

Rt Hon. Mairi Gougeon MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

19 August 2021

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Future Agriculture Support

The Scottish Crofting Federation has considered the many and various reports that have been written over the last few years, most recently from the Farming and Food Production Future Policy Group.

Having assessed the impact on our members, we wish to make the following points:

- * The budget for agriculture (and rural development) should increase, or at least not decrease,. Public funds have to be used more prudently than under the CAP and must be targeted better, with measurable, policy-driven outcomes.
- * High quality food production should be at the heart of the system with local food supply and sustainable food production, including horticulture.
- * Payments will include a mix of direct, area-based payments and targeted payments with defined outcomes.
- * Direct payments will be conditional on active land management contributing to specific policy objectives – which include mitigation of climate change, promotion of bio-diversity, population retention and thriving local economies – ‘public goods’ that are not rewarded in the market. Any measure of activity should take account of differing land types and appropriate stocking rates.
- * There will be 2 payment regions for direct payments – arable and grazing. This is what stakeholders wanted in the SG consultation in 2013 and can be re-tested. Direct payments will be capped at a maximum – we have in the past agreed with the suggestion of £150,000.

* Targeted payments will be an optional addition as an incentive to achieve specific outcomes – e.g. increasing biodiversity, carbon sequestration, decreasing emissions. Grazing management, peatland restoration & maintenance and appropriate tree planting will feature particularly. These schemes will be easy to access and front-loaded (degressive) to encourage smaller units and have measures specifically tailored for Common Grazings.

* LFASS will be replaced by a system which offsets natural constraints (based on EU Areas of Natural Constraint). These areas will be defined by reference to Scottish land only (i.e. ANCs will be measured relative to other land in Scotland), so will cover a minority of the country.

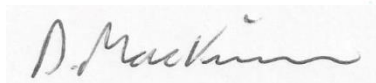
* The Crofting Agriculture Grant Scheme and the Croft House Grant Scheme have been shown to be very effective and cost-efficient. There will be a loan or advance-payment available to help those with limited access to capital (who the schemes are intended for).

Crofting is already diverse and has strong environmental credentials, but it can do more. Crofters have always had to adapt to survive but any new agriculture / development system will need to be underpinned with individualised advice, technical support and training to drive the change in practices.

We look forward to working with whatever stakeholder groups you set up to design and evaluate replacement support systems. We urge you move quickly on this before uncertainty takes its toll on crofting and wider agriculture.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully



Donald Mackinnon
Chair, Scottish Crofting Federation