

SCF – the Scottish Crofting Federation

THE SCF is now legally recognised as the Scottish Crofting Federation, a change agreed by its members at the 2009 AGM and celebrated at a reception in Inverness on 18th November.

Neil MacLeod, chair of the SCF, set the background to the name change, a move brought about by the call to use a name that reflected the structure and mandate of the organisation more accurately. He pointed out that a federation is a number of independent bodies that come together under a common cause and central administration.

SCF areas have their own constitutions and need to be able to reflect their own circumstances whilst coming together under the common cause of fighting to safeguard and promote the rights, livelihoods and culture of crofters and their communities. Federation is also a more internationally recognised name for a representative body, fitting for the SCF – being the UK's largest association of small-scale food producers.

Patrick Krause, the SCF's chief executive, gave a presentation on the organisation's vision for crofting. Based on the SCF

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SCF EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

Small farmers: backbone of rural development or barrier to efficiency?



THE FIRST SCF conference exploring aspects of the European Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), under European Commission Agriculture funding for 'Information Actions' with match-funding from HIE, was held in Grantown on Spey in September.

The title of the conference was carefully chosen to explore how the small producer contributes to rural development, a purpose of the CAP.

Whilst crofting is, of course, a unique culture, it is important to place this culture within the wider context of Scottish, UK, European and global rural development and

agricultural policy. Most of the rules that affect crofting and small-scale farming come from policy that is drawn up on the European scale, which is ultimately directed by global trade agreements.

Policies are sometimes criticised as being too wide in application, both geographically and in relation to scale of holding, not taking into account local conditions, or as being too focused on industrial-scale production whilst ignoring the small-producers' situation.

The CAP is very controversial. It is the only policy funded totally from the EU budget and costs roughly 50 billion euros, just under half the total European budget.

Critics argue that the CAP costs too much and benefits relatively few people – only about 5% of EU citizens work in agriculture. Supporters of the CAP say it guarantees the survival of rural communities – where more than half of EU citizens live. The recent focusing on climate change and food security has brought another angle to the argument for public spending on support to the custodians of the countryside.

But does that support go to the right people or enterprises? Most of the CAP money goes to the biggest farmers – large agribusinesses and hereditary

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Martin Benson

Crofting reform: government is reacting to crofters' response

AFTER SUSTAINED pressure from crofters and the support of MSPs, Minister for the Environment Roseanna Cunningham told the SCF at a recent meeting that she would drop the government suggestion of a housing burden.

The consultation on the draft Crofting Reform Bill had included the suggestion that houses built on de-crofted land should have a residency condition imposed on

them. We argued in our response that using crofting to attempt to address the failure of rural housing policy is unacceptable and should not feature in this bill. This has been listened to and subsequently the minister has assured us that this will not be in the bill put forward.

We are getting indications that our informing the government of crofters' views is also affecting other parts of the draft bill. The

proposal to have area committees has been abandoned, for example. In our response we said that our membership were not comfortable with this proposal and the minister has taken this on board. The suggestion we made of making the Crofting Commission more democratic and grass roots driven is also being enthusiastically taken up by Ms Cunningham.

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