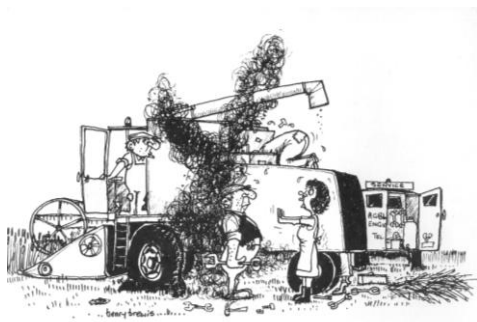


Harvest thoughts 2010



Sometimes Harvest doesn't always go as well as expected. Here we see Sep the farmer created by Henry Brewis explaining to his wife that he won't be attending the harvest festival. This year has been one of those years with many days of light showers just enough to stop harvesting for the day after a few hours, or not let it

As we stood sheltering at the great Yorkshire Show a farmer said to me " Well that's done it, it has rained on St Swithins day, it will be back end of August before we get any settled weather". It certainly seems as though this old traditional saying has some relevance with the last 40 days weather. A farmer told me in early August that it had taken him a month to do 1/3 of his harvest, he hoped it would not take another 2 months to do the other 2/3 . This harvest has been a bit frustrating but never the less reasonably rewarding with on or just below average yields at the time of writing. (August 24th)Most of the first wheat's here in the North are still to cut; some of these first wheat's look exceptionally good so there might be some records broken yet. Prices have hit the headlines recently due to the lack of rain in parts of the world and far too much in others. The news that the Russians were suspending exports lead to the speculators coming into the market and lifting the price to high levels of around £160 a ton. This sort of price would give amazing returns if it all got back to the farmer, but up to 60% of the harvest was already sold forward before the combines started to roll and the speculators started buying futures , many not even knowing what they are trading in .The rise in prices on the world market immediately prompted the Major retailers to say that the price of food would have to go up as wheat was twice the price of last year . They conveniently forget they had a lot of their wheat brought forward at around £100 -£120 a ton. They also did not bring the price of food down when they put it up to reflect the price rise of 3 years ago when it was at nearly £200 a ton again driven up by speculators . Farmers and there staff will continue to work very hard to get the harvests in despite the challenging weather conditions. One thing that is certain is that every acre capable of growing wheat will be planted this autumn and that next autumn there will be a lot of wheat around and the prices of £ 160 will be very remote . A lot of farmers are thinking that the forward price for November 2011 £125-£130 is a good price and a fair bit of wheat is being sold forward at this price.





The other major Harvest of the countryside especially the uplands is getting under way with the sheep and suckler sales starting in the uplands. The sheep trade looks to be set fair as the national sheep flock has dropped by 4% year on year for the last 4 years and when this year's June returns are published the educated guess is that this decline will not have been halted and may even have been accelerated . The returns of this year will need to last longer than a year for the farmers to start re investing and repopulating the uplands even if the , environmental schemes would allow .

I hope these thoughts are of use to you all and may help you in your harvests festival services when I know a lot of the communities both rural and Urban will be thinking of the countryside and the farmers . I would also ask you to remember the work of Farm Crisis Network and The Royal Agricultural Benevolent institute in their 150 year. Whilst there are many calls for any money your congregations have to spare FCN and RABI would use any you could spare to help farmers, who are not as fortunate as some in Yorkshire please contact either Sally or Helen.

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