



NEWS RELEASE

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VODAFONE ASSIST CROFTERS TO ATTEND MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Scottish Crofting Federation will have the chance to send a delegation to attend a major international conference on food issues being held in Sweden later this year after winning support from the mobile phone company Vodafone.

The Vodafone Foundation's 'World of Difference' competition gives people the chance to propose projects that will support a local charity, and the award to the SCF is one of 500 received by different charity based projects throughout the UK.

The funding will enable Iain MacKinnon, whose research specialises in the area of traditional ecological knowledge, to organise and prepare for crofters to have a presence at the Swedish conference which will discuss issues of agricultural biodiversity, local food systems and traditional knowledge, and is being held by the international Slow Food movement and the Sami, the people who are indigenous to many parts of northern Europe.

Iain is currently completing a PhD at the University of Ulster exploring distinctive ways of thinking about land that are held in different indigenous cultures. He said: "I am very grateful to Vodafone for supporting this project. Their funding will allow the SCF to find out more about the parallels that exist between the attitudes towards land and nature that people in crofting areas have held, with the kinds of relationships that other indigenous communities have with their homelands."

The opportunity to attend the event arose after an SCF delegation travelled to Turin in October to the 'Terra Madre' gathering of global food communities which is held in that city every two years. The event is organised by Slow Food and last year more than 6,000 people from different communities all over the world gathered to share their traditions and their foods. Among the groups that crofters met and were inspired by were Maori fishermen and Sami reindeer herders. When they heard that Slow Food and the Sami were planning to hold an indigenous peoples' Terra Madre in Sweden in 2011, the SCF began making their own plans to attend it.

SCF chair Eleanor Arthur said: "Travelling to Italy last year and meeting such inspiring people committed to their food traditions showed us that crofters are not alone in the challenges we face

in working to maintain and transmit our own way of living. There are many other cultures of the world who are equally as proud of their histories and traditions as crofters are, and have experiences to share from which we can learn.

"The indigenous peoples' Terra Madre in Sweden will be a great opportunity to connect with them and so we are very pleased that Vodafone have given us this opportunity to employ an accomplished researcher in these issues who can show our crofting connections in a global context."

Iain added that different ways of thinking about land and what it is for can have practical consequences. "For many cultures land is a source of sustenance and identity," he said. "As the Terra Madre gathering shows, many indigenous peoples take pride not just in their homelands, but in producing foods that are distinctly of their own culture.

"It's for this reason that indigenous communities tend to be sources of agricultural biodiversity and why many believe that the traditional knowledge held by indigenous peoples in relation to their lands and ecology will have a vital role to play in creating a sustainable global agriculture."

END

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Notes to editors

- Photographs are available, contact Karen on 01599 530 005 or hq@crofting.org
- The Scottish Crofting Federation have published a paper titled "Crofters Indigenous people of the Highlands and Islands" <http://www.crofting.org/index.php/publications/66>
- For more information about Slow Food and Terra Madre please visit <http://www.slowfood.com/>