



## **NEWS RELEASE**

**Use: Immediate**

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### **CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS MEAT MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CROFTERS**

A conference entitled 'Marketing Meat from the Croft' organised by the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) took place last week in Inverness. The purpose of the event was to bring together crofters and crofting producer groups with some of Scotland's top meat industry experts, highlighting the opportunities and constraints in marketing beef, lamb and pork from the croft.

Conference organiser Donald Murdie, Co-ordinator of SCF's Crofting Resources Programme, said, "The great majority of output from crofts is store livestock which is sold on to lowland farmers for finishing, but the direct selling route is a way that individual crofters and producer groups can add value to their produce, especially for breeders of traditional and native breeds which are slow to grow to maturity. SCF's 'Scottish Crofting Produce' trade mark is available as an additional marketing tool."

Conference speakers included Sutherland lamb producer Robin Calvert, well-known Skye restaurateur Shirley Spear, and Professor Bob Orskov of the Macaulay Institute. Technical issues on production and exporting were dealt with by Kathy Peebles and Laurent Vernet of Quality Meat Scotland, and Yvonne Richardson of SCF spoke on food safety and certification schemes. Cumbrian farmer and butcher Andrew Sharp discussed the 'Mutton Renaissance' campaign which aims to bring this neglected meat back into mainstream cuisine. The pressing issue of abattoir provision was addressed by Shetland farmer Ronnie Eunson and by Skye crofter Alaistar Nicolson. Ronnie also described how he has built up a niche market for light Shetland lambs, and Alaistar spoke about how the Meat Supply Group in Skye & Lochalsh makes local lamb available to butchers and restaurants. SCF chairman and Lewis crofter Neil MacLeod dealt with internet marketing opportunities.

Donald Murdie concluded, "The conference was a great success. An excellent panel of speakers with a breadth of experience of the meat industry engaged in lively and stimulating debate with a forward-looking and innovative collection of crofters. This was all about what crofting can and should be - supplying high-quality local produce as well as first-class store livestock."

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#### **Notes to editors**

- Pictures can be found at: <http://www.crofting.org>

**Alaistar Nicolson is as spelt**