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 *St Osyth Priory*

London

Essex 'desert' changes tack to beat the drought

Dry conditions have created a virtual desert in one part of Essex. **Edward Long** finds out how one combineable crops farmer is responding

CHANGES in the seasonal weather pattern and a severe lack of rain are forcing an Essex farm to change its strategy and tailor cropping to the new arid conditions.

Between 1964 and 1982 the average annual rainfall measured at an official weather station at Lee Wick Farm, St Osyth's, part of Wigboro Wick Farm, was just 513mm (20.2in). That was low enough for it to gain a listing in *The Guinness Book of Records* as the driest farm in the country.

"But since then we have had even less rainfall," says Guy Smith, who, with brother Philip and father Andrew, farms 520ha (1300 acres) of combineable crops and potatoes on the coast near Clacton. "Last year we recorded just 12.3in, the lowest rainfall total for over 40 years and far worse than the 1976 drought year when 19in fell.

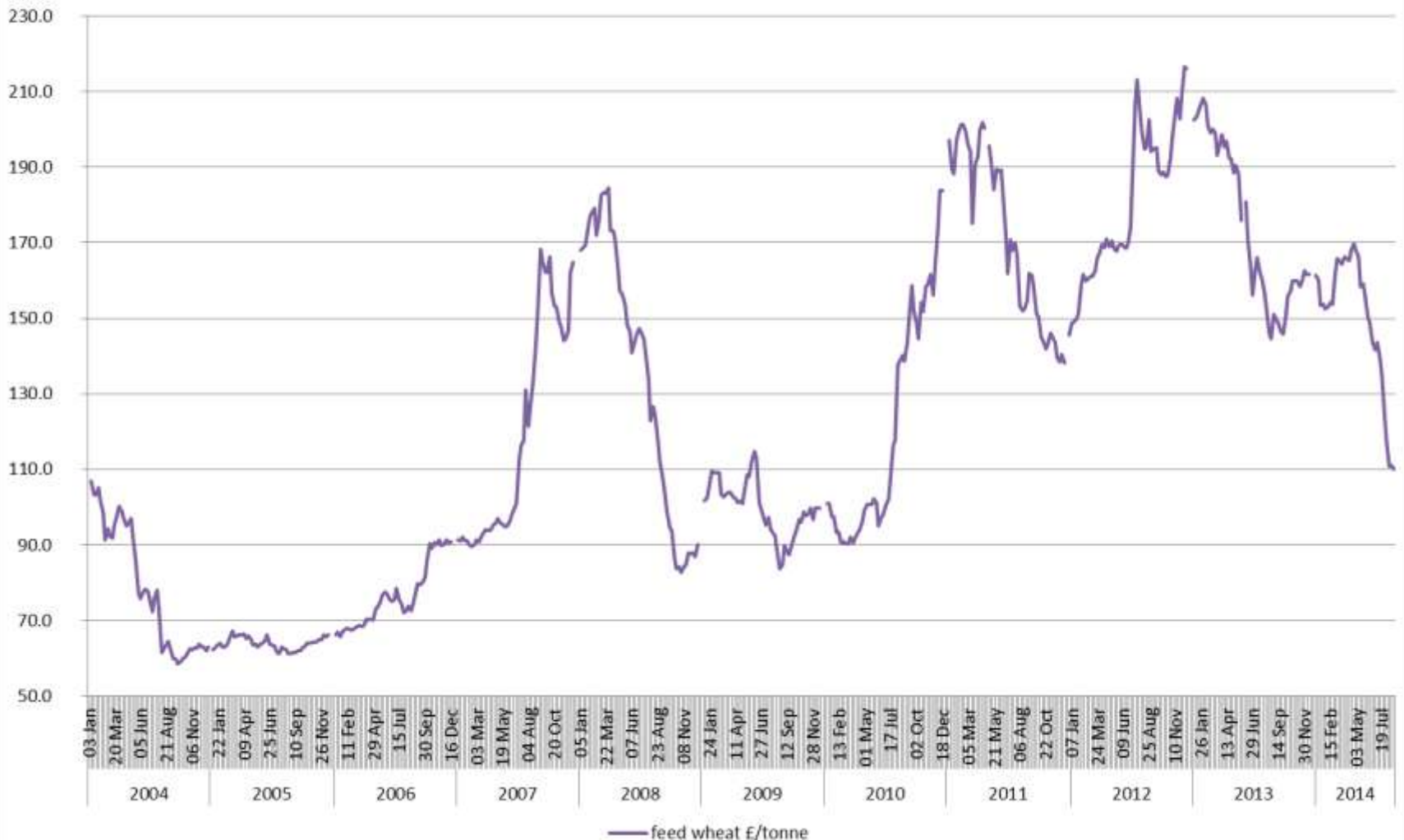


He's a record breaker — but for all the wrong reasons. Guy Smith's Essex farm is officially the driest in Britain, prompting key management changes. Where crop growth varies according to soil type precision farming could help (left).





feed wheat £/tonne













WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLYERS GONE?

An eerie silence is descending on the British countryside. Unless modern agriculture changes its tune, songbirds could go the way of the dodo. By Richard Girling. Photograph by Tim MacPherson

St. Osyth Wick Farm
This site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is also a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and a Special Protection Area (SPA). The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is also a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and a Special Protection Area (SPA).

Map of the Site
This map shows the location of the site within the parish of St. Osyth. The site is located in the north-western part of the parish. The map shows the parish boundaries and the location of the site. The site is located in the north-western part of the parish.

ST.OSYTH WICK FARM

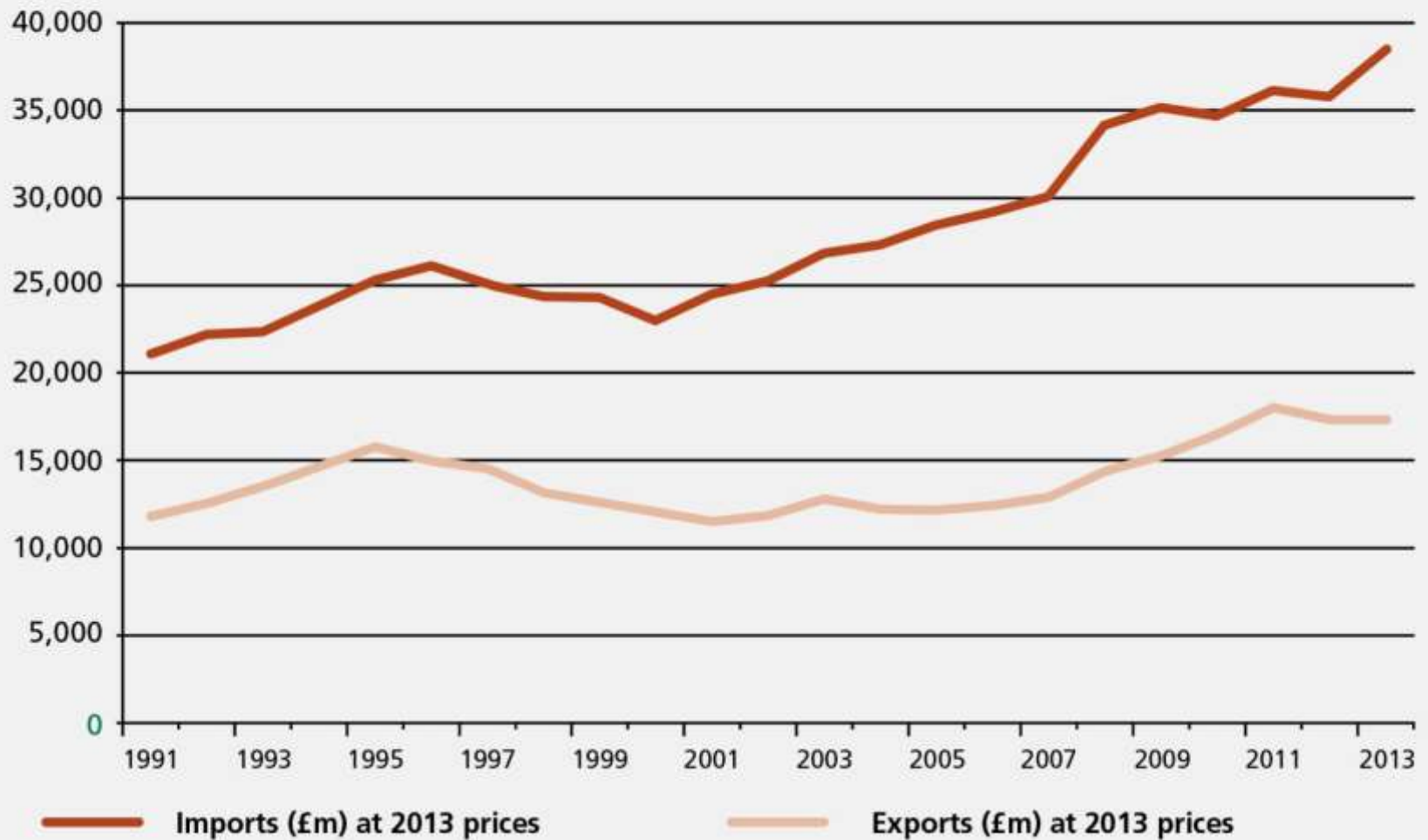


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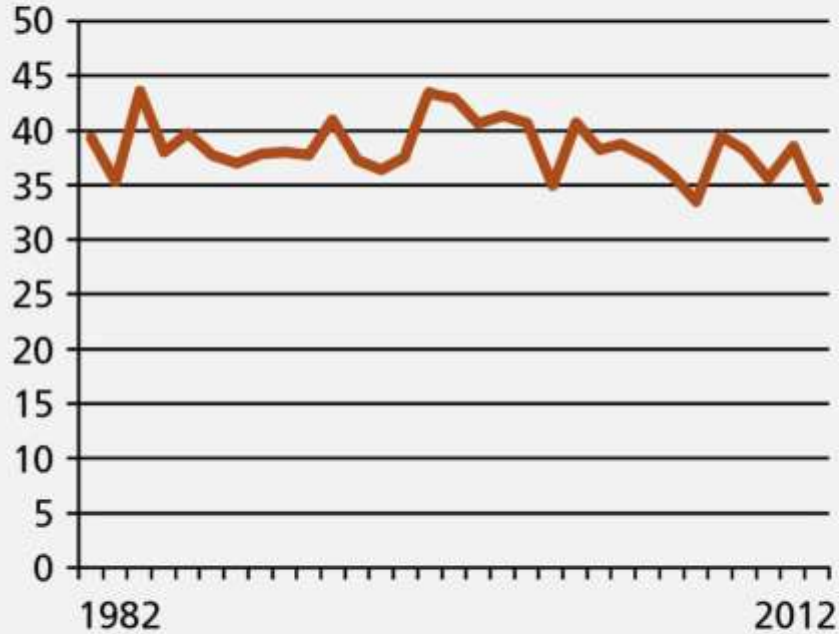


UK TRADE IN FOOD AND DRINK – 2013 PRICES

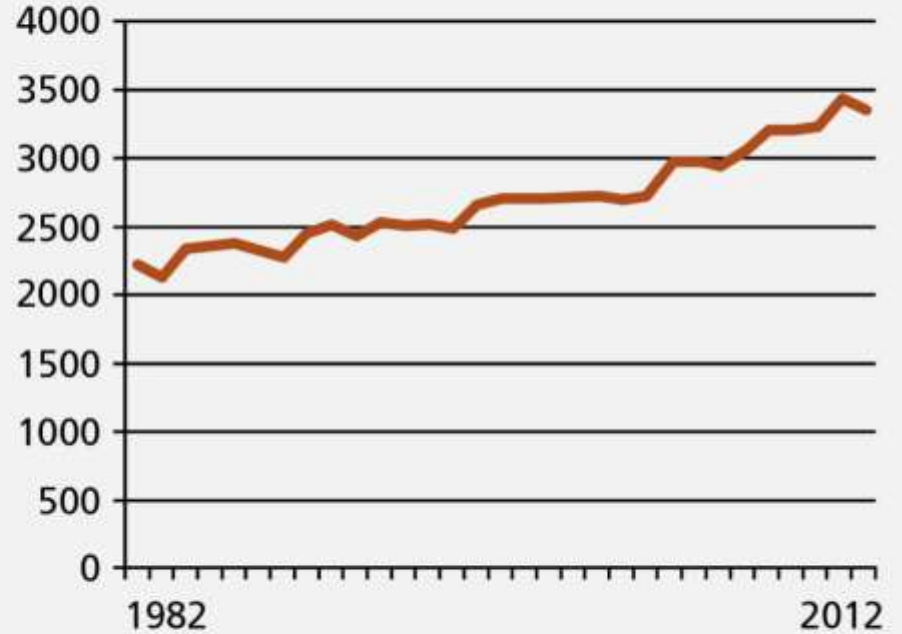


CROP PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION OF MAJOR CROPS – UK
Millions of tonnes



PRODUCTION OF MAJOR CROPS – WORLD
Millions of tonnes



* Major crops include: cereals, rapeseed, soya, potatoes, sugar beet

Sources – FAO, Defra

DEVELOPMENT OF APPROVED ACTIVE SUBSTANCES

Source: European Commission

■ 'Old' active substances

■ 'New' active substances

