

RSPB Scotland

4 September 2008

Strictly embargoed until 0001, Friday 5 September

A better deal is possible for both Scottish farmers and the environment.

Scottish environmental bodies point the way forward for agricultural funding.

A better deal is possible for Scotland's environment, as well as its farmers and crofters, and the Scottish Government should be fighting for this in its approach to land use in the 21st century.

A new report published today by Scottish Environment LINK, to coincide with the conclusion of the Government's consultation on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), points the way forward for a fairer distribution of funding which would help more farmers as well as the environment cope with the changing priorities for the countryside.

The current CAP leaves Scotland at the bottom of the European league table for rural funding and our farmers receive far lower direct payments than most of their UK and European counterparts. With the current CAP costing the average family of four £20 per month in tax, everyone has an interest in seeing this money put to good use. The new report, *Beyond the CAP – Towards a Sustainable Land Use Policy that works for Scotland*, plots a viable future for the Scottish Government to pursue which would mean more money coming back to Scottish farmers and crofters, and more incentive for them to act as custodians for the countryside and biodiversity.

The LINK report calls for payments to be made available for:

- protecting priority habitats and species, at both the farm and landscape scale, and preventing habitat fragmentation
- securing and maintaining designated nature conservation sites for the future
- supporting sustainable rural communities
- sustainable management of vital soil and water resources
- securing the long term future of High Nature Value farming systems that deliver biodiversity and landscape benefits.

The CAP's huge €40.9bn budget – which began as a post-war means to pay European farmers to produce food – now lacks a clear direction, with most payments based on how much farmers produced in the past. It is vulnerable to demands from other parts of the EU budget; already funds have been diverted to the Galileo space programme for example, and now is the time for a new Europe-wide policy based on environmental and other public goods. Scotland's land managers are particularly well placed to implement such a policy, and this would give the CAP relevance and broad public support for the 21st century.

Stuart Housden, Director of RSPB Scotland said:

"The current CAP does Scotland no favours at all. Our farmers and crofters receive a ridiculously low share of the European pot, and yet they could be producing high quality food as well as enhancing the environment for the good of the whole country.

Scottish Environment LINK is a Scottish charity under Scottish Charity No SC000296 and a Scottish company limited by guarantee and without share capital under Company No SC250899.

Registered office: 2 Grosvenor House, Shore Road, Perth PH2 8BD
Tel 01738 630804, Email enquiries@scotlink.org

Parliamentary office: 3rd Floor, Gladstone's Land, 483 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh EH1 2NT
Tel 0131 225 4345 Email parliamentary@scotlink.org

Scotland has some of Europe's finest farmland, supporting a vast range of wildlife – and yet this goes unrecognised in the current CAP funding structure.

It is time we lifted our country from the bottom of the EU's agricultural funding league table, and demanded that the valuable contribution our land managers make is properly recognised. We are calling on the Scottish Government to take a lead in renegotiating what the Common Agricultural Policy can provide for Scotland."

Angela Douglas, Scotland Director, Woodland Trust Scotland, said:

"The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is out of date and the people and wildlife of Scotland need a well funded and sustainably managed environmental and cultural landscape for the future. The Scottish Environment Link report, 'Beyond the CAP', sets out a vision of sustainable land management in Scotland, where public money generates public benefits in the environment. The Woodland Trust Scotland wants to see a CAP that will deliver sustainable land management that will help to protect and conserve Scotland's ancient woodland; create more native woodland; and buffer and extend semi-natural habitats."

Simon Milne Chief Executive of the Scottish Wildlife Trust said:

"This is a very important report which vividly demonstrates both the environmental and economic shortcomings of the Common Agricultural Policy as it operates in Scotland. It's high time we moved towards a system which rewards farmers and land managers for the positive stewardship of Scotland's ecosystems. Only through such a fundamental reform can we hope to reverse the trend of biodiversity loss over recent decades"

Paul Kirkland, Butterfly Conservation Scotland said:

"Many endangered butterflies and moths depend on the continuation of low-intensity grazing of semi-natural habitats, particularly in the north and west. We are shocked to see that such a small proportion of agricultural support is going to the farmers and crofters who have created and maintained these habitats. We are also very concerned at the declining cattle numbers in these areas. We call on the Scottish Government to do all they can to increase support for traditional forms of farming in the north and west, and to the reverse the current loss of cattle".

Eila Macqueen, Director, Archaeology Scotland said:

"The archaeology and historic landscapes of the Scottish countryside are valued by communities and tourists alike. With world-class attractions like the Ring of Brodgar and the newly designated Antonine Wall World Heritage Site, it is important that the CAP is used to protect and enhance these assets for future generations."

Ends.

For more information/interviews/images, please contact RSPB Scotland's National Media Officer Davey Fitch on 0131 311 6500, 07894 173 116.

Notes

1. The new Report is supported by: Archaeology Scotland, Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation Trust, National Trust for Scotland, Plantlife, Ramblers Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust Scotland and WWF Scotland.

The report is available for download at http://www.scotlink.org/LINK_action/LINK_action.php.

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Media News

Scottish Environment LINK is the network for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations. LINK has 31 member organisations spanning interests across the natural environment and associated cultural heritage and supported by around 500,000 people. Further information on LINK is available at www.scotlink.org

2. Scotland receives the lowest European contribution towards rural development funding out of all the European countries per hectare of farmed land, and with the national contribution added, Scotland has the third lowest rural development funding per hectare of farmed land. Scotland also receives the lowest direct funding (paid through the Single Farm Payment) out of the older member states (the EU-15);

3. Maps of High Nature Value farmland produced on a European level suggest that Scotland has a high proportion of Europe's HNV farmland; Scotland's countryside also provides important ecosystem services such as flood management, quality water resources and carbon storage; Many of Scotland's protected species and habitats are of European significance.

4. Scottish Environment LINK calls for the following immediate reforms:

- Distribution of direct subsidies on an area basis with well enforced cross compliance conditions attached;
- Measures put in place to mitigate for loss of the environmental functions of set-aside;
- Higher levels of funding directed towards rural development;
- Increased funding for High Nature Value (HNV) farming through the use of national envelopes and reform of the Less Favoured Area Support Scheme.

5. The Scottish Government should also carry out further research including

- Improving monitoring of the environmental impacts of CAP reform;
- Gathering evidence on what the taxpayer wants;
- Improving valuation of public goods;
- Defining High Nature Value farming;
- Developing a land use policy for Scotland;
- Recreating a vibrant Scottish food culture.

6. LINK proposes a multi-level payment system where land managers could earn payments for the following:

- Basic measures, which could protect and improve the environment in all locations
- Higher level payments for work which restores habitats or landscape features and involves greater change in practice;
- Payments to support practices inherently good for the environment such as High Nature Value farming or integrated agricultural-environmental techniques such as organic farming;
- Targeted payments to enhance the status of priority habitats, species and protected wildlife sites.

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