



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Crofting Federation: it is crofters' and hill farmers' £160M back-pay**

Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has laid down a marker on the £160 million agricultural 'back-payment' that has been returned to Scotland, pointing-out that it is crofters' and hill-farmers' low payments that secured it.

"It is very encouraging that the UK Government has honoured the Prime Minister's pledge to pay the £160 million that has been owed to Scotland due to the below-average agricultural payments we receive", said the chair of SCF, Yvonne White. "It is in great part down to the tenacity of the Scottish Government and Scottish producers that we won this, though it was clearly owed to us and it is shameful that we had to make such an effort to get what is due us."

The current phase of the Common Agriculture Policy set a threshold of 90 per cent of the EU average payment rate per hectare that all member states should reach. The UK's average rate per hectare fell below the 90 per cent threshold because of Scotland's very low average payment rate - which is only about 45 per cent of the EU average. As a consequence, the UK will now receive an extra €223 million (about £190 million) over a six-year period.

Ms White continued, "Scottish Government and stakeholders have long argued that the refund should come to Scotland in its entirety as it is our low payments, particularly those to crofters and hill farmers, which bring the UK average down low enough to justify the refund. Until now the UK Government has been reluctant to concede that it is Scotland's money and have only given us £30 million. Now that we are to get the remaining £160 million, we need to make sure that it goes to those areas that receive very low payments.

"There is a huge disparity in payments in Scotland," Ms White went on, "with permanent rough grazing only getting a tenth of that which arable and rotational grass get. This is the rough grazing that supports crofters and hill farmers and it is this payment that brings the Scottish average down so low. The payment for this grazing should, therefore, be increased to raise the Scottish average".

Ms White concluded, "It is imperative that Scottish Government do not do what the UK government tried to do, to use this money for anything but for that which it is intended. This is money that has a specific use, to increase agricultural payments to the lowest paid and must be ring-fenced for this."

END

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**Notes to editors**

Please contact SCF office for high resolution photos