



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation wins argument for crofters and hill farmers

Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has welcomed the Scottish Government announcement that the allocation of £160M convergence funding will adhere to the spirit and original premise of convergence agreed in Europe, as advocated by SCF.

"Following the long campaign to get the convergence uplift allocated to Scotland, as it should have been," said SCF chair, Yvonne White, "it is gratifying to see that Scottish Government has listened to SCF's arguments for a fair and principled distribution of the funding within Scotland. Convergence is about raising the income of the lowest paid producers towards the EU average. In Scotland these producers are crofters and hill farmers, many of whom are barely surviving – not helped by the very low payments for rough grazing. The bulk of the money should therefore rightfully go to regions 2 and 3.

"There has been heated discussion in the media on how the money should be divided up; lobbying by the National Farmers' Union to get the money aimed at the better-off section of their membership and counter arguments put up by SCF, representing crofters' interests, to get a fair distribution that reflects the spirit and original premise of convergence. The NFUS lobby has been rejected wholeheartedly, even by many farming stalwarts, and it is good to see Scottish Government making an announcement to end the dispute by doing the right thing. The fact that the initial payments will be made in this financial year is a big plus," Ms White added, "and Scottish Government are to be commended for treating this with urgency."

"The Cabinet Secretary's mention of his commitment to maintain support for farmers and crofters in the Less Favoured Area is appreciated" Ms White continued, "but we have to reiterate that the convergence uplift is not a means of making up for the LFASS reduction caused by Scottish Government failing to join the new European scheme for constrained areas. Taking the money owed to poorly paid producers to make up a budget deficit of Scottish Government's own making would be wrong."

Ms White concluded, "The details of the actual mechanisms by which the payments will be distributed to where they belong in our crofting, marginal uplands, hill farms and island areas are yet to be announced and we await these with interest".

END

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Notes to editors

Please contact SCF office for high resolution photos