



CHAVEREYS

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS & FINANCIAL ALCHEMISTS



Monthly Farming Update

October 2026

Policy issues

1. The NFU has called on the Government to set ambitious targets for domestic food production and reverse a 30-year trend of decline. A new report it has published shows:
 - In the last 30 years, self-sufficiency has fallen in 10 out of 11 everyday foods.
 - Over the past 30 years, agri-food imports have risen 70 per cent while exports have stalled.
 - Since 1995, fresh vegetable production has fallen by 20 per cent while demand has remained stable.
 - Demand for fresh fruit has risen by 43 per cent yet home production has remained static.
 - Potato production has fallen twice as fast as demand.
2. The National Audit Office has reported that the Government must do more to respond to food supply disruptions claiming that Defra has not done enough in recent years to encourage businesses, households and communities to prepare. The last national scenario exercise to test Defra's preparedness for catastrophic events that would severely disrupt food supply took place in 2023 and largely excluded food supply chain businesses.
3. The Government has introduced legislation empowering mayorial authorities to levy a 5 per cent 'tourist tax' on overnight stays in holiday lets, bed and breakfast accommodation etc.
4. At a time when grocery price inflation is rising, the welfare cost is rising, and unemployment is rising. Defra Minister, Dame Anne Eagle, is advising households to stock up on food to prepare for extreme weather.

Reform

1. The second application window for the Sustainable Farming Incentive opened on 22 September with £233 millions available. Unfortunately, it then closed within 6 hours with the fund exhausted. 12,204 applications were submitted with 72 per cent of applications from farm businesses with existing agri-environment schemes due to expire by February 2027. The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust failed to get funding for its renowned Allerton project, which has been at the vanguard of nature-friendly farming since the 1990s. The Allerton project has seen a 97 per cent increase in songbird population and a 1200 per cent increase in brown hare numbers. The author has spent many a Sunday morning with index fingers clicking the key in a failed attempt to get Glastonbury tickets – it is a lottery. That should not be the case with the SFI – it is a travesty and insulting to the agricultural community.

2. According to Defra:

- As of 1 September, there were 48,000 live Sustainable Farming Incentive agreements managed by 38,300 farm businesses.
- 7,000 applications were submitted to SFI2026 during Window 1 and 3,100 agreements are live.
- 87 per cent of the SFI 2026 applications were from farms without an existing Environment Land Management agreement; 69 per cent were from farms with between 3-50 hectares and 55 per cent met both criteria.
- The SFI26 average annual agreement value for Window 1 was £9,700.

Grants/regulations/legislation/environment

1. A report published by the Farm Animal Investment Risk and Return Initiative entitled 'Regenerative Agriculture: Moving from Ambition to Credibility' has revealed:

- 84 per cent of companies in the agri-food sector mention regenerative agriculture in their disclosures, up from 63 per cent in 2023.
- 96 per cent of companies that mention regenerative agriculture have identified climate as a financial risk, while 68 per cent have done so with water.
- 28 per cent of companies have quantified targets for regenerative agriculture, down from 35 per cent in 2023.
- 52 per cent of companies make a quantitative or qualitative link between regenerative agriculture and their scope 3 emissions targets, up from 4 per cent in 2023.
- No company has set a target to reduce the use of pesticides.
- 40 per cent of companies support farmers financially to adopt regenerative agriculture, yet spending remains low compared to revenue (0.01 per cent – 0.05 per cent).
- 54 per cent of companies mention measuring outcomes or having measurement, reporting and verification systems in place, up from 16 per cent in 2023.
- 10 per cent of companies aim to roll out regenerative agriculture to pork and poultry, compared to 70 per cent for vegetables, fruits and other crops.

2. The Environment Agency has reported that above average rainfall is needed through to April 2027 for the drought to end. However, even in the most likely weather scenario, Devon, Cornwall and East Anglia are still expected to be in drought come next April, while there is a 1 in 4 chance that half of the country will still be in drought.

3. The 7th Water Breakthrough Challenge, funded by Ofwat's Water Innovation Fund, has opened for collaborative projects that deliver practical solutions to some of the water sector's challenges, including drought, pollution, leaks and declining river health. Up to £50 millions is available to partnerships led by licenced water companies in England and Wales. The 'Catalyst' option provides funding of £150,000-£2 millions while the 'Transform' option offers £2-10 millions.
4. A study by Rothamsted Research has revealed that, while some principles of conservation agriculture reduce emissions, others can increase them. 422 scientific studies from around the world were assessed to determine how conservation agriculture principles influence emissions of the three major greenhouse gases. The findings of the review include:
 - Strong evidence that reduced tillage lowers carbon dioxide emissions.
 - Evidence that reduced tillage can reduce nitrous oxide emissions.
 - Some evidence that reduced tillage enhances soil uptake of methane.
 - Mulching decomposing organic material can stimulate microbial activity, increasing the production of all three gases.
 - Analysis of fertilizer management strategies produced highly variable results as other environment factors, such as rainfall and soil type, have a considerable influence on the level of omissions although the nitrogen application rate remains a key driver of nitrous oxide emissions.
 - Crop rotations that include legumes tend to produce lower carbon dioxide emissions than continuous cereal-based rotations while cereal-after-cereal systems produced increased emissions.
5. The James Hutton Institute has conducted a review into the impact of microplastics on soils, crops and livestock health. Noted effects included reduced leaf size, abrasion damage to roots and changes in shoot and root lengths. Nutrient cycling can be disrupted, increasing greenhouse gas emissions from soils and reducing the amount of nutrients available to crops. As regards livestock, negative impacts can include weight changes, hormonal imbalances and inhibited muscle fibre growth. The review found that some plastics marketed as biodegradable can have greater impacts under certain conditions such as soil type and the specific shape or concentration of the microplastics. On the plus side, the review found that microplastics can reduce the mobility of pollutants by binding to them.
6. Acknowledging that grant funding for field drainage disappeared 40 years ago, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust has investigated drainage systems at the Allerton Project site at Loddington in the East Midlands. As part of the DRAIN-WISE project, a trial was established in a poorly drained field of deep clay-loam soil where crops failed in wetter seasons. The trial will run for 3 seasons involving:

- The old drainage system being removed.
- An eastern area of 4ha has been left undrained.
- A western area of 4 ha has a new drainage system.
- Direct-drilled and ploughed treatments have been overlaid across the whole field.

In the first season, the area recorded the wettest winter on record with 100mm falling in January alone. The aim is to quantify the impact of new drainage systems not only on cropping, but waterlogged soils increase nitrous oxide and methane emissions and increase earthworm mortality and reduce soil health.

7. 2026 marks the 170th anniversary of the Park Grass Experiment at Rothamsted. The experiment was originally designed to determine how different fertilizers and manures affect the yield of hay from permanent grassland. It has developed into a globally significant scientific resource, providing a record of how ecosystems respond to changes in nutrients, soil chemistry and environmental conditions over time.
8. The Andersons Centre has produced a Woodland Factsheet summarising what is available to land managers. The factsheet is available from abarnacle@theandersonscentre.co.uk.
9. Following a year-long collaboration between Harper Adams University's School of Sustainable Food & Farming and Morrisons, producers, supply chain partners and policymakers will meet at the House of Lords on 17 November to call for practical recommendations to strengthen water resilience and support UK food security.

Other matters of farm finance and tenure

1. Many former leading politicians have branded the changes to Inheritance Tax a 'mistake' and that, and other measures, have alienated the rural community. A survey conducted by ORB International on behalf of the Countryside Alliance has revealed that only 15 per cent of rural people believe the Burnham Government cares about the countryside. 43 per cent believed the Labour Government had 'waged war on the countryside' while 55 per cent considered it favoured cities over rural areas, only 10 per cent disagreed.
2. Data has been published on Total Income from Farming in England in 2025; with comparisons to 2024:
 - TIFF increased by 12.9 per cent to £5.4 billions
 - Gross Value Added, agriculture's contribution to the economy, increased by 7.3 per cent to £11.2 billions.
 - Livestock output increased by 9.3 per cent to £14 billions with beef up 21.9 per cent and milk up 12 per cent.
 - Crop output fell by 3.7 per cent to £9.5 billions.

- Inputs increased by 1 per cent to £15.3 billions.
 - Subsidies not linked to production increased by 19.6 per cent to £2.144 billions; diversification income increased by 4.6 per cent to £1.764 billions; while income from other agricultural activities was unchanged at £1.289 billions.
 - Of the total inputs, direct inputs fell 1.2 per cent to 66.1 per cent; fixed capital costs rose 1 per cent to 18.3 per cent; labour costs rose 0.3 per cent to 11 per cent; and rent and other costs were unchanged at 4.7 per cent.
3. Farm Business Income is defined as total output less total costs. A forecast has been published of FBI for 2025/26 (to February):
- FBI on cereal farms is expected to be down 66 per cent at £17,000 and down 843 per cent on 2022/23.
 - General cropping FBI is forecast to be £54,000, 50 per cent down on 2024/25.
 - Dairy FBI is forecast to be £224,000 up 45 per cent and on a par with 2022/23.
 - Lowland grazing livestock FBI is expected to be £45,000, up 9 per cent and the best for many years.
 - Less favoured area livestock FBI is forecast to be £37,000, down 8 per cent.
 - Pig farms FBI is expected to be £75,000, down 41 per cent.
 - Mixed farms FBI is forecast to be £40,000, down 32 per cent.
4. Defra has published the Farming Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2026. Highlights include:
- Delinked payments totalling £265 millions were made to 82,000 recipients, 99.1 per cent of eligible businesses.
 - £887 millions was paid to Environmental Land Management agreement holders of which £644 millions related to revenue agreements and £242 millions in respect of capital works.
 - As of 31 March, 1,855 applicants had applied for the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier scheme and 610 agreements were active.
 - £738 millions was paid out under the Sustainable Farming Incentive under 44,500 live agreements.
 - There are 35,600 farming businesses in the Sustainable Farming Initiative and 16,400 in other agri-environmental schemes.
 - 3.2 m/ha of farmed land is actively managed under SFI, 36 per cent of the total, with a further 11 per cent in assessment and plans.
 - 977,000 ha of arable land is farmed without insecticides; 371,400 ha of low input grassland is managed sustainably; and 168,600km of hedgerows have been protected and restored.
 - £25 millions was spent on Landscape Recovery.
 - £13 millions was paid in slurry management grants.
 - £18 millions was spent on Nature for Climate Fund tree grants.
 - £96 millions was spent on water management grants including £50 millions for farmers in Somerset following severe flooding.
 - £22 millions was spent on Farming in Protected Landscapes.
 - Animal Health and Welfare grants totalled £22 millions.

- £56 millions was spent on the Livestock Information Transformation Fund.
 - £30 millions was spent across all Farming Investment Fund productivity schemes while £43 millions was absorbed by the Farming Innovation Programme.
 - £35 millions was allocated through the Producer Organisation scheme.
5. Data has been published on Total Income from Farming for 2025 in the English regions, with comparisons to 2024:
- South West increased by 38 per cent to £1.133 billions.
 - East Midlands increased by 6 per cent to £884 millions.
 - East of England fell by 5 per cent to £853 millions.
 - West Midlands increased by 12 per cent to £714 millions.
 - London and the South East increased by 14 per cent to £601 millions.
 - North West increased by 48 per cent to £583 millions.
 - Yorkshire and the Humber fell marginally to £516 millions.
 - North East fell by 25 per cent to £115 millions.

In terms of TIFF per hectare, West Midlands, at £766/ha was followed by East Midlands at £735/ha, South West at £633/ha, North West at £621/ha, East of England at £610/ha, London and the South East at £527/ha, Yorkshire and the Humber at £463/ha and North East at £191/ha.

6. The Andersons Centre has published the performance data for Loam Farm, a notional 600 hectare business operating since 1991 farming combinable crops. It is partly owned; partly rented; has a working owner plus one full-time staff and harvest casuals; grows wheat, oats, barley and beans; and has a SFI agreement in place. These are the recent results in £ per hectare:

Harvest Year	2024	2025	2026
Output	1,377	1,362	1,454
Variable costs	547	542	553
Gross margin	830	820	901
Overheads	601	634	628
Rent and finance	266	264	267
Drawings	86	89	89
Margin from production	(123)	(166)	(83)
Basic Payment and SFI	188	134	123
Surplus/deficit	65	(32)	40

7. The Andersons Centre, which publishes the John Nix Pocketbook, has released its forecast returns for 2027 – see below. The Pocketbook, which is almost akin to a farmer’s bible, can be obtained from www.pocketbook.co.uk.

£/ha	Combinable Crops		Dairy		Lowland beef and sheep		Upland beef and sheep	
	Average	High	Average	High	Average	High	Average	High
Gross Margin	920	1,130	2,998	3,378	1,180	1,757	547	813
Fixed costs	885	797	2,090	1,881	1,060	954	540	486
Margin pre-rent and finance	35	334	908	1,497	120	803	7	327
Rent and finance	160	160	295	295	150	150	80	80
Support and diversification	134	139	106	111	250	261	170	173
Profit/loss	9	312	719	1,312	220	913	97	420
Excluding unpaid labour, rent and finance	269	562	1,534	2,075	770	1,423	377	680

8. During July, the Agricultural Price Index for outputs fell by 3.5 per cent, compared to a year ago, and by 0.2 per cent compared to June. The index for inputs increased by 6.4 per cent and 0.1 per cent respectively.
9. Data has been published on agricultural land use in England as of 1 June, with comparisons to a year earlier:
- The utilised agricultural area was 8.8 million hectares, 67.7 per cent of the total land area.
 - The croppable area amounted to 55.7 per cent of the total with permanent pasture making up 39.5 per cent.
 - Arable crops fell by 1.7 per cent to 3.3 million hectares.
 - Uncropped arable land increased by 3.9 per cent to 566,000 hectares. Of the total, 82,000 hectares were left fallow with the remainder being used for environmental benefit.
 - The wheat area fell by 1.8 per cent to 1.5 million hectares; barley fell by 9.2 per cent to 673,000 hectares; oilseeds increased by 35 per cent to 302,000 hectares; potatoes fell by 8.2 per cent to 82,000 hectares; and horticultural crops increased by 1 per cent to 118,000 hectares.

- The area used for solar panels was unchanged at 9,400 hectares with 4,400 hectares of the total being used for grazing.
- 10.** As of 1 June, there were 99,872 agricultural holdings in England, down 2.3 per cent on 2025 and down 6.7 per cent on 5 years ago. The total comprised 16,343 cereal holdings; 20,475 general cropping; 3,108 horticulture; 1,768 specialist pigs; 2,297 specialist poultry; 4,841 dairy; 11,851 grazing livestock in less favoured areas; 30,498 lowland grazing livestock; 6,697 mixed; and 2,092 unclassified holdings.
- 11.** Data has been released on the agricultural workforce in England as of 1 June, with comparisons to a year earlier:
 - 281,000 were working in agriculture, up 0.6 per cent and the first increase since 2022.
 - Farmers, business partners, directors and spouses accounted for 60.1 per cent of the workforce, up 0.7 per cent.
 - Salaried manager numbers fell by 0.5 per cent to 4.2 per cent.
 - Regular workers increased by 2.8 per cent to 67,000 with 42,000 being full time.
 - Casual workers fell by 3.9 per cent to 34,000 with male casuels down 6.6 per cent.
 - 81.5 per cent of principal farmers were male across all age groups except for the under-35 group where 25.1 per cent were female.
 - In terms of age, 36.1 per cent were over 65, 29 per cent were aged 55-64, 16.4 per cent were 45-54, 11.7 per cent were 35-44 and 6.8 per cent were under 35.
- 12.** Details of agricultural land ownership in England as of 1 June 2026 have been published:
 - The total area of agricultural holdings was 8,965,759 ha, down 0.2 per cent on 2025 and down 1.7 per cent on 10-years ago.
 - Owned land totalled 6,164,012 ha, up 1 per cent on 2025 and 1.8 per cent on 10-years ago.
 - Land rented under AHA tenancies was 1,085,894 ha, down 3 per cent on 2025 and down 22.8 per cent on 10-years ago.
 - Land rented on FBTs totalled 1,286,727 ha, up 1.2 per cent on 2025 and 7.9 per cent on 10-years ago.
 - Land rented on other agreements totalled 499,680 ha, up 6.8 per cent on 2025 and 19 per cent on 10-years ago.
 - Seasonally rented in land totalled 541,705 ha, down 7.7 per cent on 2025 but up 4.5 per cent on 10-years ago.
 - Seasonally let out land amounted to 497,936 ha, up 0.8 per cent on 2025 and 29 per cent on 10-years ago.

13. Natural England has designed Environmental Development Plans as part of the Nature Restoration Fund. Each plan covers:

- A geographic area.
- The types of development which may use a plan.
- Environmental impacts.
- Total development capacity.
- Timeframe.
- The levy rate which will apply.

Each plan will set out the conservation measures Natural England will deliver using levy funding. Each draft will go through a consultation process and will then become public.

14. The Government has announced the allocation for the 2027 Seasonal Workers Scheme as being 41,000 visas for horticulture and 1,900 visas for poultry workers.

15. The Government is to withdraw financial support for small-scale biomass generators when the current Renewable obligation ends. The decision applies to all installations generating electricity with a capacity below 100MW, including anaerobic digestion, sewage gas, and energy-from-waste facilities.

Product prices

A. Market background

- 1.** Sterling held relatively steady against the Euro but closed significantly weaker against the US Dollar this month. Having opened the month at 85.7p per Euro, Sterling dipped to 86.1p and rose to 85.5p but by late September it sat at 85.8p per € (0.1p weaker overall). Against the US Dollar, Sterling opened at 73.8p per \$ and rose to 73.7p before falling significantly in the latter half of the month; by late September it sat at 75.5p per \$ (down 1.7p).
- 2.** The gold price remained relatively static for most of the month, with small levels of volatility, but fell in the final days to close down overall; Opening at £3,289 per troy ounce, the average price climbed to an early peak of £3,323, before falling back to a late September price of £3,139 (down £150 overall).
- 3.** Crude oil prices rose sharply in the first half of the month, fell back partially in week three but then returned to high levels, all as a result of the ongoing tension in the Strait of Hormuz and, to a lesser extent, the Ukraine conflict. Daily swings remained small with an overall trend that was significantly upwards. Brent Crude opened at \$90.83 per barrel and climbed to a mid-month peak of \$109.80; having fallen back to \$97.81, it then climbed back to a late September average of \$108.40 per barrel, up \$17.57.

B. Crops

1. The cereals market was relatively flat albeit marginally positive this month. With the unrest in the Black Sea region and the Strait of Hormuz already both 'baked in' to the market expectation, it was concerns over this season's French maize yields and quality, and poor harvest weather in the US, that added some support to a market where speculative traders were seeking to de-risk. Milling wheat premiums, whilst still volatile, dropped back below £10 per tonne. Feed wheat futures fell across the board overall, having opened the month with a small surge but subsiding thereafter; by late September, deliveries for November 2026, 2027, and 2028 were £207/tonne (-5), £204/tonne (-1) and £201/tonne (-1) respectively. Oilseed rape prices have risen further, driven largely by crude oil prices but supported by speculative trading and wet weather delays to the Canadian Canola harvest.

Average spot prices in late September (per tonne ex-farm): feed wheat £204 (+4); milling wheat £213 (+1); feed barley £181 (+3); oilseed rape £453 (+18); feed peas £220 (+2); feed beans £243 (+9).

C. Livestock

1. The average liveweight cattle prices for steers and heifers both closed up for the month. The average steer price opened at 336p/kg lw and climbed in the opening and closing weeks, holding steady mid-month, to reach a late September average of 360p/kg lw (up 24p to sit 6p/kg above the average a year earlier). The average finished heifer price followed a similar path albeit with a small dip mid-month: opening at 352p/kg lw, it rose to 365p/kg and fell back to 361p/kg, before climbing further to a late month average of 372p/kg (up 20p overall to sit 2p above the average a year earlier). The average dairy cow price remained volatile but relatively buoyant, closing marginally down overall: climbing first from an opening position of £2,106 per head to £2,174 before falling to a low of £1,896 and then recovering to a late month average of £2,094 per head (down £12 overall to sit £98 above the prior year average).
2. The average finished lamb price (new season SQQ liveweight) after material reductions in the preceding two months, recovered some of those losses in September. Opening the month at 315p/kg, the average price climbed steadily over the course of the month to close at 340p/kg (up 25p, to sit 30p/kg above the average new season price a year earlier).
3. The average UK standard pig price (SPP deadweight) saw a significant uplift at the start of the month then rose marginally in the remaining weeks. From an opening position of 178.3p/kg dw, it jumped to 180.2p/kg early on, then edged up to a late September close at an average of 180.8p/kg (up 2.5p overall to sit 25.9p/kg below the previous year).

4. Milk prices are on the recovery; the initial average UK all milk price for August, released this month, was 36.89ppl, a significant 1.42ppl above the July average of 35.47ppl which in turn was 0.58ppl above the revised June average of 34.89ppl (previously 34.41ppl) to sit 8.34ppl below the average a year earlier and 5.86ppl below the rolling 5-year average. The most recent official EU average milk price remains that of June (37.65ppl, sitting 8.63ppl below the price a year earlier).

Other crop news

1. ADHB has published its final 2026 harvest report:
 - Wheat has averaged 6.9t/ha, down from 7.2t/ha in 2025 and well below the 10-year average of 7.9t/ha.
 - Winter barley has also averaged 6.9t/ha, on a par with the 10-year average and just above the 2025 average of 6.8t/ha.
 - Spring barley yielded 4.8t/ha, well below both 2025 at 5.4t/ha and the 10-year average of 5.7t/ha.
 - Winter oilseed rape performed well, yielding 4t/ha, above both 2025 at 3.7t/ha and the 10-year average at 3.3t/ha.
 - The oats average of 4.6t/ha is below both 2025 at 4.9t/ha and also the 10-year average at 5.4t/ha.
2. Researchers at The Technical University of Munich have published an article in the journal Ecology and Evolution concerning the changes in yields in certain crops, having analysed yields in Lower Franconia and Upper Bavaria over 35 years. Wheat yields are falling as smaller and fewer grains are produced due to dry soil and average temperatures frequently being above optimal levels whereas fruit trees have not experience yield losses. However, the researchers claim that, if the climate continues to warm, pollinator-dependent crops will face dual stress. Plants will grow less vigorously and produce smaller flowers which are less attractive to pollinators. Climate change is also likely to have an adverse effect on the pollinators themselves.
3. AHDB has published data on UK cereal supply and demand for the 2025/26 season ending on 30 June:
 - In 2025/26, 2.615 Mt of wheat was imported, down 453Kt on 2024/25 but 365Kt up on the May estimate due to strong late season imports. Exports totalled 142Kt, down from 199Kt in 2024/25.
 - Wheat availability was 16.553Mt, down 421Kt on 2024/25.
 - Wheat consumption fell by 158Kt to 14.103Mt.
 - End of season wheat stocks were 1.514Mt, down 465Kt and the lowest since 2020/21.
 - Barley imports were 213Kt, down 20Kt, while exports were 479Kt, down 227Kt.
 - Barley availability was 7.859Mt, down 628Kt.
 - Barley usage totalled 6.04Mt, down 465Kt.
 - Closing barley stocks were 1.337Mt, up 58Kt on 2024/25.
 - Maize imports totalled 2.395Mt, down 708Kt. Exports were 200Kt, up 19Kt.

- Maize availability was 2.592Mt, up 712Kt.
 - Maize usage was 2.072Mt, down 651Kt.
 - Maize stocks stood at 198Kt, up 2Kt.
 - Oats exported totalled 93Kt, up 30Kt, while imports were 19Kt, up 5Kt.
 - Oats availability was 1.122Mt, up 28Kt.
 - Oats usage was 875Kt, down 15Kt.
 - Closing oats stocks were 155Kt, up 14Kt.
4. The US Department of Agriculture has reduced its forecast of the 2026 maize crop by 5.4Mt to 401.3Mt due to the impact of hot weather on yields. However, global wheat stocks are now forecast to be 276.3Mt, up 3Mt from the August forecast, due to increase crop estimates for Australia and Canada while SovEcon has reduced its forecast of Russian wheat exports in 2026/27 by 3.2Mt to 41.4Mt compared to 48Mt in 2025/26.
 5. During July, the Agricultural Price Index recorded increases of 7.9 per cent for wheat, compared to a year earlier, 5.9 per cent for barley, 3.2 per cent for oats, 9.9 per cent for oilseed rape, 16.2 per cent for forage plants, 9.8 per cent for fresh vegetables and 2.6 per cent for fresh fruit but there was a fall of 17.6 per cent for potatoes. Compared to June, there were increases of 2.2 per cent for wheat, 2.6 per cent for barley, 7.7 per cent for oats, 40.1 per cent for potatoes and 3.2 per cent for fresh vegetables. However, there were falls of 1 per cent for oilseed rape, 10 per cent for forage plants and 3.3 per cent for fresh fruit.
 6. A report in Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems has suggested that the most recent modern variety of Landrace cereals has the highest grain yield of all varieties but the lowest protein content and, at low or medium initial availability of nitrogen, could yield similarly to modern organic varieties. An experiment conducted in Sweden has also revealed that landraces suppress weeds better and produce higher straw yields.
 7. CPM and Premium Crops have conducted a survey of growers, representing 40,000 ha of the UK's farmed area, into aspects that shape crop selection. Findings include:
 - Profitability and yield stability are the two most important factors followed by 'rotational benefits'.
 - 48 per cent of respondents cited financial considerations drive crop selection, 26 per cent quoted farm-specific constraints such as machinery, labour and soils, while 18 per cent referred to agronomic aspects.
 - Agronomists carried the greatest influence in crop selection at 75 per cent, followed by independent trials at 63 per cent and field days at 39 per cent.
 - Oilseed rape is the principal break crop with 67 per cent planning to drill the crop this autumn while 47 per cent reported the crop as being a consistent part of their rotation. 26 per cent indicated a willingness to return to the crop having grown it in the past. Of these, 35 per cent quoted pest pressure and 25 per cent stated establishment reliability.

- After oilseed rape, beans, at 33 per cent, is the most popular winter-sown true break crop, followed by peas at 10 per cent and linseed/flax at 9 per cent. Peas is the top spring-sown break crop at 32 per cent, followed by beans at 21 per cent and sugar beet at 17 per cent.
 - While only 5 per cent quoted linseed/flax as a consistent part of rotation, 16 per cent reported as considering it for the future.
8. Kelloggs is to extend financial and agronomic support through a 5-year programme of regenerative agriculture covering all of its UK wheat supply. Kelloggs will work with Soil Capital and 25 wheat growers farming 4,000 hectares and producing 20,000 tonnes of wheat annually for the cereal giant.
 9. The Processors and Growers Research Organisation has launched the Pulse Performance Network, a crop benchmarking and analysis initiative for pea and bean growers. A new app allows growers to record information directly in the field, capturing drilling dates, seed rates and applications as they happen.
 10. Niab has produced a poster 'Growing Chickpea in the UK' summarising what is involved in growing the crop of which 60,000 tonnes are imported each year.
 11. As part of the Centre for High Carbon Capture Cropping project, Niab has developed a poster 'Growing Flax for Carbon Capture' highlighting the benefits that can be achieved.
 12. The British Society of Plant Breeders has replaced the previous classification of varieties in the Forage Maize Descriptive Lists with 'favourable', 'very favourable' and 'less favourable' sites.
 13. The James Hutton Institute has joined the International Plant Pangenome Network. Plant pangenomics is the study of genetic diversity within a species by analysing multiple genome sequences, capturing both the genes shared by all individuals and the genetic variations that make each plant unique. The aim is to develop crops more resilient to climate pressures.
 14. Analysis from the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit estimates that drought and heatwaves will reduce the potato harvest in Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands by 3.1 million tonnes compared with the 5-year average. The loss of production is estimated to be worth £423 millions - £701 millions. Belgium is expected to record the steepest decline, down 35 per cent at 3.5 million tonnes. Belgium is the world's largest exporter of frozen fries.
 15. Data published by World Potato Markets suggests that EU potato production this year will be below 40 million tonnes, down 15 per million tonnes on 2025 due to decreases in the planted area and drought conditions. This has affected prices with Expana Benchmark Prices for Fontane processing potatoes EXW Belgium increasing from £10/t in late July to £150/t in August.
 16. A plague of flea beetles has been attacking brussel sprout crops. The beetles, which usually live for 3-4 weeks, have been living for longer than 12 weeks due to the warm weather and, with smaller sprouts than usual, the beetles have eaten as much as 70 per cent of the leaves in some cases.

- 17.** The British Carrot Growers Association has reported that estimated carrot yields will be 15-30 per cent below average with growers also facing higher costs for irrigation, seed, labour, fuel and crop management. Inconsistent growth also means many carrots are mishappen.
- 18.** Langmead Herbs has acquired R&G Fresh, another herb producer.
- 19.** The British Leafy Salads Association has reported that up to 30 per cent of the lettuce crop could be wiped out by the 'worst outbreak of aphids in a generation' with crisphead, romaine and iceberg most affected.
- 20.** 'Highly challenging trading conditions' have forced vertical farming business GrowUp Farms to abandon the leafy salad sector and instead explore strawberry propagation.
- 21.** A study published in the Journal of Cleaner Production has reported that the UK's plans to create 30,000 ha of new woodland will reduce food production with animal protein hardest hit. However, the study suggests that seafood farmed in tanks on the land would offset 80 per cent of the protein loss while using less than 1 per cent of the land earmarked for tree planting. Researchers at the University of Exeter also claim that prawns produced in this way could replace a third of prawn imports thereby eliminating 7 million tonnes of Carbon Dioxide associated with long-distance freight.
- 22.** British Apples & Pears Ltd has published a new definition of regenerative apple and pear growing. Typical practices include:
 - Building healthy soils by maintaining permanent ground cover, minimising soil disturbance and increasing soil organic matter.
 - Increasing biodiversity by establishing and managing diverse orchard habitats and functional vegetation that provide year-round food, shelter and breeding habitat for pollinators, beneficial insects, soil organisms, birds and wildlife.
 - Selecting appropriate sites for new orchards and using grass margins and buffer zones to reduce soil erosion, nutrient run-off and leaching.
 - Supporting natural pest and disease management alongside carefully targeted crop protection.
 - Using water, nutrients and energy efficiently.
 - Maximising use of each season's crop by directing fruit that does not meet retailer specifications to food banks, juice and other processed ingredients or, where appropriate, local anaerobic digestion plants.
 - Protecting and enhancing carbon stored in trees and soils.
 - Measuring, learning and continually improving environmental performance.
- 23.** Mansfields has harvested the first commercially-grown crop of Sassy, an early-ripening jewel-red apple with crisp texture and sweet-tangy flavour combining the heritage of Fuji, Sciro and Scifresh.

24. A project involving AgriSound and the James Hutton Institute aims to build on Agri-Sounds's Precision Pollination system which uses Polly bioacoustic sensors and AI to monitor pollinator activity within crops. The existing technology monitors bumblebees in strawberries but the aim is to develop a multi-species, multi-crop system covering honeybees, solitary bees and hoverflies as well as bumblebees.
25. British Berry Growers has reported higher than usual late season strawberry availability as a result of delayed flower initiation caused by high temperatures. It has pleaded with retailers to maintain larger pack sizes and to prioritise home-grown fruit.
26. Agritech Future has reported that British blueberry growers are accelerating investment in production and post-harvest technologies to satisfy rising consumer demand and increasing appetite for larger fruit sizes and better eating quality. In the last year, sales have risen by 27 per cent with the tonnage up by 40 per cent over the past 5 years.
27. The Summer Berry Company has reported an 11 per cent increase in blueberry volumes due to settled, warm weather.
28. Lea Valley pepper growers have lost as much as 40 per cent of their crops as 'sheer heat' had impacted the peppers' roots.

Other livestock news

1. Data on bovine TB in the year to June shows:
 - There was a fall in new herd incidents in England of 22 per cent with falls of 22 per cent in the High Risk area, 23 per cent in the Edge area and 24 per cent in the Low Risk area. There was a fall of 23 per cent in Wales but an increase of 33 per cent in Scotland.As to the number of herds not officially TB free:
 - There was a fall of 21 per cent in England with falls of 20 per cent in the High Risk area, 25 per cent in the Edge area and 14 per cent in the Low Risk area. There were falls of 20 per cent in Scotland and 25 per cent in Wales.
2. Defra has introduced new bluetongue disease testing measures. Where signs of bluetongue are clear, private vets can diagnose affected animals with cases formally confirmed by the Animal and Plant Health Agency.
3. Bluetongue cases in September have occurred in Carmarthenshire (11), Cornwall (16); Cumbria (4); Devon (65); Dumfries and Galloway (3); Pembrokeshire (4); Staffordshire (7); Cheshire (1); Derbyshire (4); Dorset (18); Greater Manchester (2); Herefordshire (2); Shropshire (4); Somerset (1); West Yorkshire (4); Wiltshire (3); Kent (1); Lancashire (4); Leicestershire (1); Merseyside (1); North Yorkshire (1); Caerphilly (1); Ceredigion (3); Conwy (1); Gwynedd (4); Monmouthshire (1); Powys (2); Swansea (3); Vale of Glamorgan (1) and Kirkcudbright (1).

4. A report by Scotland's Rural College has confirmed that the 410-day calving interval conditionally in the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme will only benefit major farming units with the largest 10 per cent of businesses receiving 40 per cent of the funding while 40 per cent of businesses will receive less than 10 per cent of the total.
5. The Agricultural Price Index for July recorded increases of 8.9 per cent for sheep and lambs, compared to a year earlier, 1.4 per cent for poultry and 1.9 per cent for eggs but there were falls of 4.6 per cent for cattle and calves, 14.8 per cent for pigs and 19.6 per cent for milk. Compared to June, there were increases of 2.1 per cent for cattle and calves, 0.3 per cent for pigs, 1.7 per cent for poultry and 1.7 per cent for milk but a fall of 11 per cent for sheep and lambs.
6. Red Tractor has opened a 6-week consultation period on proposed changes to its standards across dairy, beef and lamb. Changes include fewer prescriptive audit points; a more farm-specific approach to livestock health planning; an annual review focused on health priorities coupled with an action plan; practical welfare and resilience; covering extreme weather; feed safety; disease planning; housing; and nutrient management. For dairy, changes include a new code of conduct on animal welfare and planning; cow comfort; environmental enrichment; and foot trimming competence. The consultation closes on 3 November.
7. The Dairy Roadmap has launched Sustainable Dairy Pathways: The Path to 2030. The report is authored by Scotland's Rural College and sets out how the dairy sector can remain resilient and sustainable while continuing to provide safe, nutritious and affordable dairy products in the future. The report identifies four priorities:
 - Doing more of what works now by increasing uptake of proven practices.
 - Investing in infrastructure and technologies that deliver measurable impact.
 - Preparing for emerging innovations and future opportunities.
 - Creating the policy, finance, data and advisory support needed to enable faster progress.The report estimates that finance of £2.4 billions is needed to achieve the transition.
8. The AHDB dairy market review for August reveals:
 - Global milk deliveries in June averaged 816.6 million litres per day, up 2.7 per cent on the previous year. All regions, with the exception of the UK, recorded an increase.
 - Milk deliveries in the EU averaged 421 millions per day, up 3 per cent, with Germany up 5.8 per cent and the Netherlands up 9.9 per cent.
 - US production rose by 3 per cent, New Zealand by 5 per cent and Argentina by 1.6 per cent.
 - In the 3 months to June, exports of UK cheese rose by 15.3 per cent, year-on-year, or 8,000 tonnes; export of powders grew by 22.2 per cent, or 9,400 tonnes.

- The latest Global Dairy Trade auction saw the index rise to 0.9 per cent to \$3,910/t. Skimmed milk powder rose 5.3 per cent to \$3,695/t but whole milk powder fell 0.1 per cent, cheddar by 6.6 per cent and butter by 0.8 per cent.
- 9.** During August, average butterfat increased by 1.4 per cent, compared to a year earlier, and by 2.4 per cent compared to July, to 4.27 per cent. Average protein increased by 0.9 per cent and 1.9 per cent respectively to 3.44 per cent.
- 10.** In the 3 months to June, dairy figures from the EU show, with comparisons to a year earlier:
- Milk deliveries increased by 2.7 per cent.
 - While exports increased by 39.7 per cent, stocks of butter still increased by 1.4 per cent or 7,400 tonnes.
 - Cheese exports increased by 6.5 per cent, yet stocks increased by 2.9 per cent or 65,200 tonnes.
 - Skimmed milk powder supplies fell by 20.2 per cent, mainly due to an 8.4 per cent fall in imports and a growth in exports of 22.2 per cent. Whole milk powder exports increased resulting in a 9 per cent fall in stocks.
- 11.** During August, with comparisons to a year earlier:
- UK prime cattle slaughterings rose by 3.1 per cent to 160,000 head.
 - Beef and veal production was up 4.6 per cent at 72,000 tonnes.
 - Sheep slaughterings fell by 7 per cent to 84,000 head.
 - Mutton and lamb production was down 4 per cent at 20,000 tonnes.
 - Pig slaughterings rose 2.2 per cent to 844,000 head.
 - Pig meat production was up 3.8 per cent at 79,000 tonnes.
- 12.** Milk price increases in September include: Muller Advantage, up 2ppl to 37ppl; Arla conventional, up 0.89ppl to 39.04ppl; Barbers Cheesemakers, up 2.37ppl to 40.11ppl; First Milk, up 1ppl to 35.85ppl, with October up by 3.15ppl to 39ppl; Saputo, up 1ppl to 38ppl; and Freshways October price, up 6ppl to 38ppl.
- 13.** An independent scientific review has determined that the figure of 0.5 ewes per hectare included in the Grazing for Good Project covering hill farming was drawn mainly from local observation rather than a wider body of scientific evidence and that the figure was best treated as a cautious local reference point, not a target to apply across all fells. It suggested that nature recovery required flexible, evidence-based grazing management tailored to local environmental conditions rather than a universal stocking figure.
- 14.** A survey of 50 members conducted by the National Pig Association has revealed that nearly half had been served notice on their contracts with proportions of the herd affected ranging from 15 per cent to 100 per cent. All of the big four processors – Cranswick, Pilgrim's Europe, Sofina Foods and the Myrton Food Group – had served notices to different extents.

15. The National Pig Association has submitted formal proposals to Defra for a support package for the sector. The proposals include a pig price top-up scheme; a restructuring scheme to aid producers who have no option but to cease production, wholly or partly; a slaughter incentive payment; and private storage.
16. During August, with comparisons to a year earlier:
 - UK commercial layer chick placings rose by 9.7 per cent to 3.6 million chicks.
 - Broiler chick placings fell 2.4 per cent to 97.4 million chicks.
 - Turkey poult placings rose 60 per cent to 1 million chicks.
 - Turkey slaughterings fell 1.1 per cent to 600,000 birds.
 - Broiler slaughterings rose 0.4 per cent to 92.9 million birds.
 - Poultry meat production rose 3.3 per cent to 172,100 tonnes.
17. By 1 September there had been 528 reported cases of salmonella linked to imported eggs.
18. Since the last report in July, outbreaks of Newcastle disease in poultry have been reported in flocks in Hungary (2), Spain (18) and Poland (1).

VIII Inputs/Supply businesses

1. A report from the Sustainable Nitrogen Alliance has urged the Government to support farmers using peas and beans as natural fertilizer to cut pollution. Fossil fuel emissions released from synthetic fertilizers are the third largest contributor to climate change after carbon dioxide and methane. 99 per cent of England's protected nature sites are suffering from too much nitrogen in at least one part of their habitat. Planting crops such as legumes, pulses and clovers, which pull nitrogen from the atmosphere into soils, are a natural alternative.
2. As of 4 September, fertilizer prices were:
 - £461/t for UK ammonium nitrate
 - £466/t for imported ammonium nitrate
 - £466/t for granular urea
 - £391/t for liquid urea (14 August price)

Most fertilizer has ready availability apart from nitrate sulphur where the lead time is up to 6 weeks.
3. The Agricultural Price Index for inputs for July recorded a fall of 0.7 per cent for veterinary services, compared to a year earlier, but increases of 0.7 per cent for seeds, 13.8 per cent for energy and lubricants, 13.1 per cent for fertilizers, 44.1 per cent for chemicals, 3.8 per cent for animal feedingstuffs, 5.7 per cent for equipment maintenance and 1.1 per cent for building maintenance. Compared to June, there were falls of 0.2 per cent for seeds, 4.7 per cent for energy and lubricants, 9.1 per cent for fertilizers and 0.4 per cent for animal feedingstuffs but increases of 30.8 per cent for chemicals and 0.6 per cent for equipment maintenance.

4. Research from Trinity College Dublin shows that fungicides can rapidly drive soil microbes to evolve multidrug resistance to clinically important drugs and, when combined with warmer temperatures, disrupt soil microbes and negatively affect plant growth.
5. A report from Frontiers in Agriculture has demonstrated that plasma-activated water reprograms the root-rhizosphere-nitrogen continuum to maximise nitrogen use efficiency. Plasma-activated water, enriched with reactive oxygen and nitrogen species, has emerged as a promising biostimulant for enhancing nutrient acquisition and plant performance with particular relevance for sustainable maize production. Plasma-activated water significantly increases root surface area, root hair density, root hair length, total organic carbon, organic acid secretion, free amino acid accumulation and nitrogen uptake when compared with normal water irrigation.

Marketing

1. The Food and Drink Federation has predicted that food inflation will reach 4 per cent by December and then climb further to 6.4 per cent by next July and will stay above 5 per cent into 2028. In the year to August, prices across all categories of UK-grown fruit and vegetables have risen by 8 per cent.
2. In the 4 weeks to 6 September, grocery price inflation rose to 2.3 per cent, up from 3.1 per cent in the previous month, while take home grocery sales increased by 2 per cent year-on-year.
3. Research commissioned by The Food Foundation has revealed that fresh food is frequently the first item cut from household budgets during a cost-of-living crisis with 65 per cent of food-insecure households buying less fruit and 55 per cent less vegetables. Further, in July 2026, 6.5 million adults and 2.2 million children were facing food insecurity.
4. According to Aethr Associates, the UK is increasingly sourcing fresh produce from regions facing heightened climate risks, potentially increasing the vulnerability of its food supply. Between 2019 and 2025, import volumes from Mediterranean Europe fell by 15 per cent while those from temperate Western and Central Europe fell by 35 per cent. Over the same period, imports from Mediterranean North Africa increased by 117 per cent, from arid North Africa and the Sahel by 45 per cent, from Southern Africa by 35 per cent and from Andean South America by 39 per cent. The report rated water stress risks as 'very high' in Mediterranean North Africa and Southern Africa while flood risk was rated as 'high' in Arid North Africa and Sahel and Mediterranean North Africa.
5. With effect from 1 October, the Scottish Government has prohibited the display of prepackaged 'junk food' by businesses with more than 50 employees in prominent locations. Certain price promotions have also been banned.

6. A survey conducted by the Soil Association has revealed that only 44 per cent of consumers trust food labels while 53 per cent find labels overwhelming. 51 per cent of those surveyed would trust a product more if it carried an organic logo while 20 per cent actively try to avoid pesticides, food contaminants and genetically modified organisms when shopping for food.
7. AHDB has published data on the dairy trade in the first 6 months of the year, with comparisons to a year earlier:
 - Volumes of milk powder exports increased by 33.1 per cent to 92,500 tonnes; cheese and curd grew by 15.4 per cent to an all-time high of 116,000 tonnes; butter grew by 11 per cent to 24,500 tonnes; and yoghurt grew by 12.4 per cent to 23,600 tonnes. However, milk and cream exports fell by 114,000 tonnes and whey by 5,000 tonnes with exports of these products to the EU down 86,000 tonnes.
 - In value terms, all sectors registered falls except powders and yoghurt. Milk and cream fell by 38.6 per cent, butter by 27.3 per cent, cheese and curd by 4.6 per cent and whey by 8.5 per cent.
 - Import volumes fell by 0.15 per cent to 636,000 tonnes. Milk and cream fell by 13.3 per cent, whey by 11 per cent and butter by 12.1 per cent. However, yoghurt imports rose by 9.3 per cent, cheese by 3.4 per cent and powders by 6.2 per cent.
8. Data has been published by Worldpanel by Numerator UK on the red meat retail performance in the 12 weeks to 6 September:
 - Volumes of beef fell 1 per cent although spend increased by 1.9 per cent.
 - Primary beef volumes fell by 2.6 per cent with mince down 4.7 per cent and roasting joints down 10.3 per cent. However, beef steak volumes increased by 7.7 per cent.
 - Volumes of processed beef increased 7.2 per cent with burgers and grills up 9.5 per cent.
 - Added value products increased by 2.6 per cent with marinades up 6.8 per cent.
 - Lamb volumes fell by 9.6 per cent with spend down 1.5 per cent.
 - Primary lamb cuts recorded a fall of 13.1 per cent with roasting leg down 28 per cent.
 - Volumes of processed lamb fell 13.5 per cent while added value fell 7.9 per cent.
 - Volumes of pig meat fell 1.4 per cent and spend 0.6 per cent.
 - Volumes of steak fell 6.5 per cent but mince grew by 24.8 per cent and belly by 3.6 per cent.
 - Processed pig meat fell 3.1 per cent with bacon rashers down 5.9 per cent and sausages 3.6 per cent.
 - Added value volumes increased by 6.1 per cent with sous vide up 17.2 per cent and marinades 3.7 per cent.

9. British Apples & Pears Ltd supplied 180,506 tonnes of apples and pears in the 2025/26 season, up 10.4 per cent on 2024/25 and the highest since records began. Apple sales were up 8.6 per cent at 162,331 tonnes while pear sales rose 29.3 per cent to 18,175 tonnes. Retailer Award winners were Tesco for the highest apple sales and Sainsburys for the highest pear sales; Lidl for the highest early season apple sales, Sainsbury's for pears' and Aldi for market outperformance in apples, Lidl in pears.
10. Data published by NIQ Homescan POD, Total GB concerning dairy retail in the 12 weeks to 5 September shows:
 - Milk volumes fell by 0.3 per cent but spend increased by 1.6 per cent. Semi-skimmed volumes fell by 1.8 per cent and skimmed by 3.8 per cent but whole continued to grow, up 3 per cent.
 - Cheese volumes increased by 2.2 per cent with spend up 0.2 per cent. Cheddar volumes fell by 13 per cent, British regionals by 2.8 per cent, processed by 2.1 per cent and stilton and British blue by 8.1 per cent. These falls were offset by increases in other cow cheese, up 10.6 per cent, speciality and continental, up 4.6 per cent, and snacking, up 3 per cent.
 - Butter volumes fell by 2.4 per cent and spend by 6.2 per cent. Block butter continues to outperform, up 5.5 per cent but volumes of spreads fell by 6 per cent.
 - Volumes of yoghurt, yoghurt drinks and fromage frais grew by 6.8 per cent with spend up 9.4 per cent. Increases were seen in standard plain yoghurt, 18.4 per cent, healthy yoghurt, 17.5 per cent, fat-free yoghurt, 9.1 per cent, probiotic yoghurt, 6.3 per cent, and yoghurt drinks, 7.4 per cent.
 - Cream volumes fell by 0.1 per cent but spend increased by 1.4 per cent.
11. British Apples and Pears Ltd has asked the British Retail Consortium to convene the UK's leading grocery chains and create an action plan to reduce audit duplication and cost. A 91 per cent overlap was found between one retailer audit and existing assurance requirements and an 88 per cent overlap with another.
12. In the 3 months to June, with comparisons to a year earlier:
 - Exports of pig meat totalled 84,700 tonnes, taking the total in the year to date to 173,200 tonnes, up 11 per cent. The cumulative value was £267.2 millions, up 5 per cent.
 - Imports of pig meat grew by 1 per cent, compared to quarter 1, but were down 8 per cent compared to a year ago. In the year to date, volumes were down 5.6 per cent at 350,000 tonnes.
 - UK's self-sufficiency in pig meat has increased by 5 per cent to 66 per cent in the first half of 2026.
13. The Soil Association has launched the Organic September campaign to encourage consumers to increase their spend on organic products. According to NielsenIQ, sales of organic fresh food grew by 4.7 per cent in the 4 weeks to 5 September compared to growth of 1.9 per cent in conventional sales.

14. Aldi has announced an investment of £900 millions in 40 new stores, distribution centres, and continued price cuts. Long-term agreements with its British suppliers will result in at least 50 per cent of its products being home-sourced by 2027.
15. English Whisky has been granted Geographical Indication status which will cover over 70 distilleries.
16. M&S has lowered the price of over 50 organic products at a cost of £4 millions. In newer, larger Foodhalls, a multi-temperature zone for organic food will result in frozen, chilled and store cupboard food all in one place.
17. AHDB has relaunched its 'This is British Pork. But not as you know it' campaign.
18. Waitrose is to add a 'Championing Regenerative Farming' logo to its own-brand cows' milk.
19. Specialist potato and vegetable processor Fylde Fresh and Fabulous has secured finance from Chiltern Capital to effect a management buyout. The company supplies 1,000 tonnes of fresh prepared produce each week to some of the UK's best known food manufacturers.

Miscellaneous

1. The 2026 NFU Mutual Rural Crime Report has been published. It reveals:
 - Agricultural vehicle theft claims rose by 18 per cent to £8.3 millions.
 - Quad bike and all-terrain vehicle claims rose by 31 per cent to £3.5 millions.
 - Tractor theft rose by 8 per cent to £1.6 millions and telehandler theft rose by 38 per cent to £773,000.
 - GPS claims fell by 80 per cent to £250,000.
 - Livestock theft rose by 30 per cent to £4.5 millions.
 - The cost of animals killed or badly injured in dog attacks rose by 10 per cent to £1.95 millions.
 - While the overall cost of rural crime in the UK fell by 6 per cent to £41.5 millions, there were increases of 24 per cent in Northern Ireland and 14 per cent in Scotland. Wales and the Midlands both recorded the largest falls at 21 per cent. The North East had the costliest claims at £7.6 millions.
2. Evaluation of the 2026 Veg Power 'Growing to Love' campaign has revealed that 25,000 children across 387 schools participated with all schools wanting to repeat the project in 2027. The campaign involved primary schoolchildren growing their own tomato plants and tending them at home during the holidays. 77 per cent of pupils said they were more willing to eat tomatoes. 98 per cent of schools reported the programme was easy to deliver while 90 per cent of teachers said it helped them deliver the curriculum.

3. As part of the Open Your Gate campaign, launched by AHDB and LEAF and which aims to deliver one million on-farm learning experiences for children and young people by 2031, applications have now opened for the School Farm Visits Support Programme with a closing date of 5 October. 80 farmers will be given the chance to take part in the free programme. This will include training in the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme; tailored one-to-one support from a LEAF Education specialist; and practical resources and ongoing support.
4. Natural England has been refused permission by the High Court to appeal against a ruling that it had acted unlawfully by banning releases of gamebirds near protected sites. Further, Mr Justice Ritchie added that threats that the decision could force it to withdraw all licences was tantamount to ‘bullying’.
5. The Government has launched a call for evidence on gamebird shooting. The consultation will run until 1 November.
6. Defra has revealed that it received 184,000 responses to its consultation on trail hunting.
7. The Society for Agriculture has opened its November Farm Management Skills Programme for bookings. The programme is held at Harper Adams University and comprises 8 one-day modules:
 - Developing myself
 - Owning your story: Presenting and communicating with confidence
 - Managing others
 - Influencing for success
 - Finance and money
 - Managing risk
 - Agreements
 - Future farming
8. A report from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services has suggested that unclear guidance and legislation, combined with poor supervision and oversight, were creating inconsistencies in the firearms licensing system and risks to public safety. But the Countryside Alliance has labelled the report as “riddled, with contradictions” and that a ‘raft of new regulations’ was unjustified and impractical.
9. The results of the 2025 Seasonal Workers survey have been published:
 - There were 17,796 responses, 43.4 per cent of the total.
 - 87.6 per cent of responses were from workers from Central Asia with Kyrgyzstan having the highest number at 33.4 per cent.
 - 90.1 per cent paid for their visa themselves, which 54.3 per cent paid for their travel to the UK. The percentage paying £500-£999 increased to 63 per cent.
 - 97.5 per cent were provided with a contract they could understand.

- 87.7 per cent were paid for all the work undertaken; 97 per cent were provided with a minimum of 32 hours work per week; and 90.8 per cent worked in the UK for over 4 months.
 - Between 84.2 per cent and 95.6 per cent were 'happy' for each topic which included accommodation, pay, healthcare and safety.
 - 88.8 per cent did not have a grievance while working and only 1.8 per cent had raised a formal complaint.
 - 94.1 per cent had a 'positive' or 'extremely positive' experience and 98 per cent desired to return.
- 10.** The Centre for Rural Policy Research at the University of Exeter has published the results of its survey of the health and wellbeing of women in agriculture in England and Wales:
- Respondents reported notably higher levels of stress and anxiety than the general population along with lower subjective mental wellbeing. Further, women aged 45 and under expressed significantly worse psychological outcomes than their older counterparts.
 - Women fare better when they feel their contributions to the farm are valued, when they receive emotional support, are included in decision-making, and are satisfied with their level of contact with friends, family and the community.
- 11.** Plans drafted by Natural England under the Nature Restoration Fund, involve 15,780 new homes being built in Norfolk with developers funding large scale improvements to rivers and wetland across the county. The plan is currently in the consultation process which will close on 27 October.
- 12.** The Horticultural Trades Association is to conduct an industry-wide survey Horticulture Industry Employer Workforce Survey & Horticulture: The Industry Employee Survey. It is being conducted on behalf of Access All Areas, a partnership of organisations from across horticulture, landscaping, arboriculture and garden media. The survey aims to build a picture of today's workforce and identify opportunities to make the sector more attractive to workers.
- 13.** Groundbreaking research is being undertaken at Harper Adams University into neurodiversity in agriculture. The research is aiming to tackle loneliness and stigma among rural people with neurodiversity, and offers the food and farming industries tools, workshops and techniques to help harness the hidden strengths of a neurodivergent workforce.
- 14.** The Society of Agriculture, in collaboration with the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, has launched an Initial Leadership Development Programme. It is designed as an accessible first step into professional leadership development at an early stage in their career. A 5-day programme will cover:

- Leading self
 - Influencing others
 - Building teams
 - Understanding organisations
 - Shaping the future
15. The fresh produce industry is mourning the death of Professor David Hughes who, in 1991, became the inaugural Sainsbury's Professor of Food Marketing at Wye College and later Emeritus Professor of Food Marketing at Imperial College London.
16. The Annual Conference of the Agricultural Law Association will be held at the Copthorne Tara in London on 4 March 2027.

Postscripts

1. A dentist tells his patient, "This might hurt a little bit. Are you ready?"
The patient says, "Yes doc. I'm ready."
And the dentist says, "I'm sleeping with your wife."
2. A guy walks into a fancy restaurant, dressed very casually, and asks for a table. The maître d sniffs and says, "Sir, we have a dress code at this restaurant. You must be wearing a tie to enter."
The man, very upset, goes back out to his car, looking for something to use as a tie. All he can find are his jumper cables. So, he wraps those around his neck in the best bow he can, then marches back up to the front desk.
"See?" he says belligerently. "I have a tie now, so you have to seat me!"
The host squints at him but nods. "Ok, I'll seat you ... but don't start anything."
3. An elderly man is on his deathbed. Summoning his last bit of strength, he lifts his head and whispers: "Is my beloved wife Sarah here with me?" And Sarah says, "Yes, I am here."
He then says: "Are my children – my wonderful children – are they here with me?"
And they reply, "Yes father, we are here with you to see you breathe your last."
And he says: "And my beautiful grandchildren ... are they here with me as well?"
And they too tell him that they are here.
The old man lays back quietly, closes his eyes, and says, "If everybody is here ... why is the light on in the kitchen?"
4. Two sisters – one blonde, one brunette – inherit the family farm. Unfortunately, after just a few years, they fall into financial trouble. To keep the bank from repossessing the farm, they need to buy a bull so they can breed their own stock.
The brunette checks the bank, then takes their last £600 and heads west to another farm where a man has a prize bull for sale. Before leaving, she tells her sister, "When I get there, if I decide to buy the bull, I'll contact you so you can drive out and help haul it home."

The brunette arrives, inspects the bull, and decides to buy it. The man tells her he'll sell it for £599 – no less. After paying him, she drives to the nearest town to send her sister a telegram with the news. She walks into the telegraph office and says, "I want to send a telegram to my sister telling her I've bought a bull for our farm. I need her to hitch the trailer to our pickup truck and drive out here so we can haul it home." The telegraph operator nods and says, "I'd be glad to help. It's just 99 pence a word." With only £1 left after buying the bull, the brunette realises she can only afford to send one word.

After thinking for a moment, she nods and says, "Send her the word 'comfortable.'" The telegraph operator looks puzzled. "How will she know to hitch the trailer to your pickup truck and drive out here to haul the bull back if you send just the word 'comfortable'?" The brunette explains, "My sister's blonde. She'll read it slow."

5. A young man goes into a pharmacy to buy condoms. The pharmacist tells him they come in packs of 3, 9 or 12 and asks which he'd like. "Well," the young man says, "I've been seeing this girl for a while, and she's really hot. I think tonight's the night. We're having dinner with her parents, then we're going out afterwards. I've got a feeling I'm going to get lucky ... and once she'd had me, she'll want me all the time. Better give me the 12-pack." So, he buys the condoms and leaves.

Later that evening, he's sitting at dinner with the girl and her parents. He asks if he can say the blessing, and they agree. He starts praying ... and keeps praying ... and praying ... for several minutes. Finally, the girl leans over and whispers, "You never told me you were such a religious person."

He whispers back, "You never told me your father was a pharmacist."

Farmers – we value your contribution to the country!!

Scotland has long been the home to many of the UK's top financial institutions – banks, life assurance and pension companies, and investment brokers and advisers. Yet the Scottish Government frequently seems to be financially incompetent. Perhaps that is the difference between learned professionals and politicians north of the border although it is apparent that the political malaise is ever increasing its path southwards.

In England, numerous political initiatives have been identified to raise taxes. One of the latest is the so-called Mansion Tax, or a high value Council Tax. Apparently, inspectors or valuers, are to have unfettered access into properties to assist with a valuation. One wonders who these people are and what qualifications they have? Some years ago, Kent, for example, had five District Valuers covering the county, all highly respected and on first name terms with land agents and fellow professionals. Now, one is led to believe, there are two covering the whole of the South of England.

Perhaps a new initiative of the Scottish Government may percolate in a southerly direction.

The Scottish Land Commission has published a five-year route map to modernise Scotland's land and property tax administration.

It focuses on four areas:

- Making better use of land data for tax decisions including information on land ownership, use and value.
- Improving land and property valuation.
- More co-ordination, digital infrastructure and a user-focus approach.
- Innovating and testing opportunities so potential tax reforms can be modelled.

The policy is quite overtly tax-driven. The intention is to build an information database so that the impact of tax-raising policies can be assessed and evaluated.

In other words, information will be gathered; the Government will then be able to model how it can squeeze the 'few who own the most.' There is no mention of the income generation of said assets, just value. So, 'if there is a pip to squeeze, we will squeeze it, and to hell with the consequences.'

In England, property occupied and used for the purposes of agriculture does not attract business rates. 67.7 per cent of land, often including buildings, is owned or occupied by farmers. Given what has happened to Inheritance Tax, some form of land value tax could be next. Farfetched – possibly. But, never forget the Government statement, 'if we can't grow it, we'll simply import it.'

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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If you would like to add a friend or colleague's name to the mailing list
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The MFU was edited from 1991 to 2006 by John Nix, Emeritus Professor of
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