:
 - The scheme comprises 3 components: Universal; Optional; and Collaborative.
 - Every participating farm must have at least 10 per cent habitat and must undertake a farm-level carbon baseline.
 - The Universal layer comprises 12 universal actions and will operate on a calendar year basis. Farmers will need to meet all universal actions applicable to their farm in order to receive the Universal Payment. The actions are: soil health; integrated pest management; benchmarking; continuous professional development; habitat maintenance; temporary habitat creation in improved land; hedgerow management; tree and hedgerow planting opportunity plan; historic environment; and animal health and welfare.
 - The Universal Baseline Payment has 3 categories: Whole Farm Payment at £70 per hectare for the first 70 hectares, thereafter £2 per hectare; Habitat Maintenance Payment at £69 per hectare; and a Woodland Maintenance Payment at £62 per hectare. A Social Value Payment, to reflect the public value of actions undertaken, will be £102 per hectare. Capping will be at £300,000 with tapering starting at £25,000.
 - A Stability Payment of £1,000 will be paid to farms who join the SFS in 2026 and have less than 100 hectares.
 - The Optional Actions will cover: improved soil health and multispecies crop cover; sustainable production; enhanced habitat management; creation of habitats; implementation of designated site schedule of works; enhanced woodland management; woodland and agroforestry creation; hedgerow creation and restoration; improved public access; advanced continuous professional development; improved water quality, water usage and flood mitigation; improved air quality and lowering ammonia emissions; organic farming support and conversion; and enhanced biosecurity.
 - Payment rates for Optional Actions will be a mixture of one-off revenue payments, multi-annual revenue payments and capital payments.
 - The Collaborative layer is to enable farmers, land managers and organisations to cooperate. The 3 themes will be: innovation, research and development; collaborative market and supply chain; and collaborative landscape scale activity.

- 70 per cent of the SFS budget will be allocated to the Universal Payment and legacy Basic Payment Scheme while 30 per cent will be allocated to the other actions.

The Scheme represents a 40 per cent reduction when compared to the Basic Payment Scheme funding.

Grants/regulations/legislation/environment

1. A report from the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee entitled 'Nitrogen: Time to reduce, recycle, reuse' has called on the Government to introduce a nitrogen strategy within the next two years to counter the dangerous health, environmental and economic impacts of nitrogen pollution caused by industries including agriculture.
2. A survey conducted by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit has revealed that 80 per cent of farmers are concerned about the impact of climate change on their ability to make a living. 86 per cent of farmers have been hit by extreme rainfall; 78 per cent have been affected by drought; and more than 50 per cent have felt the impact of heatwaves. 87 per cent cited reduced productivity; 84 per cent endured reduced crop yields; and 75 per cent have suffered a reduction in income.
3. The Environment Agency is to double the number of farm inspections to 6,000 a year by 2029 to investigate agricultural pollution.
4. Material footprint is a measure of the global primary raw material extraction attributable to final domestic demand for goods and services. In 2022:
 - England's material footprint was 1,142 million tonnes, 84 per cent of the total UK figure.
 - The total was up 22 per cent on 2021 but down 6 per cent on the peak year in 2004.
 - Non-metallic minerals made up 43 per cent of the total, biomass 25 per cent and fossil fuels 22 per cent.
 - 67 per cent of the total was associated with household consumption, 20 per cent with gross fixed capital formation and 10 per cent with government services.
5. The Environment Agency has revoked abstraction licences in the Ely Ouse area affecting approximately 240 growers. No advance warning was given. However, it has since lifted the restrictions on 150 growers.
6. The Environment Agency has declared the East and West Midlands to be a drought area.

7. Statistics on UK waste have been published:

- The recycling rate for waste from households in 2023 was 44 per cent in England, 50.2 per cent in Northern Ireland, 42.1 per cent in Scotland and 57 per cent in Wales.
- The UK recycling rate for waste from households, including incinerated bottom ash, was 44.6 per cent in 2023, an increase of 0.5 per cent.
- UK biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill in 2023 fell by 1 million tonnes to 5.3 million tonnes.
- In 2024, between 64.1 per cent and 75.2 per cent of packaging waste was recycled.

8. Sightings of Asian hornets have been confirmed in Folkestone, Hawkinge, Stelling Minnis and Chilham in Kent and Hastings in East Sussex.

Other matters of farm finance and tenure

- 1.** The Office for National Statistics has reported that 6,365 businesses engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing have closed over the past year, the highest since data was first published in 2017. In the same period, only 3,190 businesses in the sector have been set up.
- 2.** Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2024 has been published. This shows:
 - The utilised agricultural area fell by 1.5 per cent to 17 million hectares.
 - The total croppable area increased by 1.3 per cent to 6.2 million hectares.
 - The cereal crops area fell by 3.9 per cent to 3 million hectares.
 - The oilseed rape area fell by 24 per cent to 317,000 hectares.
 - Numbers of cattle and calves fell by 1.5 per cent to 9.4 million head. The beef herd fell by 4.5 per cent to 1.3 million head while the dairy herd was unchanged at 1.8 million head.
 - Numbers of pigs rose by 0.7 per cent to 4.7 million head. Female pigs in the breeding herd fell by 3.1 per cent to 327,000 head.
 - Sheep and lamb numbers fell by 2.5 per cent to 31 million head.
 - Poultry numbers fell by 1.2 per cent to 176 million birds.
 - The agricultural workforce fell by 2 per cent to 453,000.
- 3.** A Strutt and Parker survey has revealed that over 50 per cent of farms in the York and North Yorkshire areas are failing to achieve a sustainable profit. The report also revealed that 20 per cent of farms in the area will see a reduction in output as a result of climate change which would wipe out all of farming profits achieved in the area.
- 4.** The CPRE has reported that 53 per cent of solar farms have been built on the best and most versatile agricultural land in England. 827 hectares of grade 1-3a has been lost to solar along with 755 hectares of grade 3b land.

5. Barclays has published 'Cultivating Success: Six ways UK farmers are responding to change'. This shows that farmers are adopting change by:
 - Embracing sustainable practices.
 - Deepening relationships across the sector.
 - Using innovation and technology to improve the farm.
 - Seeking support from rural professionals.
 - Planning to leave the farm in good hands.
 - Recognising how to adapt to challenges facing the climate.
6. Knight Frank has reported that values of bare land fell by 2.3 per cent in the 3 months to June to £8,861 per acre, taking the fall over the past 12 months to 5.1 per cent.
7. A study commissioned by Defra and the Seasonal Worker Task Force into the possible effects of the review of the Employer Pays Principle has found that:
 - Any additional costs to growers that cannot be passed up the supply chain will result in significant financial pressure.
 - Many growers operate on profit margins as low as 2 per cent and implementing the Principle could force some out of business.
 - While growers may be able to pass on some extra costs, they would still face serious losses, potential closures, job cuts and reduced production.
8. The results of the 2024 Seasonal Workers Survey have been published. 14,012 responded, 39.4 per cent of the total:
 - 91.5 per cent of respondents were from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
 - 94.4 per cent paid for their visa while 56.7 per cent paid for travel costs to the UK.
 - 59.1 per cent paid their costs out of savings with 27.4 per cent borrowing from family or friends.
 - Most respondents described the information provided during the recruitment process as accurate with 96.2 per cent being provided with a contract in a language they could understand.
 - 96.2 per cent were paid for all the work they performed with 96.7 per cent being provided with a minimum average of 32 hours of work per week.
 - 91.4 per cent worked in the UK for over 4 months.
 - Most respondents were happy with accommodation, pay, operator support and safety.
 - 81.8 per cent knew how to raise a complaint while 87.2 per cent did not have reason to raise a complaint.
 - 94.2 per cent had a 'positive' or 'extremely positive' experience working in the UK while 96.9 per cent would return and work under the scheme.

9. In the first year of operation covering the period to February 2025, Natural England sold Statutory Credits with a total value of £206,180. The cost of administering the system is estimated to have been £300,000.
10. A potato grower in Lincolnshire has won a case against a local authority noise abatement notice concerning the use of drying fans in a potato store following the extreme wet weather in October 2023.

Product prices

A. Market background

1. Sterling weakened against the Euro and the US Dollar this month. Having opened the month at 85.5p per Euro, Sterling fell back throughout the month, reaching a 20-month low of 87.6p; however, in the final days there was a sharp, partial recovery to close at 86.5p per € (1.00p weaker). Against the US Dollar, Sterling was more volatile; opening at 72.9p, it fell to 74.7p and recovered to 73.6p before falling again to close the month at 74.8p per \$ (1.9p weaker).
2. The gold price improved this month, recovering after the fall in June, with a marginally reduced level of volatility. Opening at £2,391 per troy ounce, the price rose to a peak of £2,539 but, in the final week, the price fell back to a late month average of £2,482 per troy ounce, up £91.
3. Crude oil prices closed the month marginally up, following a month of low amplitude volatility. Brent Crude opened at \$67.77 per barrel and climbed over the first half of the month to peak at \$71.38 before oscillating between £68 and £70 for the remainder of the month, eventually closing at \$69.98 per barrel, up \$2.21.

B. Crops

1. The cereals market closed marginally up at the end of July, although the latest futures prices would suggest this is likely to reverse. With harvest in the northern hemisphere underway, the market is constantly reacting to information as it becomes available. Rain in Northern Europe (Germany and Northern France) is slowing the pace of harvest and could have an impact on wheat quality, whilst the UK average was supported by the weakness of Sterling. Feed wheat futures closed marginally up across the board, having been both higher and lower during the month; by late July, deliveries for November 2025 and 2026 were £178/tonne (+1) and £190/tonne (+1) respectively, whilst March 2027 deliveries were £196/tonne (+1). Oilseed rape prices closed marginally down as reports of good yields and quality were reported but also following the weaker Soya price.
Average spot prices in late July (per tonne ex-farm): feed wheat £163 (+4); milling wheat £192 (+13); feed barley £143 (-); oilseed rape £396 (-5); feed peas £207 (-16); feed beans £212 (-16).

C. Livestock

1. The average live-weight cattle prices for steers and heifers went in different directions this month, with steers closing up and heifers closing down. The average steer price, from its opening average of 362p/kg lw, dropped to 357p/kg early on, before recovering to close at 369p/kg lw (up 7p and sitting 98p/kg above the average a year earlier). The average finished heifer price fell from its opening position of 379p/kg lw to a low of 370p/kg, before bouncing back to 377p/kg and eventually closing at 376p/kg (down 3p and 97p above the average a year earlier). The average dairy cow price retained its volatility and closed up whilst keeping the range of movement relatively low; first climbing from its opening position of £2,019 to £2,142 before dropping back to £1,987 and ultimately closing the month at £2,074 per head (up £55 overall to sit £591 above the prior year average).
2. The average finished lamb price (SQQ liveweight, new season) fell back in the opening weeks, before climbing to recover most of the lost value by the end of the month. Starting from an average of 353p/kg it fell to 341p/kg but rose again to settle at a late July average of 350p/kg (down 3p to sit 47p/kg above the average a year earlier).
3. The average UK standard pig price (SPP deadweight) improved by a small margin this month, edging up for most of the month, then relaxing in the final days. From an opening position of 207.0p/kg dw, it rose to peak at 207.7p/kg before falling back to a closing average of 207.5p/kg (up 0.5p/kg overall, 1.9p/kg below the previous year).
4. The UK all milk price for April, updated and reported in June, remains the most recently reported average (a fall of 1.18ppl to 43.69ppl – 5.23p above a year earlier). Meanwhile, the EU average farmgate milk prices for April and May have been published, with a rise of 0.72ppl in April and a fall of 0.54ppl in May to give a May average of 46.06ppl, 5.56ppl above the average a year earlier.

Other crop news

1. The AHDB Harvest report as at 23 July shows:
 - Winter wheat harvest was 11 per cent complete, ahead of the past two years and on a par with 2022.
 - Initial yields are down 11 per cent on the 5-year average at 6.9t/ha.
 - Quality is reported as good with protein levels at 14 per cent or higher.
 - Winter oilseed rape harvest was 54 per cent complete, behind last year when 73 per cent had been harvested by this date.
 - Average yields are estimated to be 3.76t/ha, 21 per cent above the 5-year average.
 - Quality is again reported to be good with an average oil content of 45 per cent.

- Winter barley harvest was 92 per cent complete with only Scotland and Northern Ireland to finish harvesting.
 - Yields have varied between 4.7t/ha to 8.3t/ha but the average is estimated to be 6.7t/ha, in line with the 5-year average.
2. AHDB has released figures for human and industrial cereal usage in the period July 2024 to May 2025 which show:
 - Flour millers consumed 3.842Mt of home-grown milled wheat, down 17.6 per cent on a year earlier, and 1.479Mt of imported milled wheat, up 40.1 per cent with the total of milled wheat down 6.9 per cent.
 - Stocks of milling wheat at the end of May were up 4 per cent at 233.8Kt.
 - Total flour production was 4.158Mt, down 7.3 per cent, while stocks of flour at the end of May were up 8.3 per cent at 48.5K tonnes.
 - Brewers, maltsters and distillers used 1.626Mt of barley, down 7.1 per cent, and 1.061Mt of wheat, up 7.2 per cent.
 - Oat millers used 372Kt of milling oats, down 3.3 per cent. The stock of oats at the end of May was 25.7Kt, down 37.3 per cent.
 3. The latest World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates from the US Department of Agriculture show global wheat ending stocks at 261.5Mt, down 1.2Mt on the June forecast as a result of lower production in Canada and the EU.
 4. An AHDB led review into Ergot has recommended 4 principal management practices. Ergot is a fungal pathogen which can affect cereals during flowering causing dark ergots to develop instead of grain. It is highly toxic when ingested by both humans and livestock and GB has contractual limits for ergot by weight for feed grain and zero tolerance for all other grains. The 4 strategies are:
 - Reduce the amount of ergot and its viability to limit the production of primary spores.
 - Grow lower-risk crops to reduce infection events.
 - Manage grass weeds to prevent them becoming a spore source.
 - Know where ergot is and manage infected grain to keep clean crops clean.
 5. The latest EU MARS report shows forecast yields of 6.1t/ha for soft wheat, against a 5-year average of 5.8t/ha; 5.5t/ha for winter barley, against a 5-year average of 4.8t/ha; and rapeseed and rapeseed turnip unchanged from the 5-year average at 3.2t/ha.
 6. ADAS has decided to discontinue the UK Cereals and Oilseeds Yield and Enhancement Network at the end of this season.
 7. Sygenta has released a hybrid barley variety, SY Kestrel, the first to contain resistance to barley yellow dwarf virus rather than just tolerance.
 8. The 2025 harvest has had its earliest start since at least 2006.

- 9.** British Apples & Pears Limited has concluded two studies of current and future UK apple and pear orchard infrastructure. The results reveal:
- Survey responders have 4,120 hectares of apple orchards with an average of 2,231 trees per hectare producing 92 per cent of British apples.
 - More than 70 varieties of apple are being grown in commercial orchards with 36 different varieties planted in the last 5 years.
 - Gala is grown in 30 per cent of orchards and Braeburn 11 per cent but both are declining, from 54 per cent and 20 per cent respectively 11-15 years ago due to reduced profitability.
 - Plantings within the last 5 years have included Jazz, 189 hectares; Pink Lady, 120 hectares; Magic Star, 80 hectares; Cameo, 43 hectares; and Cox, 38 hectares.
 - Responders have 702 hectares of pear orchards averaging 1,438 trees per hectare.
 - Conference accounts for 93 per cent of all pear orchards although 10 difference varieties are grown commercially.
 - 55 per cent of Conference orchards are over 21 years old.
 - In the last 5 years, an average of 20 hectares of pear orchard have been planted each year.
 - No responders are planning any new pear plantings in the next 2 years.
 - 15 per cent of apple and pear orchards lie fallow.
 - Storage survey responders represent 81 per cent of the total picked crop of apples and pears with 1,203 stores which can hold 197,271 tonnes of fruit.
 - 63 per cent of all stores are over 15 years old.
- 10.** The British Carrot Growers Association Demonstration Day will be held on 2 October at Honingham in Norfolk.
- 11.** Biobest, a division of the BioFirst Group specialising in biocontrol and natural pollination for horticulture, has acquired Ecoation Innovative Solutions Inc. The acquisition includes the Crop-Scanner monitoring and scouting tool as well as the OKO 2 IPM and yield production solution.
- 12.** The James Hutton Institute has bred the UK's first blueberry at Invergowrie. Highland Charm has taken 10 years of research and has been bred to thrive in the Scottish climate.
- 13.** US-based Akorn Technology has unveiled Akorn Natural Advantage, a natural edible coating which will do away with single-use plastic wraps on cucumbers.
- 14.** Innovation Agritech Group has collaborated with Sparsholt College Group's University Centre Sparsholt resulting in the installation of its flagship aeroponic vertical farming system, the GrowFrame260, on the Sparsholt campus.

Other livestock news

1. Wales has introduced 'blue-tongue approved red markets' to allow animals in the England restricted zone to be moved to an approved market in Wales for direct onward movement to a designated slaughterhouse.
2. A group comprising AHDB, Dairy UK, Arla Foods UK, Dale Farms, First Milk, Lactalis UK and Ireland, Muller UK and Ireland, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, McDonald's and Sysco GB have committed to collaborate as part of the dairy roadmap and operate under one governance structure. The group will oversee the creation of the Sustainable Dairy Pathways report which will highlight the funding and innovations needed to reach net zero and other sustainability goals.
3. The annual Kingshay Dairy Costings report has reported that the high milk price and reduced input expenditure has resulted in dairy margins remaining firm in 2024/25. Average herd sizes grew by 27 cows to 226 although average yields fell by 20 litres to 8,421 litres per cow. Low-to-moderate organic herds saw a jump in the milk price to 54.09ppl and the highest margin of any sector at 41.47ppl. Margin over purchased feed increased to £2,602 per cow, the highest since 2001.
4. In the first 3 months of 2025/26, GB milk deliveries rose by 5 per cent, compared to 2024/25, with April up 6 per cent, May 5.7 per cent and June 6 per cent. The forecast for the whole season is an increase of 3.1 per cent to 12.83 billion litres.
5. During May:
 - UK dairies processed 1,404 million litres of milk, up 0.6 per cent on the rolling average to April.
 - Liquid milk production fell by 2.7 per cent to 532 million litres, compared to April.
 - Cheese production fell by 5.6 per cent to 45,800 tonnes.
 - Butter production fell by 13 per cent to 19,400 tonnes.
 - Milk powder production rose by 1.5 per cent to 12,700 tonnes.
6. Dairy producer Meadow has requested its suppliers to 'formally inform' the processor of actions being taken on carbon sequestration.
7. Muller is to invest £45 millions in its Skelmersdale site to enhance liquid milk production capacity. The facility will be capable of producing 30 per cent more powdered milk. All suppliers to the Skelmersdale plant will be eligible to receive either a Muller Direct Skelmersdale price or a Muller Ingredients price.

8. During 2024, UK milk deliveries increased by 1.2 per cent to 15 billion litres:
 - 42 per cent was processed into liquid milk, unchanged from the previous year.
 - 32 per cent was processed into cheese with cheddar utilising 23 per cent of total milk production.
 - 3 per cent was processed into yoghurt.
 - 16 per cent was processed into milk powder, cream and butter.
9. During June, average butterfat increased by 1.4 per cent, compared to a year ago, and 0.1 per cent, compared to May, to 4.18 per cent. Average protein increased by 1 per cent and 0.3 per cent respectively to 3.37 per cent.
10. During June, with comparison to a year earlier:
 - UK prime cattle slaughterings fell by 4.7 per cent to 162,000 head.
 - Beef and veal production fell by 5.2 per cent to 70,000 tonnes.
 - Sheep slaughterings rose by 8.5 per cent to 960,000 head.
 - Mutton and lamb production rose by 9 per cent to 23,000 tonnes.
 - Pig slaughterings rose by 2.7 per cent to 846,000 head.
 - Pig meat production rose by 2.1 per cent to 79,000 tonnes.
11. Latest reports indicate there are 26 outbreaks of Lumpy Skin Disease in Sardinia and 26 outbreaks across 2 departments in France, the first since the outbreaks in the Balkans in 2018.
12. In association with SRUC and the UK Agri-Tech Centre, Oxcel has developed a nanobubble system that boosts standard drinking water with dissolved oxygen levels in commercial broiler and pig units. The increased oxygen levels create the right biological environment in the animal's gut to enhance the gut microbiome balance and improve tissue oxygenation, reducing oxidative stress and muscle damage.
13. In the 3 months to June:
 - 264 million dozen eggs were produced, up 5.7 per cent on a year ago and 2.4 per cent on the March quarter.
 - The average price was 148p per dozen, up 3.4 per cent on a year ago and 0.4 per cent on the March quarter.
 - The production of egg products totalled 15,000 tonnes, down 6.3 per cent on a year ago and 1.4 per cent on the March quarter.
14. During June, with comparisons a year earlier:
 - UK commercial layer chick placings rose by 21 per cent to 3.8 million chicks.
 - Broiler chick placings fell by 2.4 per cent to 95.5 million chicks.
 - Turkey poult placings fell by 32 per cent to 800,000 chicks.
 - Turkey slaughterings fell by 21 per cent to 400,000 birds.
 - Broiler slaughterings fell by 0.2 per cent to 91.7 million birds.
 - Total poultry meat production rose by 0.6 per cent to 158,500 tonnes.

15. North Norfolk District Council has approved plans for a poultry farm capable of housing 335,000 birds producing 2.4 million chickens a year at Edgefield.

VIII Inputs/Supply businesses

1. The British Survey of Fertilizer Practice for the crop year 2024 has been published. It reveals:
 - The overall application rate for nitrogen on all crops fell by 4kg/ha to 121kg/ha and also fell by 4kg/ha on grass to 34kg/ha.
 - The overall application rate for phosphate on all crops was unchanged at 17kg/ha and also unchanged on grass at 10kg/ha.
 - The overall application rate for potash on all crops fell by 2kg/ha to 19kg/ha and by 1kg/ha on grass to 13kg/ha.
 - The overall application rate for sulphur on all crops rose by 1kg/ha to 29kg/ha but was unchanged on grass at 15kg/ha.
2. Data concerning growing media sold in 2023 shows:
 - Total peat use over the period 2018 to 2023 has fallen from 56.8 per cent by volume to 24.1 per cent.
 - Substrate usage is 4.3 per cent retail and 25.7 per cent professional.
 - Peat usage is 51.1 per cent retail and 48.9 per cent professional.
3. Fera Science has launched a wireworm DNA barcoding test to help UK potato, vegetable, arable and salad growers identify wireworm species so as to optimise pest management. Of the 60 species of wireworm in the UK, only a handful are crop pests.
4. Agrovista has acquired Zantra Holdings, the independent agrochemical supply and agronomy business.

Marketing

1. In the first nine months of the apple season, Tesco leads the way having sold 28,421 tonnes of British apples, up 2,633 tonnes on a year earlier. Lidl is up 2,668 tonnes and Sainsbury's 1,436 tonnes but Morrisons is down 391 tonnes and Co-op 566 tonnes. M&S has sold 5.2 per cent of all British apples, compared to its market share of 3.7 per cent and Waitrose has sold 4.8 per cent compared to its share of 4.6 per cent.
2. In the 4 weeks to 13 July, Lidl achieved a market share of 8.3 per cent, its highest ever. Tesco boosted its share to 28.3 per cent while Ocado was the fastest growing grocer with sales up 11.7 per cent.
3. During May, UK exports of wheat rose by 44 per cent on April to 33,700 tonnes, the highest level of the current season taking the total to 188,100 tonnes, down 22 per cent on the year. Barley exports are down 12 per cent at 647,900 tonnes. However, exports of rapeseed are up 11 per cent at 35,500 tonnes.

4. Imports of wheat during May totalled 212,000 tonnes, 10 per cent up on April. In the season to date, imports are up 29 per cent at 2.8Mt and are 65 per cent up on the 5-year average. Maize imports are up 21 per cent at 2.9Mt and are 30 per cent above the 5-year average.
5. The Consumer Prices Index for food increased to 4.4 per cent in June with the average price of chicken up 1.8 per cent in the month alone and beef up 3.2 per cent. Chicken breast portions rose by 6.7 per cent, thigh fillets by 5.1 per cent and whole chicken by 5 per cent. The price of lean beef mince rose by 9.15 per cent.
6. During May, UK pigmeat exports rose by 10 per cent on April and 20 per cent on a year earlier to 27,000 tonnes. Imports rose by 9 per cent on April and 3 per cent on a year earlier to 66,600 tonnes.
7. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, global consumption for pork is forecast to grow by 0.5 per cent per year up to 2033 with annual growth rates of 3.6 per cent in countries in SE Asia.
8. In the 12 weeks to 15 June, average prices for beef increased by 10.4 per cent compared to a year earlier but volumes declined by 3.6 per cent. Mince volumes fell by 4.5 per cent, partly caused by a price increase of 18.9 per cent, while steak volumes fell by 9.8 per cent as a result of a price increase of 20.5 per cent. However, roasting joint volumes increased by 6.9 per cent. Processed beef volumes fell by 1.1 per cent with sausages and burgers both down but volumes of sliced cooked meats rose by 4.6 per cent. Volume sales of added value products continued to fall with marinades down 3.8 per cent, sous vide 12.8 per cent and ready to cook 0.5 per cent.
9. According to Kantar, in the 12 weeks to 15 June, average lamb prices increased by 4.7 per cent but volume sales fell by 0.6 per cent, compared to a year earlier. Primary lamb cuts volumes rose by 2.9 per cent with roasting joints up 12.8 per cent and lamb steaks up 0.3 per cent. Processed lamb volumes rose 3.4 per cent with burgers and grills up 3.9 per cent. Added value lamb volumes fell by 8.8 per cent with marinades down 17.3 per cent and sous vide by 5.1 per cent.
10. In the year to 15 June, Kantar figures show:
 - British shoppers spent £30 millions on primary red meat offal, up 1.8 per cent, but volume sales fell by 7.9 per cent to 6,000 tonnes.
 - Lamb offal accounts for 51 per cent of sales, pork 30 per cent and beef 11 per cent.
 - 11 per cent of households purchased offal but 75 per cent of purchases were by shoppers aged over 55.
 - Pork offal exports totalled £162 millions in 2024 with China taking 55 per cent by volume.

- In 2024, beef offal exports rose by £9 millions to £70 millions with most going to France, Canada, the US, Japan and Ghana.
 - Sheep meat offal exports in 2024 totalled £12 millions with the EU taking 77 per cent.
- 11.** AHDB has reported that 54 per cent of consumers prefer to purchase from a counter rather than an aisle. Despite this, according to Kantar, loose packaged meat and poultry only accounts for 7 per cent of the total market and, in the year to 20 April, declined by 3.2 per cent while pre-packaged volumes grew by 0.7 per cent.
 - 12.** In the 12 weeks to 15 June, Kantar figures show that average pig meat product prices increased by 1.6 per cent and volumes by 0.8 per cent. Primary pig meat volumes fell by 2.6 per cent, mainly in roasting joints. However, volumes of chops rose by 2.2 per cent, fillet by 1.2 per cent, mince by 3 per cent and ribs by 24.5 per cent. Processed pig meat volumes fell by 0.2 per cent although gammon volumes rose by 8 per cent, sausages by 0.9 per cent and sliced cooked meats by 0.1 per cent. Unlike with other meats, added value volumes rose by 9.7 per cent with marinades up 16.6 per cent, ready to cook up 11.1 per cent and sous vide up 3.6 per cent.
 - 13.** Australia has exported record volumes of mutton and lamb in 2024/25. Beef and veal exports reached 1.4 million tonnes, mutton exports totalled 256,104 tonnes and lamb exports 363,109 tonnes.

Miscellaneous

- 1.** A survey conducted by Diffley Partnership on behalf of Scottish Land and Estates has revealed that 48 per cent of people living in rural Scotland want improved access to healthcare; 41 per cent want more long-term employment opportunities; and 36 per cent support an increase in affordable housing while land reform came bottom of the poll.
- 2.** Statistics from the Health and Safety Executive for 2024/25 show that agriculture, fisheries and forestry suffered 23 deaths, only behind construction which had 35.
- 3.** The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Private Members Bill passed its Third Reading on 4 July.
- 4.** The Welsh Government has launched a 3-year strategy to tackle rural crime. The cost of rural crime in Wales rose by £400K in 2023/24 to £2.8 millions.
- 5.** The International Trial for working sheepdogs will take place at the Brynkinalt Estate near Wrexham on 11-13 September.
- 6.** The Government is to introduce measures to ban shot containing more than 1 per cent lead and bullets with a lead content of more than 3 per cent.

7. The Agricultural Engineers Association has reported that tractor registrations in the 6 months to June totalled 4,869, the lowest level since 1998. The total is 17 per cent down on 2024.
8. The latest NFU Digital Access Survey reveals that rural broadband and mobile coverage still falls short of the needs of farmers. Findings include:
 - 21 per cent of respondents have broadband speeds under 10Mbps, the national average is less than 1 per cent.
 - 22 per cent report a reliable signal across the whole farm.
 - 10 per cent have no 4G or 5G access.
 - 32 per cent have access to fibre broadband, the UK average is 57 per cent.
9. The Environment Agency's National Waste Crime Survey 2025 has revealed that landowners have only reported 12 per cent of the most recent events which affected them while 57 per cent of all landowners have been victims of waste crime. It is estimated that 35 per cent of all waste crime is committed by organised crime groups.

Postscripts

1. A lady of 85 was asked at what age a woman ceases to be interested in men.
'Ask me again when I'm a little older' came the reply.
2. A farming couple built their new calf shed close to the house which attracted flies during the summer.

'I'm fed up with these flies in the house' said the farmer's wife while her husband was swatting them in the kitchen.

'I've just killed five' he reported, 'three males and two females'.

'How do you know what sex they are?' asked the wife.

'Three were trying to get to my beer and the other two were on the phone' came the reply.
3. A little girl, fresh from a school sex education lesson, said to her mother:

'Mummy, do you and Daddy have sexual relations?'

'Yes, dear' replied her mother. 'Why do you ask?'

'Well, replied the little girl, 'why haven't I met any of them?'
4. A nervous young curate was visiting one of his parishioners, a sharp-tongued lady, in late autumn.

'Well,' he said, 'winter draws on.'

'As a matter of fact I have' replied the lady, 'though I don't see it is any business of yours.'
5. If you pampered your cow too much, you get spoilt milk.
6. Country vicar to aged villager:

'How is it that I haven't seen you at church lately.'

Aged villager, after profound thought:

'I ain't been.'
7. A dairy farmer talking to friends:

'Once I could dance with the wife until the cows came home. Now I will dance with my cows until she doesn't come home.'
8. A farmer talking about his wife. 'Most wives would be content with a romantic love story or even a thriller to read but my wife likes the cheque book. She won't put it down until its finished!'
9. Question: 'What do you think of marriage as an institution?'

Reply: 'I think its fine for people who like living in institutions'.

Common sense prevails at last!

Until the crass decision of Ms Reeves to alter Inheritance Tax relief for farms and businesses, the main concern of the older generation when the subject of succession planning was raised was the risk of divorce. After all, approximately 42 per cent of marriages in the UK are expected to end in divorce. That is roughly one in every 2.5 which is a concerning statistic.

A farm is not like holding surplus cash, investments or let property, all of which can be realised if a financial settlement is needed. The sale of part of a farm can have devastating consequences for the viability of what remains.

Before the IHT changes, succession planning could be deferred if there was concern over the stability of a successor's marriage. However, following the changes, early succession planning must be high on the agenda. So, what about the risk of divorce?

At last, the UK courts have issued a common-sense ruling.

The case of *Standish v Standish* concerned the transfer of assets valued at £80 millions from a husband to his wife with the intention that she would onward-transfer them to Jersey-based trusts for the benefit of their children. Sadly, the wife did not do that and continued not to do so until the couple separated.

The husband sued for their return in the High Court but lost.

In due course, the case reached the Court of Appeal where the husband's appeal was successful. The Court decided that the source of an asset is key in determining whether or not it is matrimonial, rather than whose name it is in. 'Matrimonialisation depends on how the parties have been dealing with the asset and, whether this shows that, over time, they have been treating the asset as shared between them'.

The Court of Appeal ruling also stated explicitly 'the time has come to recognise that the sharing principle applies only to matrimonial property and not to non-matrimonial property although courts have been reluctant previously to say so.'

This ruling does not change the fact that pre-nuptial and post-nuptial arrangements are an essential part of succession planning. It may not be an easy subject to raise with your successor but it could save a lot of heartache in the long run.

Monthly Farming Update

We welcome feedback on the MFU.
Does this issue raise any questions in your mind?
Would you like more information on a particular item?

Please ring one of our agricultural specialists:

Karen Blackiston, Nick Holmes, Iain Morris, Ben Wilkinson

Chavereys Limited
The Goods Shed Jubilee Way Faversham Kent ME13 8GD

Tel: 01795 594495

Fax: 01795 594499

E-mail: mfu@chavereys.co.uk

www.chavereys.co.uk

If you would like to add a friend or colleague's name to the mailing list
please contact Lindsay Glead.

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



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