



CHAVEREYS

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS & FINANCIAL ALCHEMISTS



Monthly Farming Update

June 2026

Policy issues

1. A group of food experts has advised the Government that the impact of extreme weather, inflation and the US-Israeli war on Iran are a national security risk for the UK which the Government is failing to take seriously. Comments include:
 - An update is required to the national food strategy to factor in a future of higher temperatures and weather extremes.
 - Three priorities highlighted are a resilient production of healthier food, preparedness for supply chain stocks, and universal access to safe, affordable and healthy food.
 - According to Tim Lang, professor emeritus of food policy at City St. George's, University of London, 'this Government has received serious scientific intelligence and policy advice that it should take significant action on food security, but it keeps signalling all is OK. It's not.'
 - Tim Lang also believes the target for domestic food production should be close to 80 per cent rather than the 60 per cent suggested by the Climate Change Committee.
2. The Fresh Produce Consortium has expressed concern that there is a danger of 'substantial new costs, complexity and border friction across the UK food supply chain' following the Government's latest guidelines on the proposed UK-EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary arrangements. It has added that the guidelines risk shifting the burden onto 'critical global supply routes' through the introduction of unnecessary EU-style controls on imports from the Rest of the World.' It has estimated the changes could add over £300 millions in extra costs, primarily falling on the UK's fresh produce sector. There will be increased inspections, additional phytosanitary certification requirements, expanded pre-notification obligations and wider compliance measures on goods entering the UK from non-EU countries despite those products being destined solely for UK consumption.
3. The UK and the Gulf Corporation Council, which comprises United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait, have agreed a trade deal which will see tariffs removed from goods such as cheddar cheese, butter, frozen lamb and cereals. The GCC is the UK's second largest market for dairy products while lamb is the second most consumed red meat.
4. Apparently, Rachel Reeves has quietly ditched her proposal for supermarkets to cap the price of essential groceries, following the reaction from food retailers. Comments included:
 - 'Completely preposterous' – M&S CEO Stuart Machin
 - 'Nonsense and idiotic' – former Asda chair Lord Stuart Rose

The majority of the Chancellor's policies have resulted in U-turns. It's just a pity she refuses to U-turn on those that hit farmers and family businesses the most - Inheritance Tax and Employers National Insurance.

5. MPs have reinstated an amendment to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill to include a focus on rural affairs.

Reform

1. Defra has announced that the Government Land Management Scheme Capital Grants 2026 will open next month with £225 millions of funding available. The scheme will close once the available funding is committed. Last year, the scheme closed before the end of July. Funding falls into 6 groups:
 - Air quality – maximum £25,000
 - Assessments
 - Boundaries, trees and orchards – maximum £35,000
 - Improvements
 - Natural flood management – maximum £25,000
 - Water quality – maximum £25,000
 - Funding for education visits, included within improvements, is capped at £9,075 per year for 3 years.

Grants/regulations/legislation/environment

1. The Climate Change Committee has published ‘A Well Adapted UK’. Relevant extracts include:
 - In 2025, farmers in England were expected to lose £800 millions + in revenue to the hot and dry spring and summer with yields over 10 per cent below the 10-year average.
 - By the 2050s, the CCC expects that agricultural losses could rise significantly, with ‘bad years’ severe enough to threaten farm viability at scale.
 - Without adaptation, the proportion of top-grade farmland in England and Wales could fall from a historical 40 per cent to 10 per cent by 2050.
 - Assuming a 4°C global warming increase by 2100, the Fens, which has almost 50 per cent of the UK’s Grade 1 land, will see a 16-fold increase in flood risk, plus up to 110 months of severe drought in a 30-year period.
 - There will be a reconfiguration of UK food systems as the UK transitions to crop suitability.
 - Heat-driven losses in wheat and barley, already material, are forecasted to grow significantly.
 - Soil water-holding capacity must be enhanced along with plant-breeding for drought tolerance.
 - Precision irrigation, soil sensing, climate modelling and decision support tools will be essential.
 - The report has an objective of maintaining domestic production at 60 per cent of food consumption by value between now and 2050.
 - Government must provide access to the right skills, information and training.
 - Regulatory barriers must be eased, such as on-farm water storage.
 - Public money should be used to provide incentives to adapt.
 - New crops, new business models, new data infrastructures and new forms of collaboration between farmers are required.

2. Research from the University of Reading has suggested that reducing methane emissions will slow climate change but would lead to gases derived from halo carbons and nitrous oxide becoming more chemically active which would slow the recovery of the ozone layer.
3. The Soil Association has branded the latest report from the Climate Change Committee as a ‘frightening reality check’ about the likely impact of the climate crisis on UK food security. While the Association welcomed the recognition that diets need to change in addition to the importance of soil health, water management and biodiversity, it questioned the wisdom of basing the modelling on existing government policy on import volumes. It has advised that the government urgently needs to double production and consumption of British fruit and vegetables.
4. A study by Forest Research, the University of Sterling, the University of Glasgow, the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and Cranfield University, published in the Journal of Applied Ecology, suggests that restoring ecological complexity, rather than trying to replicate historical conditions, may be a more effective way of building resilient ecosystems. Researchers examined 114 restored sites across the UK, including 54 calcareous grasslands and 60 broadleaved woodlands and assessed complexity across several parts of the ecosystem including plant communities, invertebrates, soil bacteria and fungi, habitat structure and ecological networks. The clearest finding was that decisions made at the start of the restoration had a strong and lasting influence on ecological complexity. The results challenge the assumption that restoring specific species or waiting for sites to mature will automatically lead to healthy ecosystems, rather they highlight the importance of early planning, habitat structure and a broader understanding of what restoration success looks like.
5. The Environment Agency has invited farmers to apply for a Local Resource Option screening study. This is a local water project designed to improve the reliability and resilience of water supplies. Groups need to nominate a lead farmer and the process is competitive. Consultants will visit the farms to discuss current water use, future water needs and longer-term business solutions and will then build a picture of water resources in the relevant area. They will screen and rank the water resource options that will work best.
6. A pan-European team of scientists and soil innovation partners have invited soil advisers, land managers, policymakers and researchers to help shape the next phase of AI4SoilHealth’s Soil Health Viewer. The platform is designed to support more informed land management, soil monitoring and evidence-based decision-making across Europe.
7. The Royal Horticultural Society and Animal and Plant Health Agency have combined to create a new National Centre for Environmental Horticulture and Plant Health that will research and help mitigate existing and emerging threats.

8. A new Farming Innovation Investor Partnerships competition, with £5 millions available, has opened to attract private investment and support businesses developing near-commercial on-farm innovations. The scheme closes on 17 June. Applicants must be:

- a UK-registered micro, small or medium-sized business
- seeking late seed or Series A investment
- developing an innovation close to commercial use

Projects must:

- deliver clear benefits for farmers, growers or agricultural businesses in England
 - cost between £750,000 and £3 millions
 - last up to 18 months
 - be carried out in the UK
9. Growers are to receive grants totalling £1.9 millions from leftover levy funding from the defunct horticulture arm of the Agricultural and Horticulture Development Board. The funding will be distributed to 22 grower associations to support a series of legacy projects between now and March 2029.
10. Defra is to invest £30 millions in a new Wildlife-Rich Habitat Fund to deliver new habitat across England's National Parks, National Landscapes and the Broads over the next 3 years.
11. An NFU survey has revealed that 85 per cent of farmers and land managers are opposed to the reintroduction of white-tailed eagles in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Durham.

Other matters of farm finance and tenure

1. The latest Bank of England Summary of Business Conditions has reported that farming has been hit by 'elevated financial stress as a result of the Middle East conflict with increases in fertilizer, fuel and electricity costs. It forecasts that food inflation will rise to 6-7 per cent rather than falling as previously anticipated.
2. The Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit has predicted that UK food prices by November will be 50 per cent above those at the start of the cost-of-living crisis in mid-2021.
3. The judicial review in the High Court by two Cambridgeshire farmers into the introduction of Inheritance Tax on agricultural property has failed. George and Thomas Martin, supported by Farmers and Businesses for Fair Tax Relief, argued the Government had failed to keep a promise to adequately consult on reforms to tax legislation. While the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee supported the case, the Government denied that limited consultation was unlawful. The Speaker of the House of Commons argued the claim by the plaintiffs was not justiciable. The judges stated:

- The claim lacked substantive merit as there was never any legitimate expectation to a consultation.
 - There was no unequivocal promise made by the Government to consult on the changes.
 - The claim was brought out of time.
 - The claim was not justiciable on grounds of parliamentary privilege.
4. The National Association of Agricultural Contractors has reported average increases in contracting charges of 4.84 per cent this year, down from 5.7 per cent in 2025.
 5. The Agricultural Price Index for March for outputs fell by 5.3 per cent, compared to a year ago, but was up 1.1 per cent compared to February. The index for inputs increased by 3.7 per cent and 1.1 per cent respectively.
 6. A report published in the Society of Agriculture following work by Thrings, solicitors on the subject of Biodiversity Net Gain, shows that the following changes are expected to come into force by 31 July:
 - An exemption for developments below a 0.2-hectare threshold.
 - Removal of the self-built exemption.
 - Exemption for temporary permissions of up to 5 years.
 - Changes to the biodiversity gain hierarchy for minor development making it easier for smaller schemes to comply.
 7. A report published by the Co-operative Party suggests that agricultural co-operatives could ‘unleash growth’ in the UK and improve national food security by ‘improving the resilience of UK farms.’
 8. In 2025, organically farmed land increased by 7.3 per cent to 540,000 ha, the highest in over a decade. In Scotland, land in conversion increased by 115 per cent to 56,000 ha with organic land increasing from 1.8 per cent of all land to 3.3 per cent. In England, land in conversion increased by 23 per cent to 24,200 ha while in Wales the increase was 4 per cent. However, in Wales, fully organic land fell by 6 per cent.
 9. The Society of Agriculture has analysed Defra data on succession. Findings include:
 - 37 per cent are reviewing a succession plan; 10 per cent are creating a plan; 22 per cent say they have a plan; and 20 per cent have not considered the matter.
 - However, only 20 per cent of farms have reached a clear, agreed position.
 - 41 per cent of cereal farms are reviewing succession plans and 24 per cent have a plan in place.
 - In less favoured areas, 28 per cent of livestock farms have not considered succession, this increases to 32 per cent for horticulture farms.

- The tighter the margin, the greater the uncertainty, the more difficult it is to plan succession.
- Succession planning is more prevalent in farms where there is more active business management.

10. The headline authorised mileage rate for approved mileage allowance payments has increased to 55p per business mile, the first increase for 15 years.

Product prices

A. Market background

- 1.** Sterling closed down against both the Euro and the US Dollar this month, having been weaker still during the month. Opening the month at 86.2p per Euro, Sterling fell marginally early on, then more obviously mid-month, reaching a low of 87.3p. Over the remainder of the month, it recovered to 86.1p and settled to close at 86.6p per € (0.4p weaker). Against the US Dollar, Sterling opened at 73.5p per \$ and rose marginally to peak at 73.3p before falling sharply to 75.1p mid-month, followed by a partial recovery with minor fluctuations leading to a close of 74.3p per \$ (down 0.8p).
- 2.** The gold price volatility settled this month, with a swing of less than £250 per troy ounce. The average price peaked early on and fell to a lowpoint late in the month, recovering in the final days. Opening at £3,403 per troy ounce, the price peaked at £3,508 and bottomed-out at £3,276 before climbing to close at £3,386 (down £17).
- 3.** Crude oil prices remained strong early on, peaking at \$114.79 per barrel. The on/off/on ceasefire and ‘deal’ news has fuelled (pardon the pun) volatility with daily swings reaching \$10, however, the generally positive news in the latter weeks led to a fall overall. Brent Crude opened at \$111.41 per barrel, climbing to \$114.79 and falling to \$96.82 in the first week. After peaking mid-month at \$112.11 the average price fell back for the remainder of the month closing the month at \$93.26 per barrel, down \$18.15.

B. Crops

- 1.** The cereals market rose overall this month, although the positivity was suppressed by traders’ reluctance to commit without more meaningful updates of the northern hemisphere’s 2026 harvest predictions. The dominant positive drivers in the month were: favourable news regarding the US / Iran negotiations and the dry weather in Europe, US and Australia; countered by forex volatility, increased Russian yield predictions and a dropping oil price. The milling wheat premium shrank back to £10. Feed wheat futures closed down overall, having been higher and lower in the month; by late May, deliveries for November 2026, and 2027 were £189/tonne (-2) and £197/tonne (-1) respectively, with March 2028 deliveries sitting at £203/tonne (-1). Oilseed rape prices rose again, supported by the crude oil price, despite its fall in the month.

Average spot prices in late May (per tonne ex-farm): feed wheat £184 (+6); milling wheat £194 (+4); feed barley £156 (-); oilseed rape £476 (+12); feed peas £207 (+5); feed beans £235 (+22).

C. Livestock

1. The average live-weight cattle prices for steers and heifers closed the month down, having fallen lower but with a positive final week. The average steer price, opening at 344p/kg lw, fell to a low of 338p/kg before a marginal upturn saw it close at 341p/kg lw (down 3p to sit 33p/kg below the average a year earlier). The average finished heifer price moved similarly but with a small lift early on: opening at 354p/kg lw it rose to 358p/kg before falling to a low of 349p/kg and closing at 352p/kg (down 2p to sit 31p below the average a year earlier). The average dairy cow price remained volatile and upped the amplitude of movement – from an opening position of £1,886 it fell to £1,815, climbed to a peak of £2,359 but then fell sharply again to a closing average of £1,783 per head (down £103 overall to sit £129 above the prior year average).
2. The average finished lamb price (SQQ liveweight) switched from old season to new season this month which led to a jump in price, as with previous years. The old season price recovered much of the fall seen in April. From an opening average of 402p/kg, the average price climbed back to 415p/kg before the switch new season saw a jump of over 50p/kg and a closing average price of 467p/kg (up 65p, sitting 119p/kg above the average new season price a year earlier).
3. The average UK standard pig price (SPP deadweight) continued to fall for most of the month but recovered, partially, in the final week. From an opening position of 180.9p/kg dw, it fell to 178.3p/kg but rose to a closing position of 179.6p/kg (down 1.3p/kg overall to sit 27.1p/kg below the previous year).
4. The average UK all milk price for March, released in early May, was 35.05ppl, 0.87ppl below the revised February average of 35.92ppl (previously 36.07ppl) and 9.82ppl below the average a year earlier. The EU average milk price for March fell 0.94ppl to 38.42ppl, to sit 7.42ppl below the price a year earlier.

Other crop news

1. According to the AHDB's May crop development report:
 - 13 per cent of winter wheat is rated excellent; 51 per cent is good; 31 per cent is fair; 4 per cent is poor; and 1 per cent is very poor. These figures are all down on March and April but are still up on 2024 and 2025.
 - 17 per cent of winter barley is excellent; 45 per cent is good; 34 per cent is fair; and 4 per cent is poor.
 - 12 per cent of winter oats is excellent; 59 per cent is good; 27 per cent is fair; and 2 per cent is poor.
 - 25 per cent of oilseed rape is excellent; 53 per cent is good; 18 per cent is fair; 3 per cent is poor; and 1 per cent is very poor.

- 3 per cent of spring wheat is excellent; 32 per cent is good; 63 per cent is fair; and 2 per cent is poor.
- 17 per cent of spring barley is excellent; 40 per cent is good; 37 per cent is fair; 5 per cent is poor; and 1 per cent is very poor.
- 7 per cent of spring oats is excellent; 48 per cent is good; 42 per cent is fair; and 3 per cent is poor.
- 8 per cent of spring oilseed rape is good; 81 per cent is fair; 2 per cent is poor; and 9 per cent is very poor.

2. Latest figures from AHDB on grain stocks show:

- Total cereals demand for 2025/26 is estimated at 13.453Mt, 1 per cent higher than 2024/25.
- Total cereals demand by human and industrial sectors is estimated at 9.182Mt, 12 per cent down on 2024/25, due to reduced bioethanol production and reduced demand for brewing, malting, distilling and flour milling.
- The balance of total availability and domestic consumption of wheat is estimated at 2.079Mt, with operating stock of 1.5Mt needed.
- The barley supply and demand balance is estimated at 1.266Mt, similar to 2024/25 levels.
- The oats supply and demand balance is estimated at 177Kt but closing stocks are likely to be well down on 2024/25 at 87Kt.

3. A report from Innovative Farmers into flax growing has revealed:

- Scottish fibre flax trials have confirmed the crop's agronomic suitability but has exposed critical gaps in harvesting equipment and processing capacity.
- Retting, not seed variety, proved the decisive factor in fibre quality.
- A distributed network of farms, mills and researchers is building the missing supply chain through collaboration rather than commercial structure.

Flax grows without chemical inputs or irrigation and suits low-input and organic relations. It attracts pollinators, diversifies arable systems and produces a fibre for which domestic demand is growing. 80 per cent of the world's flax is grown in Belgium, France and the Netherlands. A trial across 8 farms in Scotland between 2023 and 2025 produced straw yields which exceeded the European commercial benchmark of 11-13 tonnes per hectare but harvesting had to be done entirely by hand. After harvest, retting follows, pulled straw laid flat on the ground for 3 weeks, turned once, broken down by rainfall and soil microbes, then drying and storage. The problems continue. No processor is placing contracts; no established logistics link field to mill; and no pricing structure exists that farmers can plan against with confidence. However, it can still be a crop for the future.

4. The University of Warwick's Crop Centre and ADAS have developed a new soil test which allows growers to detect the pathogen responsible for causing Fusarium Basal Rot. The disease is caused by *Fusarium oxysporum* which infects bulb crops through their roots. The test is available to growers via ADAS.
5. A trial undertaken at a farm near Newark conducted on Innovator potatoes has tested the effect of Wholly K, a potassium metabolite, on potato bulking. The results saw an increase of 10 per cent in yield with tubers larger and longer, ideal for use in chipping.
6. The Processors and Growers Research Organisation is to take ownership of the pea and bean Yield Enhancement Networks with the aim of modernising them for today's pulse grower.
7. Dyson Farming will host an open day, organised by the Processors and Growers Research Organisation, on 15 June for vining pea growers and a second on 30 June for pea and bean growers.
8. Researchers at Wageningen University & Research have suggested that biologicals could help agriculture be less dependent on chemical inputs, but their effectiveness varies between varieties. According to researchers Mohammadhadi Sobhani and Richard Visser, biologicals are less studied than chemical inputs and their efficiency is less predictable. Four factors play an important role in effectiveness: the type of biological; the environment; the type of plant stress; and the genetic make-up of the plant. The researchers consider that genetics could be the most important and so have started experiments with 20-30 different potato genotypes as, in the Netherlands, 50 per cent of all chemical products are used on potato crops. It is hoped to involve plant breeders in the research so as to lead to breeding new varieties that can benefit from biologicals rather than chemicals.
9. The Agricultural Price Index for March shows increases of 4.4 per cent for oilseed rape, compared to a year ago, 40.9 per cent for forage plants and 9 per cent for fresh vegetables but there were falls of 5.9 per cent for wheat, 4.5 per cent for barley, 16.4 per cent for oats and 0.8 per cent for potatoes. Compared to February, there were increases of 2.3 per cent for wheat, 0.3 per cent for oats, 2.8 per cent for potatoes, 2.9 per cent for oilseed rape, 5.5 per cent for forage plants, 3.6 per cent for fresh vegetables and 2.1 per cent for fresh fruit.
10. Analysis by Andersons Midlands has revealed that unanticipated inflation caused by the Iran conflict has added £31.30 per tonnes to the cost of growing UK Gala apples, this in addition to the already forecast increase of £32 per tonne. The cost increases will also affect berry growers with fertilizer and chemicals up an average of 35 per cent, packaging up 17.5 per cent and transport up 20 per cent. Those growing in heated environments also face increases in electricity costs of between 10-40 per cent and gas costs of 60 per cent.

- 11.** The World Apple and Pear Association has reported that European apple stocks were 14.5 per cent higher at the start of March than at the same date last year. 676,946 tonnes had been moved by 1 March compared to 644,034 tonnes in 2025. UK stocks had increased by 26.1 per cent to 80,310 tonnes. European pear stocks were up 7 per cent at 319,973 tonnes with 140,003 tonnes having been moved by 1 March compared to 99,272 tonnes in 2025. UK stocks were up 69 per cent at 7,590 tonnes.
- 12.** Scientists at Seoul National University have reported work on *Prunus x yedoensis* and *Prunus sargentii* to regulate reproduction through a hierarchical abscission programme in which petals, calyces, flower pedicels, fruit pedicels and peduncles are shed in sequence to refine final fruit set. The team tracked 5 abscission events across reproduction. In *Prunus x yedoensis*, petals dropped rapidly after flower even without pollination showing the tree has an internal development timer rather than successful pollination whereas on *Prunus sargentii*, petals on unfertilized flowers were often retained thereby extending the window for pollination. The study also confirmed that fruit selection continued after pollination in that fruit abscission removed many, small growing fruits. The findings suggest that cherry trees are continuously evaluating reproductive success and developmental quality.
- 13.** The latest quarterly Business Barometer from the Horticultural Trades Association shows that more businesses are behind their profit targets than ahead, with a net balance of -36 per cent. This compares with -13 per cent for sales. While retailers, growers and manufacturers reported an annual increase in sales of 11 per cent, profits fell by 27 per cent, indicating rising costs rather than reduced demand. Investment is being cut with 62 per cent planning one investment compared to 70 per cent in the previous quarter and 74 per cent in quarter 3 in 2025. 63 per cent plan to cut or slow investment. Medium-term confidence has fallen to 4.2/7 while long-term has dropped to 4/7, the lowest since the start of the pandemic.
- 14.** Horti daily has revealed that lettuce grown outdoors in areas such as Murcia in Spain and exported to Northern Europe is likely to have a lower carbon footprint than an equivalent crop produced in a local vertical farm.
- 15.** Wageningen University & Research and The Ohio State University have signed an agreement to expand collaboration in greenhouse horticulture. It aims to advance research, education and knowledge exchange.
- 16.** Dutch greenhouse growers are using Naaldwijk greenhouse maintenance specialist HS Tuinbouw Service to fly drones above greenhouse structures with a thermal imaging camera to identify exactly where heat is escaping.

17. An article published in Farming Future Foods has revealed that Chinese researchers improved pollination and fruit set by distributing bee-collected pollen with drones. The scientists found that boron concentrations were essential for optimal germination and naturally occurring boric acid in bee-collected pollen did not occur in manually collected pollen. The use of additives and drones dramatically increased fruit set, from the early 20 per cent to between 50-80 per cent.
18. UK bio acoustic crop monitoring specialist AgriSound has been awarded funding from Innovate UK Full Adopt Grant Round 3 to support its project 'Trialling a novel bee attractant to improve strawberry pollination.' The project, which will last until March 2027, includes PheroSyn and Oakford Farm.
19. Researchers at Cornell University's Duffield College of Mechanical Engineering have used stretchable fibre-optic sensors to create a soft robotic gripper that can predict the ripeness of strawberries by touch, then gently twist them off the plant without causing damage.
20. Data from the Food Standards Agency shows that wine production in England and Wales in 2025 rose by 55 per cent to 124,377 hectolitres, equivalent to more than 16.5 million bottles. While wine production grew by 131 per cent. The number of vineyards grew by 4.3 per cent to 1,158 while the industry now employs over 10,000 people and is valued at £14 billions.

Other livestock news

1. RSPCA Assured has announced new beef cattle standards which will be effective from 3 August. They include:
 - All cattle must have permanent access to pasture throughout the grass growing season by the age of 5 months.
 - All artificially reared calves must receive milk through teat feeding systems rather than buckets.
 - A ban on the use of methane-reducing feed additives that could negatively impact on behaviour or welfare.
 - A lifetime limit of four movements between farm holdings with all movements logged.
 - Annual independent testing of bacterial and coliform counts.
 - A minimum of 30 hours of professional development training for those working with farmed animals.
2. During April, with comparisons to a year earlier:
 - UK prime cattle slaughterings fell by 4 per cent to 164,000 head.
 - Beef and veal production fell by 1.5 per cent to 73,000 tonnes.
 - Sheep slaughterings fell by 12 per cent to 852,000 head.
 - Mutton and lamb production fell by 9.8 per cent to 21,000 tonnes.
 - Pig slaughterings rose by 3.3 per cent to 892,000 head.
 - Pigmeat production rose by 7.5 per cent to 86,000 tonnes.

3. Cases of bluetongue disease BTV-3 have been reported in May in Cumbria, South Yorkshire and Ceredigion.
4. An AHDB study conducted by Promar International has suggested that targeted breeding could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from dairy farming by up to 16 per cent. The study focused on the EnviroCow index which ranks animals based on traits linked to environmental impact. Herds that selected bulls with higher EnviroCow scores saw improvements over time leading to average carbon footprint reductions of between 8.5 and 16 per cent over 5 years.
5. A study published in Animal Journal has reported that taller post-grazing sward height led cows to adopt a more selective and efficient foraging strategy, characterised by shorter, more frequent meals, more frequent movement between feeding stations, and fewer but larger bites. Forage intake was increased and diet quality improved, supporting higher milk yield without increasing grazing time.
6. During May, Greece has reported a further 55 outbreaks of foot and mouth disease while Cyprus has reported 23 further outbreaks.
7. During April, average butterfat fell by 1.4 per cent, compared to March, but was up 2.5 per cent on a year ago at 4.38 per cent. Average protein was up 0.3 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively at 3.5 per cent.
8. Arla increased its price by 1.76ppl taking the conventional milk price to 35.83ppl.
9. Data has been published on milk utilisation by dairies in March, with comparisons to February:
 - Milk available to processors increased by 16 per cent to 1,225 million litres.
 - Liquid milk production increased by 14 per cent to 530 million litres.
 - Cheese production rose by 12 per cent to 43,700 tonnes.
 - Butter production rose by 27 per cent to 19,000 tonnes.
10. The Agricultural Price Index for March shows increases of 11.1 per cent for sheep and lambs, compared to a year earlier, 2.8 per cent for poultry and 2.1 per cent for eggs, but falls of 1.9 per cent for cattle and calves, 10.4 per cent for pigs and 21.9 per cent for milk. Compared to February, there were increases of 13.5 per cent for sheep and lambs and 4.9 per cent for poultry but falls of 0.4 per cent for cattle and calves, 1.9 per cent for pigs and 2.4 per cent for milk.
11. British Wool has advised that returns for the 2025 clip year will be up by 70 per cent, compared to 2024, the highest level in 10 years.
12. The AHDB Pork cost of production for the first quarter of 2026 is estimated to be 192p/kg deadweight with margins per slaughter pig estimated at -£3.85 and -4p/kg deadweight. The estimated cost of production was up 2p/kg.
13. The Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust and the Royal Agricultural Society of England have published Novel Proteins and Feed Efficiencies: A Bitesize Guide on the subject of alternative protein sources for livestock.

- 14.** A multi-year field study by Wageningen University & Research conducted with Royal GD and Utrecht University has reported that vaccination of laying hens against highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) reduces virus transmission, mortality and outbreak risks in the poultry sector. The study reviewed the effectiveness of two commercial vaccines with vaccinated laying hens monitored for more than 85 weeks. Transmission experiments were conducted with groups of hens exposed to H5N1 virus in the laboratory. The study revealed that one unvaccinated hen can infect more than six other hens whereas, in vaccinated hens, virus transmission was much lower. Flock-level modelling showed that the probability of an outbreak in unvaccinated hens following virus introduction is 96 per cent whereas the risk is 10-30 per cent in vaccinated flocks. The vaccination was proved to be safe to hens and egg production was normal. Research suggests that vaccination must be combined with monitoring otherwise only a limited proportion of outbreaks would be detected.
- 15.** During April, with comparisons to a year earlier:
- UK commercial layer chick placings fell by 11 per cent to 2.8 million chicks.
 - Broiler chick placings rose by 0.9 per cent to 94.2 million chicks.
 - Turkey poult placings rose by 25 per cent to 700,000 chicks.
 - Turkey slaughterings rose by 31 per cent to 600,000 birds.
 - Broiler slaughterings fell by 1 per cent to 93.4 million birds
 - Poultry meat production fell by 0.9 per cent to 171,900 tonnes.

VIII Inputs/Supply businesses

- 1.** Data has been published on fertilizer usage on farm in England in 2024/25:
- 29 per cent used at least some precision farming techniques including 56 per cent of cereal farms; 40 per cent of general cropping farms; 42 per cent of mixed farms; and 12 per cent of livestock farms.
 - 33 per cent of farms used soil nutrient software packages to help determine fertilizer applications including 62 per cent of cereal farms; 56 per cent of general cropping farms; 34 per cent of mixed farms; and 16 per cent of livestock farms.
 - 59 per cent of farms used clover or legumes in grass swards including 37 per cent of mixed farms; and 62 per cent of livestock farms.
 - 25 per cent of farms used green manure in arable rotation including 27 per cent of cereal farms; 46 per cent of general cropping farms; 25 per cent of mixed farms; and 16 per cent of livestock farms.
 - 78 per cent of farms make adjustments to fertilizer application rates including 81 per cent of cereal farms; 92 per cent of general cropping farms; 81 per cent of mixed farms; and 74 per cent of livestock farms.
 - Independent advice (FACTS) was the source of nutrient planning on 31 per cent of farms; 21 per cent used supplier advice (FACTS); 5 per cent used their own advice (FACTS); and 44 per cent used their own advice (not FACTS).

- Nitrogen application rates were 91kg/ha across all farms with 74kg/ha of inorganic nitrogen and 9kg/ha of organic nitrogen; cereal farms were 136kg/ha, 134 kg/ha and 2kg/ha respectively; general cropping farms were 106kg/ha, 102kg/ha and 4kg/ha; mixed farms were 81kg/ha, 74kg/ha and 7kg/ha; horticulture farms were 82kg/ha, 81kg/ha and 1kg/ha; and livestock farms were 54kg/ha, 39kg/ha and 15kg/ha.
 - Phosphate application rates were 22kg/ha across all farms with 12kg/ha of inorganic phosphate and 10kg/ha of organic phosphate; cereal farms were 26kg/ha, 21kg/ha and 5kg/ha respectively; general cropping farms were 26kg/ha, 20kg/ha and 6kg/ha; mixed farms were 20kg/ha, 11kg/ha and 9kg/ha; horticulture farms were 25kg/ha, 24kg/ha and 1kg/ha; and livestock farms were 19kg/ha; 5kg/ha and 14kg/ha.
 - Potash application rates were 48kg/ha across all farms with 18kg/ha of inorganic potash and 30kg/ha of organic potash; cereal farms were 36kg/ha, 27kg/ha and 9kg/ha respectively; general cropping farms were 48kg/ha, 37kg/ha and 11kg/ha; mixed farms were 43kg/ha, 14kg/ha and 29 kg/ha; horticulture farms were 41kg/ha, 38kg/ha and 3kg/ha; and livestock farms were 55kg/ha, 8kg/ha and 47kg/ha.
2. An on-farm trial in the Netherlands conducted across 31.12ha of potatoes has found that farmers using ICL's biodegradable CRF, eqo.x could lower their carbon footprint by 7.5 per cent per tonnes of potatoes and, when combined with reduced fertilizer inputs while maintaining yields, the potential reduction rises to 25.8 per cent. Analysis of emissions showed that 44 per cent were linked to fertilizer production, 34 per cent to direct field emissions, 20 per cent to nutrient leaching and 2 per cent to volatilisation. The use of CRFs delivered a 1.7 per cent reduction in product emissions, a 12.6 per cent fall in direct emissions, a 6.9 per cent decline in leaching and a 35.4 per cent drop in volatilisation.
 3. Jeremy Moody of the CAAV has warned that the Government needs to prioritize agricultural access to fuel to avoid crops rotting in the field this summer and to enable autumn sowing.
 4. Defra has opened a consultation calling for evidence to support innovation in the fertilizer sector, diversify supply, and strengthen the UK's resilience to global market stocks. The consultation closes on 10 June.
 5. ICL Growing Solutions has opened a new fertilizer plant in India which will produce 30,000 tonnes of water-soluble fertilizer each year.
 6. British Berry Growers has highlighted significant new cost pressures facing UK soft-fruit producers following global market disruption since early March. Grower data compiled by Anderson Farm Business Consultants show average cost increases of 35 per cent for fertilizer and chemicals, 17.5 per cent for packaging, 20 per cent for transport, 25 per cent for electricity and 60 per cent for natural gas.

7. AHDB figures show the impact of the war in the Middle East on fertilizer prices:
 - UK produced AN (34.5 per cent N) is up 31.7 per cent.
 - Imported AN (34.5 per cent N) is up 23.2 per cent.
 - Granular Urea (46 per cent N) is up 34.4 per cent.
 - UAN (30 per cent N) is up 36.9 per cent.
 - Muriate of Potash is up 4.8 per cent.
 - Diammonium Phosphate is up 6.3 per cent.
 - Triple Super-Phosphate is up 13.8 per cent.
 - UK produced Polysulphate is up 2.2 per cent.
8. The Society of Agriculture has published a report on Green Shed, an innovative working example of how researchers, businesses and other partners can collaborate to shape a more resilient, nature-positive producer supply chain that is aligned with the aims of the Scottish national Food Strategy. The project, led by Scotland's Rural College:
 - Green Shed will use cattle waste products to power a methane capturing system and grow indoor crops.
 - The system will produce low-carbon fertilizer and has the ability to remove the equivalent of 237 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide per farm per year.
 - The project has received £3 millions from the Direct Air Capture and Greenhouse Gas Removal programme.
 - The shed is sited at the SRUC's Easter Howgate farm.
 - The shed's anaerobic digestion plant will use waste cattle bedding to produce energy to run a methane capture system. Excess energy will power a vertical farm and a low-carbon fertilizer system.
 - Farmers could yield an income stream of £40,000 per year plus £1,000 per year in reduced fertilizer and energy costs.
9. The European Commission has adopted its Fertilizer Action Plan which combines immediate support measures, aimed at supporting affordability and security of supply, with longer-term action to strengthen domestic fertilizer production, improve resilience and accelerate the transition to bio-based, low-carbon and circular fertilizers.
10. The Agricultural Price Index for March shows falls of 2.3 per cent for seeds, compared to a year earlier, 0.7 per cent for veterinary services and 3 per cent for animal feeding stuffs, but increases of 10 per cent for energy and lubricants, 12.8 per cent for fertilizers, 33.1 per cent for chemicals, 6.6 per cent for equipment maintenance and 2.6 per cent for buildings maintenance. Compared to February, there were increases of 0.2 per cent for seeds, 10.9 per cent for energy and lubricants, 2.7 per cent for fertilizers, 0.4 per cent for veterinary services, 0.9 per cent for animal feedingstuffs, 1.5 per cent for equipment maintenance and 0.9 per cent for buildings maintenance.
11. The fuel duty rate on red diesel will be cut from 10.18p to 6.48p per litre from 15 June until the end of the year.

12. A report published in Science Advances and Phys Org has detailed work undertaken at the Leibniz Institute of Plant Biochemistry in Halle, Germany, in collaboration with the University of Bonn, into the strategy of plants to counter a lack of phosphate in the soil. The report suggests:
 - The scientists identified enzyme VIH2 which regulates symbiosis and also controls the production of inositol pyrophosphates which indicate phosphate status.
 - When there is little phosphate in the cell, VIH2 produces lower amounts of inositol pyrophosphates telling the cell to initiate a starvation program.
 - When the phosphate supply is adequate, the starvation response is suppressed.
 - This enabled the scientists to decouple the regulation of mycorrhizal symbiosis from the phosphate status of the soil, which has been under research for decades, and may result in a reduction in the need to applications of phosphate fertilizer.
13. Koppert has launched Timing Expert, a new feature within the Koppert One app, which helps growers determine the optimal timing for foliar applications of beneficial nematodes in outdoors crops.
14. Belgian strawberry growers are using autonomous ultra-violet-C robots during the night to issue ultraviolet light to neutralize powdery mildew fungi before it can spread.
15. The Caledonian Tree Company, developers and makers of the Air-Pot plant growing systems, has been awarded the King's Award for Enterprise.

Marketing

1. The Advertising Standards Authority has upheld a complaint lodged by TV present Chris Packham. Newspaper adverts as part of the Lets Eat Balanced campaign compared the carbon footprint of UK beef and dairy production with the global average. However, the ASA ruled that because these life cycle assessments represented emissions from cradle to retail, the limitation should have been specified as environmental claims must reflect full life cycle emissions, that is to the point of disposal.
2. A review, commissioned by Sustain and undertaken by the Organic Research Centre, has examined evidence of economic benefits of local food systems, prioritising evidence from UK and comparable markets. The review found that local and regional food systems can be less exposed to price shocks and more resilient to disruption. Producers supplying locally are typically less reliant on synthetic inputs for example, vegetable producers selling directly to consumers were estimated to use 70 per cent less pesticides. Further, a study of 252 farms participating in short food supply chains, found that 75 per cent produced at least 3 different crop types compared with 28 per cent nationally.

3. A poll of 2,000 adults has revealed that, while 80 per cent consider supporting British farmers is important, only 27 per cent actively consider whether fruit and vegetables are grown in the UK when deciding what to buy.
4. AHDB data on dairy trade in the first quarter reveals:
 - Exports increased by 2 per cent year-on-year with increases in powders, yoghurt, butter and cheese but falls in milk and cream.
 - Exports of powders grew by 42.4 per cent, mainly to the EU, but those to China fell.
 - Volumes of butter grew by 26.7 per cent but the value fell by 17 per cent.
 - Volumes of yoghurt increased by 58 per cent.
 - Dairy imports grew by 1.5 per cent to 291,400 tonnes with yoghurt up 12.7 per cent, powders up 11 per cent, cheese and curd up 2 per cent, whey and whey products down 25.5 per cent, butter down 13.3 per cent and milk and cream down 3.8 per cent.
5. According to Worldpanel by Numerator UK, in the 12 weeks to 19 April:
 - Volume sales of beef fell by 6.2 per cent but spend was up 7.6 per cent due to a rise in average prices of 14.7 per cent.
 - Primary beef volumes fell by 8.8 per cent with mince down 6.2 per cent.
 - Processed beef volumes grew by 9 per cent with burgers and grills down 10.1 per cent.
 - Added-value beef volumes grew by 6.1 per cent with sous vide up 15.9 per cent.
 - Lamb volumes fell by 0.5 per cent but spend increased by 7.7 per cent.
 - Primary lamb volumes grew by 0.1 per cent with steaks up 7.5 per cent and roasting joints up 0.8 per cent.
 - Processed lamb volumes fell by 6.8 per cent with burgers and grills down 6.9 per cent.
 - Added-value lamb volumes rose by 2.9 per cent with sous vide up 4.1 per cent.
 - Volume sales of pig meat fell by 3.2 per cent with spend down 2 per cent.
 - Primary pig meat volumes rose by 5 per cent with mince up 33.8 per cent and roasting joints up 8.4 per cent.
 - Processed pig meat volumes fell by 5.9 per cent with bacon down 7.9 per cent, sausages 6.3 per cent, cooked meats 6.9 per cent and gammon 4.2 per cent.
 - Added-value pigmeat volumes grew by 12.5 per cent with ready-to-cook up 38.5 per cent.
6. AHDB has published data on pork trading in the first 3 months of 2026:
 - Exports increased by 10 per cent, compared to the December quarter, although there was a fall of 2 per cent in March, compared to February.
 - Compared to a year ago, exports increased by 12 per cent to 87,100 tonnes, the highest in the first quarter since 2022.

- Fresh and frozen pork exports grew by 31 per cent, bacon increased by 15 per cent but processed fell by 26 per cent.
 - Import volumes in the first quarter fell by 4 per cent, compared to the same period last year, to 173,300 tonnes.
 - Bacon imports fell by 10 per cent and fresh and frozen pork by 5 per cent.
- 7.** Data has been published by NIQ Homescan, POD, Total GB, on dairy retail performance in the 12 weeks to 18 April, with comparisons to a year earlier:
- Volumes of cows' milk fell by 1.4 per cent while average prices increased by 7.5 per cent. Only whole milk saw volume growth, up 2.7 per cent.
 - Volumes of cows' cheese grew by 1.4 per cent while spend grew by 1.9 per cent. Growth was seen in cottage cheese, soft white cheese and kids snacking but cheddar volumes fell by 0.6 per cent.
 - Cows' butter volumes fell by 0.6 per cent with spend down 0.8 per cent. Block butter volumes increased by 7.4 per cent with average prices down 2.2 per cent. However, spread volumes fell by 4.2 per cent.
 - Volumes of cows' yoghurt, yoghurt drinks and fromage fraise grew by 5.5 per cent with spend up 7.6 per cent. Plain yoghurt volumes grew by 25.2 per cent while fat-free yoghurt grew by 9.4 per cent.
 - Cows' cream saw volume growth of 0.1 per cent with spend up 6 per cent. Clotted cream volumes rose by 18.8 per cent.
- 8.** M&S has begun construction on a new National Distribution Centre in Daventry at a cost of £340 millions. The 1.3m sq ft facility will serve over 200 Food Stores.
- 9.** Data has been published regarding the pork market in February:
- Imports fell 1 per cent on January and 5 per cent on a year ago to 56,100 tonnes.
 - In the year to date, imports are down 4 per cent to 112,700 tonnes, the lowest first two months since 2021.
 - Year-on-year, bacon imports fell 9 per cent.
 - Exports rose by 15 per cent, compared to January, to 29,300 tonnes. Shipments to the EU were up 7 per cent, over the year, which compared to January, exports to China were up 24 per cent.
- 10.** Aldi has announced it will invest £5 billions to help achieve its goal of buying 50 per cent of its home-grown produce through long-term agreements.
- 11.** Branton-owned Nanna Tete has launched convenience baby potatoes into Tesco.
- 12.** Morrisons has given notice to a number of pig producers and also notified others that it would be sourcing reduced numbers.
- 13.** Lidl has overtaken Morrisons to become the UK's 5th largest supermarket.
- 14.** Florette has launched a value-tier 'Essentials' range to include high-volume everyday staple foods. The first two additions are Shredded Iceburg and Chopped Iceburg.

15. The British Tomato Fortnight will run from 1-14 June.
16. Aldi is forecasting its sales of British blackberries to increase by 20 per cent this year. In partnership with Driscoll's, it intends to promote a 100 per cent British range of sweeter varieties.
17. Cold pressed juice company Daily Dose, which buys surplus fruit and vegetables from UK growers and farms, has spent a six-figure sum on its first advertising campaign across out-of-home, digital and in Waitrose stores.

Miscellaneous

1. With a review of Red Tractor standards underway, including that for waste, experts at Bins.co.uk have outlined the mistakes that could put a farm at risk of failing to meet the standard:
 - Leaving plastic waste exposed to where it can blow across neighbouring land.
 - Storing waste too close to feed, crops, bedding, livestock areas or watercourses.
 - Mixing hazardous materials with general waste.
 - Allowing packaging, containers or redundant materials to accumulate around the site.
 - Using waste collectors without checking registration.
 - Failing to keep waste transfer notes, invoices or collection records.
 - Assuming agricultural waste can be burned, buried or left on site.
 - Not giving staff clear instructions on where different waste types should go.
2. The 'mother' of all modern Bramley trees, a tree in the garden of a cottage in Nottinghamshire believed to be 220 years old, is thought to be at risk as the cottage has been listed for sale. Campaigners have, to date, raised £10,000 out of a target of £250,000 to purchase the cottage.
3. Tesco has opened applications for its annual Agri-Tech Challenge which invites innovators to submit solutions that can help farmers and suppliers build more resilient, sustainable and product food supply chains.

Postscripts

1. A lost dog strays into a jungle. A lion sees the dog from a distance and cautiously thinks, "Hmm, this guy looks edible. Never seen his kind before." The lion starts rushing toward the dog menacingly. The dog notices and begins to panic, but just as he's about to run, he spots some bones nearby. Thinking quickly, the dog loudly exclaims, "Mmm ... that was some good lion meat!" Hearing this, the lion abruptly stops in his tracks and thinks, "Whoa! This guy seems tougher than he looks. I better leave while I still can." The lion retreats cautiously. Up in the treetops, a monkey witnesses the entire scene. Realizing he could gain favour with the lion, the monkey decides to spill the truth. He swings down and tells the lion what really happened.

Furious, the lion growls, “Get on my back! We’ll deal with him together!” The lion and monkey rush back toward the dog. Spotting them, the dog panics again but quickly comes up with another idea. He shouts loudly, “Where the hell is that monkey? I told him to bring me another lion an hour ago!”

2. Why do French tanks have rear view mirrors? To see the battlefield.
3. As a butcher is shooin a dog from his shop, he notices a £20 note and a note in the dog’s mouth that reads: 5 lamb chops please.” Amazed, he takes the money, puts a bag of chops in the dog’s mouth, and quickly closes up shop to follow him.

He watches in awe as the dog waits for a green light, looks both ways, and trots across the road to a bus stop.

The dog checks the timetable and sits on the bench. When a bus arrives, the dog walks to the front, inspects the bus number, and hops on.

Dumbstruck, the butcher boards too, following the dog as the bus travels to the suburbs. After a while, the dog stands on his back legs, pushes the “stop” bell, and gets off. The butcher follows closely. The dog runs up to a house, drops the bag of lamb chops on the doorstep, and backs up. He takes a big run and whap! slams into the door. No answer. The dog repeats the process – slamming into the door several times – then jumps on a wall, circles the garden, beats his head against a window, and jumps back down, waiting at the door. Finally, a big guy opens the door and starts cursing and shouting at the dog. The butcher, furious, runs up and yells, “What the hell are you doing? This dog is a genius!” The owner replies, “Genius, my backside ... it’s the second time this week he’s forgotten his keys!”

4. When a chameleon can’t change its colours anymore, that’s a reptile dysfunction.
5. What did the Tibetan monk say when he saw the face of Jesus in a tub of margarine? “I can’t believe it’s not Buddha.”
6. A driver was stuck in a traffic jam on the highway outside Westminster. Nothing was moving. Suddenly, a man knocks on the window. The driver rolls down the window and asks, “What’s going on?” “Terrorists have kidnapped the entire Parliament, and they’re asking for a £100 million ransom. Otherwise, they are going to douse them all in petrol and set them on fire. We are going from car to car, collecting donations.” “How much is everyone giving on average?” the driver asks. The man replies, “Roughly a gallon.”

There's only so much blood I can give!

In olden times, bleeding was a restorative procedure designed to rid the body of unpleasant impurities, albeit with limited medical provenance. Today, bleeding is a procedure of political envy, designed to rid society of entrepreneurs and those who have worked hard for their financial security, and provided much for others, so it can be passed to those who are 'disadvantaged'. The end result is there will be no one left to bleed and England will no longer be on the 'bucket list' of overseas visitors as it will be a 'bucket' country. Then everyone will be 'disadvantaged' and the Government can claim discrimination has been abolished.

The latest 'bleeding' proposal is the High Value Council Tax Surcharge which will be introduced in April 2028. It will apply to properties with a value of greater than £2m with bands increasing by £500K, £1m and £1.5m. The annual charge will be £2,500, £3,500, £5,000 and £7,500 respectively.

It will apply to dwellings which will include 'any associated gardens, garage and any private storage buildings.'

The charge will be payable by the 'legal owner'. This will include trustees. Who will want to accept the responsibility?

Those who cannot afford the charge may enter a deferral scheme, but interest will apply. Just think of the poor youths who took out student loans. The criteria will be maximum annual income of £35,000 and maximum savings of £16,000. So, a person with a house valued at £2m and savings of £17,000 can say goodbye to any maintenance of the property.

If a person enters the deferral scheme, the local authority will register a charge over the property. How will that be viewed by an equity release lender?

This information all forms part of a consultation document; the consultation closes on 14 July. Views are sought on where it may be appropriate to allow a discount to the valuation. Specifically mentioned are properties which are 'sometimes referred to as tied accommodation' – 'particularly agricultural'.

Don't get your hopes up.

So, what happens if a farmhouse, and its grounds, is fragmented between family members. Will there be anti-avoidance measures included in the legislation? Farmhouse stays with parents; outbuildings pass to son; paddock passes to daughter. Will this be prevented? It will become a minefield.

So, the bleeding will continue until the blood of this once great country ceases to flow and the bucket case, simply becomes a basket case.

Oh, and by the way, the taps in the author's house have run dry because of the hot weather. Does that qualify for a discount – the fact that the supply of a basic commodity cannot be guaranteed?

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:

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The MFU was edited from 1991 to 2006 by John Nix, Emeritus Professor of
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