

Weather and Harvest 2026:-

The very welcome rain has come too late to make much difference to many of the food crops being harvested this autumn. The grain harvest in the south of the U.K. was mostly completed by the end of July; almost a third down on the average yield. The growing season for fruit and root crops is pretty well over, so there will be a reduction in yield and more expensive product in the shops.

In our prayers during this coming season of Harvest Festivals. we need to remember those less well-off than ourselves. The list should include families struggling with the cost of living as well as many in the farming community where returns on crops have sometimes not covered the cost of growing them.

Harvest then is a time to reflect on, and respond to, our creative role within God's creation and our responsibilities, under God, for all God's creatures. Harvest Festival is still one of the best loved church festivals, although the days when whole village communities worked together to bring in the harvest disappeared with the coming of the combine harvester.

How our food is produced is a hot, topical issue. Even people who have never grown a radish are worrying about pesticide residue on carrots, growth hormones in milk and genetically engineered soya. Using publicly available data from 2006-2023, the study, from Pesticide Action Network, found there to be an estimated 402-433 *million* cases of unintentional acute pesticide poisoning of farmers and farm workers every year* most of these in developing countries including India. There is a feeling that current farming practices are providing cheap harvests today by putting at risk the mechanism God has set in place to ensure there will be harvests 'tomorrow'. Many farmers are on the margins of economic survival.

The countryside is often presented in an unrealistic fashion; a rural idyll of a green and pleasant land; a place of relative affluence, to which people can escape for leisure and recreation; where a strong sense of community prevails and life is lived at a gentler pace.

We pray for those who live with a reality which is very different -

- For the 20% of the population in this country living on or below the poverty line,
- For those who suffer from the lack of appropriate, affordable housing,
- For farmers expected to produce more food in a more efficient and sustainable way – and in particular those experiencing considerable pressure, especially in dairying and uplands livestock production, or struggling with Bovine TB or the disease 'Blue Tongue'**.
- For those wrestling with the complexities and inefficiencies of Government bureaucracy.

* See The Guardian [Wednesday 2nd September](#).

** 'Blue Tongue' is caused by a virus transmitted by midge bites. It affects cattle, sheep, goats and camelids and leads to 15% mortality as well as abortion, weakness and debility in affected animals. There is now a vaccine available on veterinary prescription but again at an extra high cost to the farming community.

Some appropriate Readings for Harvest:-

Deuteronomy chapter 26, verses 1 – 11. For the presentation of offerings.

Gospel of John chapter 6, verses 35 – 40. The Bread of Life.

2 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 6 – 12. God loves a cheerful giver.

Gospel of Mark chapter 4, verses 1 – 9 (10 - 20). Parable of the Sower (explanation).