



NEWS RELEASE

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Emerging strategy for agriculture support: Crofting Federation comments

Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has provisionally commented on the consultation document "Stability and Simplicity" released by Scottish Government last week.

"This document lays out the broader issues facing agricultural support," said Russell Smith, Chair of the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF), "and possible routes forward. It is good to see an emerging strategy but it is of course only in its infancy – the consultation document makes this clear. Clear principles such as maintaining environmental standards are welcomed, as are the suggested possibilities of innovation, such as simplifying the application process for those whose circumstances stay largely unchanged year on year.

"Capping the Basic Payment Scheme in order to release funds is an innovative approach to the responsible use of public money," Mr Smith went on. "As the consultation states, 'A more progressive capping policy could be a first step to a future agricultural policy which widens the benefits/range of recipients, and supports new entrants and small businesses', outcomes that would benefit Scotland as a whole. The document publishes modelling that shows the savings that can be made by capping, relating this to how many people it would affect. For example, capping payments at £50,000 would release £60 million for wider benefits, yet only caps payments to 10% of recipients.

Mr Smith continued, "Not to introduce Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) is a missed opportunity, an opportunity to move meaningful support to where it was intended. The prospect of the Less Favoured Area Support Scheme being reduced to only 20% is completely unacceptable. We would therefore need to see more detail on how Scottish Government intends to make up the shortfall and to reorganise the scheme more along the lines of ANC.

"There are other areas in the consultation that we will be commenting on, such as mapping of eligible areas, duplicating inspections and over-severe penalties, which all cause problems for our members."

Mr Smith concluded, "Without adequate support we will lose the benefits that crofting brings in terms of retaining population in rural areas, providing secure high quality food and maintaining the landscape and bio-diversity. SCF will be putting forward proposals on behalf of crofters."
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