



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation lay out the fundamentals of agricultural support

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has written to Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, outlining the fundamental principles needed for agricultural support to be croft-friendly.

SCF's chair, Donald MacKinnon, said, "Having 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, and having assessed the impact on our members, we have sent the cabinet secretary our thoughts on the principles that are needed in a new agricultural support policy for Scotland. These include:

Public funds have to be used more prudently than under the CAP and must be targeted better, with measurable, policy-driven outcomes. High quality, sustainable, local food production and supply, including horticulture, should be at the heart of the system.

Payments will include a mix of direct, capped, area-based payments and targeted payments with defined outcomes 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. We need to go back to the original idea of 2 payment regions for direct payments.

Targeted payments will be an optional addition as an incentive to achieve specific outcomes and these schemes will be easy to access and front-loaded to encourage smaller units and have measures specifically tailored for common grazings.

The misuse of the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme will have to stop. Areas of Natural Constraint will be measured relative to other land in Scotland, so will cover only those areas that really are constrained.

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

Mr MacKinnon concluded, "Any agricultural and rural development policy that is devised must be croft-proofed in the making of it. Past mechanisms were not, and turned out to be inadequate for crofting agriculture, for common grazings and for areas of natural constraint. We have the opportunity now to not make the same mistakes. We have urged the cabinet secretary to move quickly on this before uncertainty takes its toll on crofting and wider agriculture.

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