

## COUNTRY VIEW



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## Support for farm tourism

ADVANTAGE West Midlands has invested £200,000 to support farm tourism through Farm Stay UK. The funding, delivered through the Rural Development Plan for England, will be used to help 93 farm accommodation businesses across the West Midlands region. It is part of Farm Stay's Wake up to the Heart of the Country project – a three-year initiative to boost rural businesses which includes information on IT training and launching new marketing campaigns.

## Exposing label deception

A NEW website, designed to publicly expose UK retailers and producers who deceive consumers with false packaging, has been launched. The site, [www.honestfoodlabelling.com](http://www.honestfoodlabelling.com), is helping to dissolve confusion surrounding what is, and what is not, real British produce. Created by Rob Ward, founder of the Food Marketing Network, any businesses with ambiguous or inaccurate labelling are called 'sinners' and are 'condemned' on the site.

# A stroll round the market from the comfort of your own home

## ►► First ever virtual farmers market

MEETING the producer has just reached new heights as the first ever 3D virtual farmers market (VFM) has launched.

The new retail concept is a virtual take on a traditional farmers' market.

It allows shoppers to 'stroll' freely around over 45 market stalls where they can view products and buy the same high quality artisan produced food and drink they might find in a real-life farmers market.

The interactive website also offers consumers the opportunity to 'meet' the original producer first hand via a video stream that broadcasts a brief description of the food or drink for sale.

The facility enables farmers to tell the story of how their product has been produced, what ingredients have been used

and where they have been sourced.

It is hoped the programme will offer farmers and smaller specialist food and drink producers the opportunity to reach new markets, especially targeting consumers unable to attend farmers' markets, such as shift workers or those unable to attend because of time clashes.

The website is also designed to extend a producer's business scope by making them available 24/7 online, without the need to go through the multiples.

## Checkout

In addition to the 3D virtual experience, a 2D version of the VFM provides all the information for consumers, allowing them to view products along with descriptions, images and videos before taking their shopping basket to checkout.

The project is the brainchild of Marcus Carter, managing director of Carter Food House,



The first ever virtual farmers' market has been launched, and it is set to revolutionise the way consumers can interact with food producers.

who recognised the commercial viability of bringing the farmers' market experience direct to people's homes.

Recent figures reveal in 2009, the online grocery market was worth £4.4 billion with experts predicting the figure will reach

£6.9bn by 2014 – a growth of 57 per cent on 2009.

"The VFM gives consumers the opportunity to buy direct from the producer," explains Marcus.

"Seeing the face behind the food is more important today than it has

ever been. To be able to connect remotely by using the internet, with the people who make what we eat, enables consumers to get a sense of trust before buying."

**MORE INFORMATION**  
Visit [www.vfmuk.com](http://www.vfmuk.com)

## Livestock market prices are available online

Visit [www.farmersguardian.com/prices](http://www.farmersguardian.com/prices)

- Individual primestock and store market prices - available within hours of the close of an auction
- Compare current prices per venue against the past three week's prices
- Access the latest weekly averages with just a click of the mouse
- Select and compare prices from up to five venues



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