



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Crofting Federation encouraged by direction of travel in agricultural policy strategy report**

Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has welcomed the direction of travel recommended by the Scottish Government 'Agricultural Champions' in their report "A Future Strategy for Scottish Agriculture" citing it as "croft-proofed".

"We were concerned about the lack of coverage of crofting in the interim report but the Champions have taken on board our response. The report has been 'croft-proofed' and there is much that we can heartily endorse," said the chair of SCF, Russell Smith. "For example, when discussing Natural Capital the Champions acknowledge that Scotland has huge areas of less favoured permanent grassland and rough grazing, where high nature value farming is both traditional and common. They recommend that, 'Future policies must address the specific needs of this type of farming, including the fact that low profitability threatens its very survival.' This is indeed the case for our members and ties in with the recent study carried out for the Highlands and Islands Agricultural Support Group."

Following the Scottish Government's vision for the "Future of Scottish Agriculture" published in 2015, and the subsequent national discussion/consultation, the four champions of agriculture were appointed in early 2017 to advise the Scottish Government on a strategy for delivering that vision. The recently published report sets out their strategic ambitions for the future of Scottish agriculture, as well as a list of recommendations for the actions that everyone involved in the industry should take.

"We are particularly impressed that the Champions have grasped the 'capping' nettle," Mr Smith added. "They recommend that support payments are capped, maintaining current levels for small and medium holdings but reducing payments to bigger recipients in order to fund a more equitable and results-focussed system. This was a central provision of the SCF policy document published last year.

"The Champions also talk about future funding being 'tailored to regional or sectoral needs because one size does not fit all' and 'the policy priorities to be supported must cover purely public goods such as wildlife and carbon sequestration for which there is no market

mechanism'. We have long argued for public payment for the provision of public goods and 'Public Value' is central to the Champions' thinking.

Mr Smith concluded, "As always, the more difficult phase is the detailed formulation of new policies to enact the guiding principles, but this is a good start. The SCF will be happy to work with the Scottish Government to develop such schemes."

END

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**Notes to editors**

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