



NEWS RELEASE

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CABINET SECRETARY URGED TO CONSIDER FURTHER USE OF ‘NATIONAL ENVELOPES’

The Scottish Crofting Foundation this week wrote to Cabinet Secretary, Richard Lochhead stressing the importance of the Scottish Beef Calf Scheme in supporting suckler cattle herds in the hills.

According to SCF Chairman Norman Leask, the effectiveness of the scheme, which recycles money within the beef sector to support breeding herds, provides an example of how mechanisms under the CAP can be used to achieve specific outcomes.

He said, “The CAP Healthcheck will provide an opportunity over the coming year or so to decide what we want to see happening with agricultural support. Decoupling of support has produced many challenges, especially in more marginal hill, upland and areas. In some places, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, declines in livestock numbers are pretty steep. Cattle numbers, though, are holding up better than sheep and we think this is partly to be explained by the targeted, simple and accessible support available through the Beef Calf Scheme.

We argued strongly in 2004 for the Beef National Envelope to ensure the viability of keeping suckler cows in more peripheral hill and upland areas. The justification for such a scheme is, if anything, even stronger today, given the emerging food policy which places an emphasis on quality, environment, niche products and local food. Opportunities to use this and other targeted mechanisms as effectively as possible must be looked at during the discussions on the Healthcheck.

In terms of the Beef Calf Scheme itself, a recent survey undertaken for the Crofting Inquiry found that of all support available, the Scottish Beef Calf Scheme rated highest for effectiveness among all respondents to the survey. That has to be a positive sign.”

END

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Notes to editors

1. National Envelopes are a mechanism available through the reformed CAP to support “specific types of farming which are important for the protection of the environment or for improving the quality and marketing of agricultural products”.
2. The Scottish Beef Calf Scheme is the Scottish implementation of the Beef National Envelope and recycles 10% of all CAP support to the beef sector to the producer of the calf. It pays a payment for every animal registered and a higher rate for the first 10 animals from each herd to recognise the environmental importance of cattle-keeping.
3. Pictures can be found at: http://www.croftingfoundation.co.uk/index.php/contact_headoffice