

Use: Immediate

Date: 01/06/2022

PRODUCER-LED ORGANISATIONS JOIN FORCES TO CALL FOR SUPPORT FOR AGROECOLOGY AND SMALL FARMS AND CROFTS UNDER AGRICULTURE BILL

Farmer and crofter-led organisations have formed a new alliance to promote a transition to agroecological farming, crofting and land use in Scotland and to call for accessible and better targeted support for small-scale production under a new Scottish Agriculture Bill.

The Scottish Agroecology Action Group (SAAG) includes the Nature Friendly Farming Network, Landworkers' Alliance, Pasture for Life, Propagate, Scottish Crofting Federation, and Soil Association Scotland. David McKay, Head of Policy for Scotland at the Soil Association said: *"Cooperation between our organisations started at the 'Small Farms and Crofts' demonstration at Holyrood, last autumn. As SAAG we will campaign for a better deal for Scottish agroecological and small-scale farmers and crofters, communities, nature and climate"*.

Agroecological production is farming and crofting with nature and people to increase resilience, tackle the climate emergency and enable equity and social justice for farmers and crofters. Research in Scotland has highlighted the great potential of agroecology for agricultural transitions, yet agroecology was not mentioned in the Scottish Government's Vision for Agriculture or its proposals for a future Agriculture Bill.

"Under the current area-based payments system, 10% of farm businesses receive more than half the budget", said Tara Wight, Policy Coordinator for the Landworkers' Alliance in Scotland. Ms Wight added: *"Small farms and crofts pioneer sustainable agroecological practices, support local food systems and are central to rural community life, yet receive little to no government support. The upcoming Agriculture Bill must ensure Scotland transitions towards a fairer payment system in support of agroecology."*

Ms Wight concluded: *"A higher payment for the first hectares is a proven way to support small-scale agroecological production and achieve more equity. It is, therefore, SAAG's first key ask. The Scottish Government has committed to align with the EU and it should make a redistributive payment, as is mandatory under EU rules, part of the anticipated Scottish Agriculture Bill"*.

END

A formal launch event will take place online on Wednesday 28th of June. More information and a link for registration can be found here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-fairer-payment-system-for-farmers-and-crofters-in-scotland-tickets-646872602367>