

Harvest 2009

Harvesting this year has been described as a 'snatch and grab affair' as farmers try to dodge the showers and take advantage of sunshine. But many areas have made good progress gathering in crops of wheat, barley, oil seed rape and an increasing amount of oats as well.

Bob Baker, Churches Rural Development Officer, writes:

Harvest is progressing reasonably well, one farmer told me that his new combine cut more barley in two days than his first combine cut in an entire season.



This increase in capacity does not come cheap, and the infrastructure needed to keep these monsters running at full capacity takes some managing. If one of these mega machines is running at full capacity it holds 11 tons of grain and is capable of cutting in excess of 60 ton/hour. All the harvesting is not done by these mega machines. Many tons of corn will be cut by older and smaller machines, many over 20 years old which are kept going by hours of careful maintenance over the winter months. This machinery, plus the ability of farmers to work extremely long hours at this time of year, is essential to a successful harvest. Last year's disastrous harvest is still fresh in many minds, and this is driving the farmers on to get this harvest in. Despite the good quality of the harvest the spot price is disastrous with barley trading at only £75-£80 a ton off the combine. This is not looking good for the wheat trade.

The Livestock sector continues to benefit from higher prices than last year:

The first breeding sheep and store lamb sales of the season are now under way with good prices for both breeding sheep and store lambs. Breeding sheep are meeting a very strong trade. The easing of the proposed Electronic Sheep Tagging regulations is helping to put a little more confidence back into the industry coupled with the generally good prices. Beef has had the usual seasonal dip in price but is still better than last year. Pigs are continuing to be a good trade with those farmers who were able to stay in the industry are at last making a good return.

But dairy farmers continue to face major difficulties:

Milk however is a different matter with some prices being cut by 3p a litre in the past few weeks and many of the other contracts at best only at breakeven; the exodus of farmers from milk is showing no sign of abating.

TB moves north:

The Emley Show in West Yorkshire cancelled cattle entries this summer as TB had been identified in a local herd. FCN have just published a report, *Stress and Loss: a report on the impact of Bovine TB on farming families (FCN)*, on the human cost of TB which in recent years has had a devastating effect on herds and farmers in Wales and the West country.

Harvest Worship Resources:

Simon Martin, the Training and Resources Officer at the Arthur Rank Centre, has put together a list of worship resources for harvest and two other seasonal festivals, available via www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk click on "**Find Rural Worship Resources Here**"

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