



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation welcomes report demonstrating Highlands & Islands agriculture is unique

Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) welcomed a report launched yesterday that “demonstrates unequivocally that Highlands and Islands agriculture and land use stands out as unique in Scotland and the UK”.

At the gathering for the launch of the report ‘Post-Brexit Implications for Agriculture & Associated Land Use in the Highlands and Islands’, chair of SCF Russell Smith said, “We welcome this very important piece of work that demonstrates unequivocally that Highlands and Islands agriculture and land use stands out as unique in Scotland and the UK. The contribution that this region, and therefore crofting, makes to food production and public goods such as environment, landscape and culture is shown to be very significant, but along with that the report emphasises the vulnerability and constraints this fragile area suffers.”

Mr Smith continued, “Crofters are rational people; if they cannot make a living from crofting they will stop doing it and will have to leave, with the negative consequences for the local economy, communities and environment. The critical mass that allows communities to thrive would be lost.”

The study, carried out by Andrew Moxey of Pareto Consulting and Steven Thomson of SRUC, was commissioned by the Highlands and Islands Agricultural Support Group and draws on published analysis, literature and data plus interviews with stakeholders. The work considers the potential economic, social and environmental implications of Brexit’s impacts on the distinctive agriculture, crofting and related land use found across the region.

Mr Smith added, “There are two things that I would highlight in planning our future agricultural support policy. One is that common grazings must be brought in to the

planning, not added as an afterthought as has been the case. This is a huge and underused resource. Secondly, support must be based on activity, but 'activity' has to be carefully defined as land use rather than as a measure of financial turnover. Some crofting areas can only support very low stocking densities and small units will have low total stock numbers. But these should still be supported because of the environmental diversity, economic activity and community resilience they provide."

Andrew Moxey, co-author of the report, summed up saying, "The study shows that Highlands and Islands agriculture and land use is different from the rest of Scotland. This report is just the beginning; there is much work to be done."

END

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Notes to editors

- A picture can be found at: <http://www.crofting.org>