



BITE
SIZED
GUIDES

KENT'S CHERRIES & BERRIES

JUICY & SUCCULENT TREATS
FROM THE GARDEN OF ENGLAND

kentfoodtrails.co.uk



Produced in Kent

We want to inspire you with the amazing food and drink of Kent. From products grown here for hundreds of years to 21st century innovations, food and drink has shaped the landscape of our wonderful county and we hope you enjoy exploring all it has to offer.

This series of publications will introduce you to a whole range of fabulous food and drink and kentfoodtrails.co.uk will guide you through what to do and where to eat and stay so you can make the most of the Garden of England. Enjoy!

Go to producedinkent.co.uk to find out more about the tasty work we do inspiring everyone to buy locally.



GARDEN OF ENGLAND?

Kent's landscape and drier climate than the rest of the UK provide the ideal conditions for horticulture, resulting in a heritage that spans centuries.



LIFE IS LIKE A BOWL OF CHERRIES...

...or at least Kent is, quite literally.

Welcome to the Garden of England, home to those ripe, juicy, succulent little temptations we call cherries since the early 16th century. And thanks to its soils, climate and weather, this particular corner of our island not only provides the lion's share of all English cherries, but is renowned for the very finest of fruits, the very sweetest of flavours and the very richest and deepest of colours.

So let's say hello to the stars of this garden; vibrant ripe cherries, both dreamily sweet and startlingly sour, stunning strawberries, ruby raspberries, fleshy plums, sparkling redcurrants, intense blackcurrants and rich blackberries. All these and more enjoy a fruitful home right here in Kent. It's simply a soft fruit nirvana, filled with abundant orchards, the pink and white blossoms in spring, the array of colours, textures and tastes from the glut of fruit in the warm summer and autumn months and no shortage of places to sample them for yourself.

**Hopefully we've whetted your appetite, so read on
for the lowdown on Kent's succulent bounty.**



THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT CHERRIES

1. They've been with us a long time...

Cherry pips (stones) have been found in prehistoric remains throughout Europe and Asia but the earliest recorded mention of cherries was in Greece in 300BC.

2. It's all the Romans fault!

Roman soldiers were given cherries as part of their rations. It's thought the pits they discarded encouraged the growth of wild cherry trees throughout the empire.

3. There's lot to try!

There are more than 1000 known varieties worldwide and more being developed all the time, however only a small percentage are in commercial production.

4. Sweet & Sour...

The two key species of cherry which we eat today are the Sweet Cherry (*Prunus Avium*) and the Sour Cherry (*Prunus Cerasus*). Virtually all modern varieties stem from one of these.

5. They're quite popular...

According to the UN, over 3.5 million tonnes of cherries are produced worldwide.

6. They like our climate...

Cherry stones require exposure to cold to germinate and the sun and moisture to grow and fruit. This gives us our peak fruit season in summer and a spring full of blossom.

7. Its why we're the Garden of England!

Kent has long been associated with the cultivation of cherries. Indeed, the county's fame as the Garden of England springs from its heritage of growing cherries and other fruits.

8. Get 'em while they're hot!

Cherries are a seasonable crop and only available in the summer. During the season the UK will consume around 1,000 tonnes a week!

9. They need supporting!

At the start of the 20th century Kent had more than 5,000 ha of cherry orchards. By the end of the century there were less than 600 ha. But the good news is planting is up year on year!

10. ...and each to their own...

The world record for cherry pip spitting is 93 feet, set in 2004 by Brian Krause of Michigan, USA.

YE OLDE CHERRIES

The tale of cherries in Kent

Let's start at the beginning. We know the Romans first introduced the sweet cultivated cherry to Britain around the 1st century AD, but that wasn't the first cherry in Kent as the "Gean", "Dwarf" and "Wild Cherry" were already native tree species.

Things got really interesting however, with Henry VIII and his enthusiasm for the cherries he had sampled in Flanders. So enthused was Henry that his head gardener was ordered to "propagate with greater vigour" (we presume "grow me some most quickly") the sweet cherry varieties the King so loved, and to do so he set aside 105 acres of land at Teynham for the very purpose.

Despite ups and downs in the market, cherry production stayed relatively strong in Kent with 5,193 hectares of cherries grown in the county (about 75% of all cherry plantings in the UK) by the middle of the 20th century. Yet for all this, cherries are a long term investment (each tree needs around 4 years before it provides fruit) and by the millennium Kent had seen a steep decline in orchards (of 90%) across the county.

English cherry growers fought back and we have seen a renaissance in Kent's cherry growing, largely due to a combination of new cultivation techniques and varieties – and a belief that British is best!

So there is a happy ending. We quite simply love cherries! Demand has grown so much the industry can't keep up with our appetites and planting and replanting of orchards is on the rise again. So keep eating Kentish and keep buying local!

**QUEEN OF
ALL FRUITS**

but it was a King that
prompted our taste
for cherries.

'CHERRIES IN THE RISE'

...is the cry of the street sellers. A 'rise' in Kent dialect is a twig, to which the sellers tied cherries to advertise their wares allowing their customers to pluck a sample and taste.

English poet Robert Herrick (1591-1674) immortalised this in the folk song Cherry Ripe.

Cherry ripe, cherry ripe, Ripe I cry,
Full and fair ones Come and buy.



A BITE OF THE CHERRY...

Growing cherries the Kentish way...

So you've heard the "when" and the "why", but what about the "how"? What makes the orchards and cultivation of cherries in Kent so special?

A traditional Kentish cherry orchard is certainly a sight to behold, majestic with tall, spreading, widely spaced trees of about twelve varieties. The space in between was initially used for growing golden swathes of daffodils or soft fruit such as strawberries or blackcurrants, but once the trees matured, they would turn it to pasture as a prime sheep grazing spot.

Cherry picking!

Not an easy job in a traditional orchard! Not only was time of the essence, but the trees can reach up to 60 feet in height and the cherries needed to be picked without damaging the tree. Essentially this meant lots of pickers and lots of ladders, big ones! The trees were pruned and shaped to allow for the tapering ladders (wide at the bottom and narrow at the top) and pickers were sent up to pick as fast as they could, making sure they kept the cherries on the stem. On no account were they to 'brut' the tree (break off the small shoots).

Cherries were picked into 'kibsey' baskets which weighed about 12lbs when full. Different baskets were used depending on the destination, chip baskets for local stores and half sieve baskets for Covent Garden. Often though, the landlords didn't see enough profit in employing pickers and instead would auction off the whole crop whilst still on the tree making the picking someone else's problem!

Growing cherries today

As you might expect things are a little different nowadays and there's a lot of science going into cherry cultivation and production. For starters, orchards contain fewer (and newer) varieties and more trees planted close together in rows. Trees are grown on 'dwarf' rootstocks so most of the fruit can be reached without the need for ladders.

Cherry trees go into dormancy during the winter, when they need a certain number of 'chill hours' – anything below 1.5 degrees – to rest and then form fruit buds. For a tip top year, they need warm and dry spring days to encourage insect pollination and, after the cherry has formed, some rain to grow

THE CHERRY CAPITAL OF KENT

William Lambarde wrote in his Perambulation of Kent, 1576, 'This Tenham with thirty other parishes extending from Rainham to Blean Wood be the cherry garden of Kent. But as this at Tenham is the parent of all the rest.'



and plump up. The gestation period of cherries is between 45-60 days, depending on the variety. Dry and warm weather will then help them ripen, and is perfect for harvesting.

From May onwards nets are increasingly being used to protect against harmful weather, pests and disease and to keep the birds away (some farms use birds of prey as a deterrent). Tunnelling is sometimes used to keep the rain off the crop as well as to manage the ripening speed, meaning we get a longer cherry season. July and August is the time for picking, but true to the old ways, cherries are still picked solely by hand to avoid bruising. For all that progress it's still an intensive job!

Cherry graders

Modern cherry growers take great pride in their fruit and use cutting edge technology to ensure that externally and internally, their cherries are as good as they can be. Cherry grading machines can process four tonnes of fruit an hour and as they pass along the grader, cameras take synchronised images of the rotating cherries to sort by size, colour and quality. Those that don't make the grade are 'flipped', destined for the juicer.

WILDLIFE LIVES EVERYWHERE IN A CHERRY ORCHARD!

Orchards provide a haven for wildlife, especially of the creepy crawly variety! Predators like ladybirds and hoverflies help reduce pest populations, pollinators such as bees and wasps benefit from the nectar-rich flowers, while many species of invertebrates (woodlice and beetles) depend on the dead wood fallen in orchards.

Orchards also play host to oodles of fungi, a veritable rainbow of lichens as well as mammals and birds of all kinds.

But it's the pollinators that are a cherry orchard's busiest work force! So to encourage them, cherry growers create sand banks for beetles and mining bees, plant wildflower corridors and windbreaks using native species, and invite local beekeepers to keep their hives in their orchards.

Check out kentwildlifetrust.org.uk to see what types of wildlife you'll spot in an orchard.

PINK AND WHITE...

The fruiting cherry tree produces white blossom whilst the pink blossom you see in many gardens and parks belongs to the ornamental cherry.





‘DOUBTLESS...

**God could have made
a better berry,
but doubtless
God never did.’**

Dr. William Butler (1535 – 1618)

BOUNTIFUL BERRIES

Discover Kent’s amazing soft fruits!

**If you’ve read this far you’re a cherry expert
and no mistake! So now it’s time to meet the
star-studded cast of soft fruits.**

Strawberries

“Sweetest of the sweet, vibrant red, heart shaped bundles of joy”

Latin Name: *Fragaria x Ananassa*

Season: April – October

Originally cultivated by our friends the Romans as early as 200BC, they are the likely suspects for bringing them to the UK around the 1st century AD. Prized ever since, the UK grows around 30 of the 600 varieties grown worldwide and half (that’s around 58,000 tonnes!) of all strawberries in these islands are grown right here in Kent.

Strawberries are now often grown on ‘table tops’ – long trays or gutter systems suspended above the ground with the use of closed irrigation systems – under high polytunnels, or increasingly, glass houses. Delicate little things, they are still picked by hand, during the cool of the early morning, and will be in the shops within 24 hours, ensuring optimum freshness.

Raspberries

“Crimson conglomerations of tart, succulent globes - finger stainingly good!”

Latin Name: *Rubus Idaeus*

Season: June – November

Another wild native found throughout the forests of the UK but yet another one with Roman origins, likely first cultivated in Turkey. Raspberries are big fans of our temperate climate and consequently much easier to grow than strawberries, in fact they love it so much that they tend to “escape” and thrive as weeds. Polytunnels are essential for the raspberry crops as the birds like them as much as we do!

CHECK OUT...

**tasteofkentawards.co.uk
to find winners of
Kent’s Tastiest
Cherries and Berries**



Blackcurrants

"Rich, dark, blue-black powerhouses, mighty beyond their size"

Latin Name: Ribes Nigrum L

Season: July – early August

Wildly native but oddly only first cultivated in Europe during the 17th century, the humble blackcurrant has become a British favourite. Its secret lies in its immense levels of vitamin C, so high that during WWII, when oranges were so difficult to obtain, free blackcurrant syrup was distributed by the government to all under two's. Today 1,400 hectares of the berries are grown across the UK.

Blackberries

"Jammy, dark and unctuous wild hedgerow stars"

Latin Name: Rubus Fruticosus

Season: July – November

A staple of the British countryside, blackberries grow wild throughout Europe and are found in all good thriving hedgerows. And although you can follow in the footsteps of your prehistoric ancestors 8000 years ago and forage for yourself, you might not know that the UK also grows 2000 tonnes a year commercially.

ACCORDING TO ENGLISH FOLKLORE...

blackberries shouldn't be picked after Old Michaelmas Day (11th October) as the devil has made them unfit to eat by stepping, spitting or fouling on them. There is some value in this legend as the autumn weather often allows the fruit to become infected by mould which looks unpleasant and may be toxic.

KNOWLEDGE

...is knowing a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

Miles Kingston



Tomatoes were first cultivated as early as 700AD. Elizabethans thought their bright red colour was a signal they were poisonous. Thanet Earth is on the way to accounting for 25% of the planted area for tomatoes in the UK.



THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT BERRIES

1. Anyone for tennis?

Strawberries & Cream were served at Wimbledon in 1877 and today, all 28,000kg served at the tournament are 100% Kentish!

2. Purple power

95% of UK blackcurrants end up as Ribena. They're that potent it only takes 40 berries to make a single ½ litre bottle! Only English currants go into Ribena and Kent is the biggest producer overall, growing around 2,750 tonnes of the fruit a year.

3. Criss-cross fashion

Crossing a raspberry with a blackberry gets you a Loganberry or a Tayberry and if you cross a Loganberry with another blackberry you get a Boysonberry.

4. Flower power

Strawberries are actually enlarged receptacles of their flowers so are known as a secondary fruit, officially called "accessory fruits". The strawberry is the only berry that has seeds on its external surface, known as an 'achene'.

5. Super seedy

An average raspberry has between 100 and 120 seeds.

6. Just a drupe

Blackberries aren't actually berries! They are an aggregate fruit, formed from several individual seeded fruits (drupelets) attached to a single core. This design contributes to their high nutritional content!

7. The food of love

In medieval times strawberries were considered an aphrodisiac and a soup made of strawberry, borage and soured cream was traditionally served to newly-weds at their wedding breakfast.

8. Kindness is in our power

In some Christian art, the raspberry is the symbol for kindness.

9. Love is in the air

The strawberry was linked to the Roman goddess of love, Venus, and it was thought that eating them with cream was linked to springtime eroticism.

10. The time is ripe

Blackberries don't ripen once picked, so make sure you go for the plump, soft, dark ones and if not eating them straight away, store unwashed in an airtight container or freeze for later.

NUTRITIONAL SUPER STARS

Did you know berries are good for you too?

Not just succulent, juicy and moreish, Kent's cherries and berries are all packed with goodness. That means regularly consuming them is beneficial to more than just your taste buds!

Cherries and berries satisfy a sweet tooth!

Let's start with the hot topic – sugar! All the berries we've talked about get their luscious sweetness from naturally occurring sugars (no additives or sweeteners required). That makes them far healthier than the usual suspects (chocolate and biscuits) but more surprisingly they also contain fewer sugars than other fruits too! Tucking into 80g of raspberries means only 4g of sugar, compared to a small banana at a whopping 17g. Even the sugar of half a goody-two-shoes grapefruit weighs in at 5g!

Great for optimum health

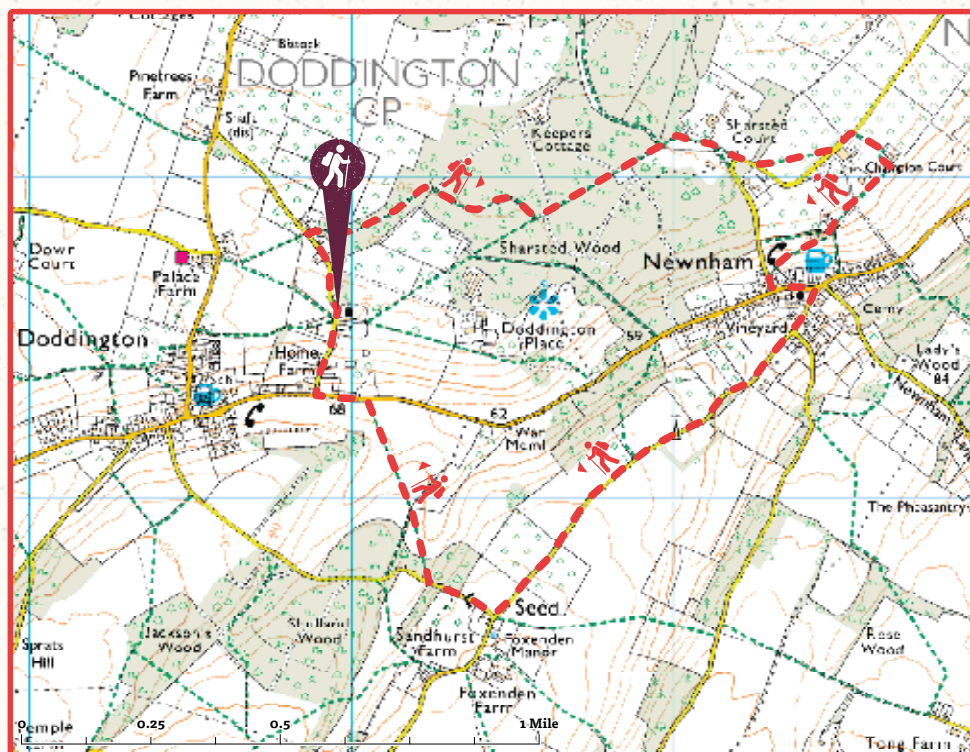
Now we've all heard about antioxidants, so essential for survival. Well, the really good news is that cherries and berries are literally bursting with them so give your body a helping hand with every juicy mouthful!

Low in calories and high in vitamin C, each berry is bursting with what we need for a varied and healthy diet.

Find out more at seasonalberries.co.uk

There are no established guidelines on how much you should eat, but experts suggest that 1-2 servings of red fruits daily can help. It's known that they are best consumed in their natural state to get the full benefits so why not have them as a healthy snack? Sprinkle them over your cereal, pop them in your yoghurt or blitz to vermilion heaven in a smoothie.

REAL FRIENDS
...will share even
a strawberry.



3.6 miles (5.8km) - allow 2 hrs

This circular walk from Doddington Church follows footpaths and quiet country lanes past old traditional and modern commercial cherry orchards.

This is a country walk so wear suitable clothing and footwear and take care on the country lanes. The Street, running through Newnham and Doddington needs to be crossed twice so beware of traffic. During wet weather the trail might get a bit muddy and slippery in places and it has some steep inclines.

How to get here

By car: The church car park opposite Doddington Church can be used if there are no services taking place. Parking is also available on the road in Newnham where the trail can be joined by Newnham Church.

By train: to Sittingbourne or Faversham on Southeastern or the High Speed 1 service. Check train times through traveline.info or nationalrail.co.uk.

By bus: The 344 and 345 run from Sittingbourne on Mondays to Saturdays. Timetables can be checked through traveline.info.

Alight at the Chequers public house in Doddington, walk to the left so the Chequers is behind you and follow the road until you reach Church Hill. Turn left and walk up the hill to Doddington Church; notice the sign 'The Beheading of St John the Baptist'.

Take a few moments to admire the wonderful views across the valley with Doddington village nestling in the bottom.



THE CHERRY TRAIL



Doddington and Newnham Walk

Directions



1. Immediately beyond the church is the entrance to Doddington Place where you'll see a commercial cherry orchard opposite with trees growing on a dwarfing cherry rootstock.

2. Continue along the road until you reach Slips Cottage on the right; opposite you'll see a cobnut plat where Kentish cobnuts are grown. Turn right immediately before Slips Cottage on to a footpath and follow the track through the wood. You'll find yourself walking through an avenue of wild cherry trees, which you can recognise from the horizontal lines on their trunks. The blossom is stunning during spring! In summer the trees are laden with wild cherries whilst in the autumn the leaves turn a rich vibrant shade of orange. Through the trees you'll see another modern cherry orchard planted at the edge of the wood on the Doddington Place Estate.

3. Follow the track through this ancient woodland which will be full of primroses, bluebells and wood anemones in spring. The track bears to the right following the edge of the estate then bears to the left (where it becomes part of the old carriage track from Doddington Church), leading you to the wrought iron gates of Sharsted Court. Notice the winged stone lions either side of the gates and, behind, the Queen Anne front to this romantic and rambling house. Follow the brick and flint wall with the yew topiary on your left and continue down the road past the side entrance to Sharsted Court. Leaving the tennis courts on your left, join the road and bear to your left.

4. Continue straight ahead on the lane past a new commercial fruit orchard on your left and some large cedar trees. Just beyond the farmyard and barns, take the footpath on the right down a drive with a vineyard on the left. Upon reaching the garage the path turns to the right. Continue around the garden to the left, pass through the gate, turn to the right and follow the top of the hill. Take in the

spectacular views across the valley to Eastling and to the south west where you will see the village of Newnham.

5. Pass a hedge with yew topiary and look back to your right at Champion Court built by Hugh de Newenham in the 12th century, whose family took its name from the village. Follow down the drive straight ahead until you reach the entrance to Mill Cottages. Turn left through the kissing gate and walk diagonally across the hill over traditional chalk grassland, rich with herbs and wildflowers, descending to the village of Newnham. At the road turn left towards the junction with The Street, passing Chapel Cottage.



Calico House

As you turn into The Street, look to your right and you will see Calico House, a Jacobean timber framed building with red and white plasterwork, first recorded in 1617.

6. At the junction with The Street turn left following the pavement to the George public house. Cross the road just past the Church of St Peter and St Paul into Seed Road. Follow behind the church noticing the cherry trees in the church yard. Continue up the hill with high banks either side (for about a mile) until you reach the top where there are extensive views towards Frith and Otterden. You

will glimpse Doddington Place on your right and some old traditional cherry orchards on both sides of the road ahead, still grazed by sheep.

7. Continue to the junction and turn right into Hopes Hill by Shullard Court. On your left you will see more old traditional cherry orchards. Notice the grease bands round the trunks of the trees. These were placed to help protect the trees from wingless winter moths crawling up the trunks to lay their eggs in the buds.

8. Before you reach the bottom of the hill take the footpath to your right at an angle passing through the wood and across the field to the top of the hill. Here you have a clear view of the front of Doddington Place. Continue following the footpath to the road and turn left onto The Street.

9. Cross the road and join the pavement. Turn right into Church Hill and continue up the hill to where you started your walk.

Other fruity trails in Kent

Grab a copy of Faversham Food Trails 'First Fruit - the home of English cherries' for a wander that takes in modern and traditional orchards around Teynham, Conyer, Lewson Street and Lynsted, an area once known as 'London's larder'. Go to visitfaversham.org/walks for your copy.

The Cherry Trail was written by Kent Orchards for Everyone
- kentorchards.org.uk

A SECOND BITE OF THE CHERRY...

Where to get Kent's cherries and berries

If, like us, you're feeling slightly peckish at this point, never fear, there are tonnes of spots to find fresh cherries, strawberries and other soft fruits whilst in season.

You can still find traditional farm gate sales and PYO around the county, and there are of course many farm shops, village shops and even supermarkets that stock Kent's finest. For insider information on these as well as places to stay, eat and for things to do, go to kentfoodtrails.co.uk.

A number of different cherry varieties are grown in Kent including the popular Penny, Regina and the beautiful heart shaped Kordia. You'll also find the sweet flavoured Elsanta and (also heart-shaped) Jubilee strawberries, as well as bright firm Maravilla and Tulameen raspberries. Try asking for them by name!

"One must ask children and birds how cherries and strawberries taste".

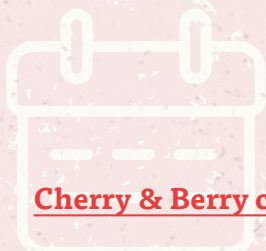
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

BROGDALE COLLECTIONS

As the Garden of England, Kent is fittingly home to the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale – a living history of fruit situated on the outskirts of Faversham. Over 350 varieties of cherry grow here, providing a stunning display of blossom in spring and a delicious feast in summer. And if you're interested in the heritage varieties of cherry, this is definitely the place to come. Go to brogdalecollections.org for details of opening times, tours and festival dates.

"Hanami" is a centuries-old practice of picnicking under a blooming cherry tree and Brogdale is one of the few places in the UK to celebrate this Japanese festival.





Cherry & Berry calendar

In Season	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Cherry blossom season	●	●					
Strawberry harvesting and PYO	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
The National Cherry and Soft Fruit Show (NCSFS) at the Kent County Show				●			
Raspberry harvesting and PYO			●	●	●	●	●
Cherry harvesting				●	●		
Plum harvesting				●	●		
Red & Blackcurrant harvesting				●	●		
Blackberry harvesting	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

GRANT'S MORELLA CHERRY BRANDY

A proper Kentish tippie and no mistake. Grant's Morella Cherry Brandy dates from 1774 when, intrigued by the distinctive flavour and rich colour of Kentish Morello cherries, Thomas Grant immortalised his name in this truly fine drink. It was a favourite with Queen Victoria, holds a Royal Warrant from the Prince of Wales and is celebrated by Charles Dickens in *The Pickwick Papers*.

You can sniff out a bottle yourself through Shepherd Neame of Faversham (shop.shepherdneame.co.uk) and many other outlets.



Produced in Kent

This is one of a series of food trails promoting Kent's local produce and distinctive landscapes. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the content of this leaflet is accurate and up-to-date at the time of printing, no liability can be accepted for any errors, omissions or misrepresentation of fact contained herein.

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The European Agricultural Fund
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Europe investing in rural areas.



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