



NEWS RELEASE

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CROFTERS SUPPORT POTENTIAL LFA CHANGES

The Scottish Crofting Foundation (SCF), the only member-led organisation dedicated to promoting crofting, welcomes the decision of the European Commission to review and change the Less Favoured Areas classifications.

SCF Chairman Neil Macleod said "Support to areas with natural handicaps is vital to the future delivery of public goods by crofters and other producers in Scotland's mountains and islands. It is vital that any reform is workable. We have some concerns that the criteria proposed relate mainly to conditions which pose difficulties for the growing of crops and that things like exposure, which cause problems for livestock, might not be properly covered. However, this exercise enables as many of these concerns as possible to be addressed before legislation is brought forward".

The European Commission has released a statement on its intentions to engage with Member States in field testing the proposed new criteria for the delimitation of the Less Favoured Areas of Europe.

SCF Parliamentary spokesman Norman Leask added "SCF regrets the Commission's decision to drop distance or peripherality as a criterion. However, this has been clearly flagged up for some time and we call on the Scottish Government to take immediate action to draw up proposals for the redefinition of islands as areas with 'specific handicaps' and of other parts of upland Scotland to be defined as 'mountain' to reflect production handicaps. SCF supports making LFA payments available to active producers only and will continue to call for the same rule to be extended to Single Farm Payment.

"We also call on the Scottish Government to take this enforced reform of LFA delimitation to address the fundamental problem with the current scheme - that less handicapped producers receive the highest payments. Those who deliver on the objectives of sustainable land management, such as maintaining High Nature Value farmland through agricultural activity should be the ones who benefit from LFA support as the Regulation intended."

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Notes to editors

- The Scottish Crofting Foundation is the largest association of small-scale food producers in the UK.

- Pictures can be found at: <http://www.croftingfoundation.co.uk/index.php/home>