

Top lines – future rural support

- The Scottish Government is taking a collaborative approach to future policy.
- Over the last 12 months the Scottish Government has worked closely with our stakeholders to address the future challenges faced by farmers, crofters and rural communities.
- Three influential reports have been published: Scottish Government's Agricultural Champions report – "A Future Strategy for Scottish Agriculture" (May 2018), The Scottish Government's response to its consultation on EU Exit – "Stability and Simplicity" (June 2018), and the National Council of Rural Advisors report - "A New Blue Print for Scotland's Rural Economy" (September 2018).
- We have guaranteed Scottish farmers, crofters, foresters, rural businesses and rural communities a period of stability through until 2024 and will continue to deliver rural and agricultural support through "CAP Schemes" throughout this period.
- Where possible, we have agreed to simplify "CAP Schemes", a Simplification Task Force of industry experts has been appointed to advise.
- We have established a Farming and Food Production Future Policy Group to advise on future policies for Scotland post 2024 and will be looking to establish incubator projects to test out new ideas.
- We have agreed with the Scottish Parliament (10 January) that future policy should be guided by six key principles - sustainability, simplicity, innovation, inclusion, productivity and profitability.
- We have completed the mapping of the EU legislation into Domestic law to allow for support payment to farmers and crofters to continue in the event of a 'No Deal'.

2021-2024 – lines to take

- The Scottish Government set out its proposals for future agriculture funding in its June 2018 consultation ‘Stability and Simplicity’ which follows four principles of stability, simplicity, sustainability and security.
- These proposals set out the approach for future rural policy until 2024. It will allow for a five-year transition period, as recommended by the Scottish Government's Agriculture Champions, to provide people in rural businesses with as much security as possible.
- The approach comprises of:
 - a period of stability, with little change to the current system, until end 2020, followed by;
 - a period of simplicity, where simplifications and improvements will be made, and potential new schemes for longer term policy will be piloted, between 2021 – 2024.
- Overall, respondents to the consultation were broadly content for support to continue in its current form to ensure a period of stability for the rural economy.
- It is right and proper that, between now and 2024, we prioritise stability and do not take risks with what we know works until such time as we can be confident any changes in our system are achievable and represent a genuine improvement.
- The intention is to minimise the level of change within existing Common Agricultural Policy schemes, across Direct Payments and the Rural Development Programme, while working to identify improvements that deliver efficiencies and better outcomes.
- It is also proposed that potential new schemes for longer term policy will be piloted.
- The approach will reflect the conclusions of the Simplification Taskforce which was set up in 2018 to take forward the simplification work set out in the Stability and Simplicity Consultation.
- The Taskforce are now undertaking a series of tasks and projects aimed at identifying specific priorities for potential action in the areas of mapping, inspections and penalties, but are also going to work through the other themes arising from the consultation
- A Scottish Bill is currently in the process of being developed. It will enable us to deliver the proposals set out in our “Stability and Simplicity” consultation.
- The new powers in the Bill will be required to make the changes to retained EU law needed to implement the stability and simplicity proposals from 2021. They are not intended to represent a major policy shift but rather streamlining existing policy.

Post 2024 – lines to take

- The Farming and Food Production Future Policy Group was announced in June and will focus on the period beyond 2024 and will build on the firm foundations set out in our five-year plan.
- The group will focus on the period beyond 2024 and will test proposals to support farming and food production as a key part of a flourishing rural Scotland, including the impact on climate change, the loss of biodiversity and maintaining the rural population. The group will make recommendations to government in the course of 2020.
- It take into account the six principles agreed in Parliament on 10 January; sustainability, simplicity, innovation, inclusion, productivity and profitability.
- At a time of huge uncertainty needlessly created by Brexit, the Scottish Government is taking a measured and consultative approach in the long term interests of farmers, crofters and Scotland's rural economy as a whole.
- Decisions about the direction of longer term policies for supporting agriculture, the wider rural economy and environmental and climate change objectives will be taken in due course, working with those most affected to design policies that best suit Scottish circumstances.

Stakeholder quotes:

- At the NFU Scotland AGM in February, Terry Jones, Director General of NFU England and Wales, said:
 - “farmers south of the Border were highly envious of the degree of engagement that the industry has been enjoying in Scotland”
 - “we found [in England] that any questions which we had on policy were met with the impression that they were already set in stone.”