



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting must get support for disadvantage, warns Federation

Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) warns that crofting is seriously threatened by the drastic cuts to Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme (LFASS) announced by the Scottish Government.

“Reducing the Less Favoured Areas support to 80% of current rates for 2019 sends out a very negative message, but we can live with it”, SCF Chair, Russell Smith, stated, “but to then cut it to a mere 40% for 2020 will be ruinous. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy, Fergus Ewing, has consistently said that further proposed cuts would be “unacceptable” and that he would fight them. Being told now that this vital support to crofters will be reduced to 40% next year is a slap in the face to us in the less favoured areas and indicates failure on the part of Scottish Government.

“It must not be forgotten”, Mr Smith continued, “that Scottish Government has had the option for many years to switch to the Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) scheme, which SCF advocated as it would have maintained support to those who really need it. Scottish Government chose to opt out of this scheme, with the support of the ‘farming industry’ lobby. The European Commission has always been very clear that rejecting ANC and staying with LFASS would invoke reductions in support. It has been unequivocal, so to blame it on the European Commission now is somewhat disingenuous.

“Having made the decision, knowing the consequences, Scottish Government has had several years to prepare for this. What is needed now is a clear message on how it is intended to distribute the remaining 20% for 2019 and 60% for 2020 in such a way that it directly benefits producers in remote, less favoured areas, so that we can keep producing the food that people want to buy and can keep living in these areas.

Mr Smith concluded, “There is enough challenge with Brexit and the, as yet, unknown consequences, so we really don’t need the havoc this cut in support will wreak. We want information now on how Scottish Government intend to deal with this debacle. SCF has given proposals for how this situation can be saved and we are happy to discuss this further with officials. Mr Ewing, please, what is the plan?”

END

Contact:

Russell Smith, SCF Chair	01863 766 144 / 07899 896 001
Yvonne White, SCF Vice-Chair	01470 532 729 / 07545 459 929
Patrick Krause, SCF Chief Executive	07739 941 199
SCF Office	01599 530 005

Notes to editors

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