

Harvest Briefing 2018

All is safely gathered in? Maybe not

The weather has made this year a challenging one for many farmers. For sheep farmers the problems began in the autumn of 2017 when prolonged cold and damp affected ewe fertility. The snow and cold temperatures of the 'Beast from the East' arrived at lambing time and there were losses of new lambs and ewes as well as cattle. Resulting in cash flow problems with fewer lambs to sell in the autumn and higher prices for replacement ewes.

The prolonged drought in some areas has meant that farmers are now feeding their livestock with forage made for the winter months, as there isn't enough nutritious grass. Many will not have been able to produce as much silage as normal and this coupled with early feeding may well lead to shortages and higher prices. This may result in further problems when hay/silage stocks run out before the winter is over – causing more stress and financial pressures.

In the arable sector, the cold spring meant that some crops were sown late and established crops had their growth affected. Many crops are being harvested early, but lack of water means that yields may be low. There will be regional variations as to the quality and amount of grain, fruit and vegetables that are harvested

The most important thing for those preparing to lead harvest worship is to ask people how things are. Please don't make assumptions, we can still give thanks for food but recognise the extra work and stress this year has caused, some of the effects will continue into next year and beyond.

Continue to listen to your farming communities and see how the church may be of help. You may need to signpost people to the following charities:

Charities:

Forage Aid www.forageaid.org.uk

Farming Community Network FCN walk with farmers offering a listening ear they are not a grant making body www.fcn.org.uk/

Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution RABI make grants towards household expenses www.rabi.org.uk

Addington Fund help with housing if someone needs to leave the farm and also make discretionary businesses expenses www.addingtonfund.org.uk