



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Crofting Federation adds crofting to NFUS policy**

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has found the paper 'Steps to Change' recently published by NFU Scotland to be lacking in understanding of the culture of crofting and crofting communities and has suggestions for future editions.

"The paper that the farmers' union has put out on their vision for agricultural support post-Brexit is clearly a considerable piece of work," said SCF Chair, Russell Smith. "It must be very challenging trying to write policy that will satisfy all their members, but they have made a good start on it. There are some aspirations that we would support, such as food production thriving whilst providing positive environmental outcomes, and public goods, things that benefit the public that are not paid for by the market, being supported with public money.

"Unfortunately, the paper comes across as a treatise on the industrial agriculture model, showing a fundamental lack of understanding of crofting and its wider benefits to crofting communities. In fact, whether talking about crofting or agriculture in other parts of Scotland, there is no mention of community whatsoever.

"It is disappointing that, whilst having made a passing reference to Scotland's 'full range of farming systems', an explicit statement that provision for hill farmers and crofters will always be needed – reiterating what Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, said – has been omitted. This should include the provision of crofting-specific support measures such as the Crofting Agriculture Grant and the Croft House Grant Scheme."

Mr Smith continued, "The farmers' union talks about 'activity' without defining it; we are concerned that small units, which are important to crofting communities, are not excluded by some arbitrary production threshold. Some areas can only carry stocking rates that are low in national terms, but are still worth supporting for the public goods they provide.

"There is no reference to capping payments which would limit the sums of public money to be distributed to the few big businesses at the top of the agricultural income support system. This surely has to change. Think of the amount of good limiting payments would do, using the surplus to develop a diverse Scottish agriculture that will thrive into the future.

“Finally,” Mr Smith added, “this document claims to be a vision for the future of Scottish agricultural support, yet the future – new entrants – don’t get a mention.” Mr Smith concluded, “It is appreciated that this is the first draft of this important document, so we hope that the next will use SCF post-Brexit policy as a guide for crofting matters.”

END

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**Notes to editors**

- A picture can be found at: <http://www.crofting.org>