

# PRESS RELEASE

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## INNOVATIVE DIVERSIFICATION CAN STILL WORK FOR FARMERS



Farm diversification is both increasingly popular and profitable and Hampshire rural land use expert Andrew Bays, a partner in Sutton Scotney-based BCM rural property specialists, suggests it's not too late for others to join in – provided they give the process careful thought.

“Some more mainstream diversifications include the obvious choices of barn conversions and storage, camping and glamping, wedding venues, farm shops, and renewable energy,” says Mr. Bays. “But there are other ideas that can work well and now is a good time to start the process.

“Alternative animals such as goats and alpacas are now widely known and popular enterprises with which farmers can boost their farm incomes and perhaps also raise revenue from visitors who would also spend at farm or gift shops.

“It is becoming increasingly difficult to find a ‘niche’ diversification that hasn't been exhausted with a saturated market but there is still a wide variety of different diversifications and rural business ideas.

“Among the more obscure ‘golden eggs’ to explore in more detail this Easter could be English cricket bat willow, a sought-after product with demand from bat manufacturers constantly outstripping UK supply. The trees grow well in especially wet soil and the south has no shortage of that.

“Walnut trees can make a stable and long-term crop, generating a possible £25,000 per acre per year at today's prices. The remarkable rise of the gin industry is pushing demand for juniper berries with many now imported so a long term supply of British berries could be a useful development.

“Lastly, the idea of a farm safari would not appear in many British farmers' thoughts but growing domestic tourism and an urban population ever more curious about food sources means safaris could easily complement an existing tourism enterprise and collaboration with adjacent farms could improve the experience.

“We are certainly seeing a rising interest among rural clients for new business diversifications and central southern counties are ideally placed to exploit some original thinking.”

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