



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation quizzes party leaders on agricultural policy intentions

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has written to all the main party leaders asking them to outline their intentions for agriculture and rural development policy in the lead-up to the general election.

The chair of the SCF, Russell Smith, said, "What happens to agriculture and rural development post-Brexit depends very much on the outcome of the national elections and the intentions of the parties that will hold power, both in the UK and in Scotland. There are fundamental issues to think about, such as the devolution of decision-making and the size of budget, and how that budget will be allocated. A major concern is with trade agreements and what Scotland's relationship with the European Union will be."

Mr Smith continued, "There is the bigger picture of agricultural and rural development in the UK and consequently in Scotland, and there are the more specific issues around crofting that will be of great concern to crofters at this time. Who ultimately will have the say on what crofting-specific support there will be? We are worried that crofting will be further consumed into general commercial agriculture when crofting is clearly distinct; it has its own benefits to offer and its own constraints to contend with.

"An election is an opportunity to take stock and think about the policies that we want and the proposals of the contesting parties," Mr Smith concluded, "and I have therefore written to the party leaders asking them what their intentions are for Scottish agriculture and rural development, and specifically for crofting. We cannot afford to be complacent and think that 'what will be will be' – crofters have to stand up as one voice and make the parties aware so that crofting-friendly commitments are included in party manifestos."

END

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Notes to editors

The questions asked of the party leaders are:

1. What is your party's view on agriculture and rural development remaining devolved - should agricultural policy for Scotland post-Brexit be determined in Holyrood or Westminster?
2. In your party's view, post-Brexit should the budget for agricultural and rural development support in the UK and in Scotland be:
a) increased; b) maintained or c) reduced?
3. If we leave the single market and customs union, what measures would your party intend to see implemented to avoid damaging tariffs on exports of beef and lamb and imports of feed grain and fertilizers?
4. Post-CAP, would your party advocate Scotland develop a new system of agricultural and rural development support (and attendant computer system) or would we simply adjust the existing CAP system of Basic Payments, Greening, LFASS and other schemes?
5. Would your party support the introduction in Scotland of a new scheme modelled on the European Areas of Natural Constraint post-CAP?
6. What plans does your party have for reducing bureaucracy and excessive penalties for crofters in claiming support post-CAP?
7. How will your party support crofting development and prevent it being allowed to wither away under market forces and under-resourced regulation?
8. Will your party support a discrete programme for targeting support to crofting?
9. How will your party represent Scottish agriculture and rural development interests and in particular crofting interests in Westminster?

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