

Common Agricultural Policy Plan for Stabilisation

Agriculture and Rural Economy
Scottish Government
12 September 2017

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Purpose and vision

Purpose

This document sets out the actions under way to provide stability for rural businesses interacting with the Scottish Government, acting as Scotland's Paying Agency for the Common Agricultural Policy.

Vision

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring eligible rural businesses who apply to the Scottish Paying Agency for support under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) receive their entitlements promptly and in full.

We will tackle the major causes of poor customer service, error and payment delay by investing in our business and IT systems.

This plan supports a number of key aims:

1. Payments to customers will be made on time, in full and compliantly with relevant law
2. Customers will have a more consistent and responsive service when interacting with our staff
3. Customers will be empowered to take more direct control over their applications and land information
4. The tools we use and share with customers (including our IT) will reflect the needs of customers and the business, now and in the future
5. The Scottish Paying Agency will support the development of its people and drive efficiency in its business processes

Background

Context

While good progress has been made in delivering the RP&S system, continuing delivery challenges mean there is a need for sustained investment in business and technical development.

The timeframe for establishing a high performing Rural Payments and Services system is dependent on a number of strategic factors including the overall design of CAP's successor

following the UK's departure from the EU in 2019. Work is underway to scope this and will form part of separate efforts to engage rural businesses during 2017 and 2018.

With the closure of the regulatory payment window for CAP 2016 Pillar 1 payments, the Paying Agency has captured lessons from a rapid review of delivery. The result is this stabilisation plan whose aim is to target specific and sustainable improvements in our strategic approach, business and IT processes, deliver value for money and maintain compliance with EC regulations. These improvements are geared towards business and scheme simplification and improving the customer experience.

Contents

The plan consists of actions in 6 main areas:

1. Improving customer experience
2. Simplifying the rules and how we work
3. How we manage land changes
4. How we handle applications
5. Delivery and operation of the IT platform
6. Improving planning, value for money and support for our people

Further Information

For more information please contact the ARE Customer Engagement and Digital team at engage.are@gov.scot or your [local area office](#).

	Heading	Commitment	Actions
1.	Improving customer experience	We will improve the customer experience of applying for and receiving rural payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with our customers to better understand their needs and improve the quality of service we offer • We will publish our customer service standards so customers know what to expect from us and what their responsibilities are when applying for CAP funding • We will publish a Schedule of Key Dates for our schemes including for any loan facilities to help customers plan ahead • We will launch a loan scheme this year for eligible Basic Payment Scheme 2017 customers. We will review progress on LFASS 2017 payments and decide whether to launch a further loan scheme in due course • We will improve the quality and timeliness of the customer letters that we provide • We will update our customer policies across a number of areas including Privacy and Complaints • We will review our staffing and skills requirement and take action to make sure we continue to be responsive to customer demand, matching resources to priorities where needed

	Heading	Commitment	Actions
2.	Simplifying the rules and how we work	We will simplify our business to help us deliver customer service excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will streamline the guidance we provide to customers and staff and publish this online • We will not introduce new changes to schemes and Rural Payments and Services except where these are in train, required by law or provide substantial and proportionate additional benefit to the customer • We will maintain this approach to business change until customers receive payments on time • We will ensure business and scheme changes are only introduced through rigorous governance procedures • We will pilot new ways of undertaking land inspections to make them more customer friendly and efficient • We will standardise and simplify a number of business processes to improve efficiency and customer service

	Heading	Commitment	Actions
3.	How we manage land changes	We will implement a new system of land change management – giving farmers the ability to verify our data and update it directly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will complete development of our Land Parcel Information System (LPIS) which will be available to producers to support their 2018 applications • We will notify customers of the land information that we hold for them (represented visually) and provide direct online access to verify and make changes. We will publish relevant data to allow farmers to better understand the impact on their SAF • We will provide support to customers in the use of the new LPIS when submitting their (online) SAF. This will be closely linked to our efforts to move to more online SAFs • This functionality will provide additional benefits to farmers and support the greater use of online services, including SAF applications

	Heading	Commitment	Actions
4.	How we handle applications	We will encourage and support all remaining paper customers to apply on-line from SAF 2018 to reduce the overall error rates and to improve our ability to process all applications in a more timely fashion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will support paper-based customers to apply online through Digital Assist appointments, clear guidance and regional workshops, supported by our network of area offices • We will create a dedicated Project team, led by experienced staff to support customers, drawing on best practice from Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as our own successful Get Online pilot. • We will communicate effectively to all affected customers setting out clearly what support is available

	Heading	Commitment	Actions
5.	Delivery and operation of the IT platform	We will operate a reliable IT platform and continue to build on the improvements already made, including to the timeliness and quality of IT functionality required to make payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to deliver the actions identified in our joint service improvement and remediation plan (including resolving outstanding technical debt) and conform to the new Scottish Government IT Assurance Framework. IT Assurance Framework • We will manage the IT Platform to best industry standards • We will organise our teams in the most effective manner to deliver the functionality that is needed to make payments accurately and on time • Our teams will be multi-disciplinary and there will be an appropriate mix of in-house and outsourced skills to facilitate knowledge transfer. • We will develop a Digital Strategy for Rural Payments and Inspections in line with the Scottish Government's refreshed Digital Strategy. Refreshed Digital Strategy 2017

	Heading	Commitment	Actions
6.	Improving planning, value for money and support for our people	We are implementing major changes to our planning and governance systems to underpin value for money, payment delivery and staff resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are implementing our new CAP Governance framework and using this to take forward recommendations made by Audit Scotland (2016 & 2017) • We have and will continue to test effective disaster recovery plans across all our systems • We are implementing a plan to ensure appropriate and effective knowledge transfer between and across teams and from contractors to SG staff • We will monitor and support staff wellbeing to ensure our workforce is able to provide high quality, year-round service to customers • We will deliver value for money by continually reviewing our annual business cycle and prioritising resources accordingly • We will ensure the actions in this plan help deliver our regulatory obligations and mitigate the risk of disallowance and financial penalties