

## **SNP – WORKING AT HOME AND IN EUROPE FOR SCOTLAND’S RURAL COMMUNITIES**

### **Introduction**

The SNP is working for Scotland’s rural communities at home and in Europe.

Scotland’s agriculture industry is one of our country’s great assets. Our countryside and the product of that landscape is world famous and globally renowned. The Scottish label is recognised internationally as a mark of quality.

A strong Scottish agricultural sector means vibrant rural communities. The strength of our agricultural community is also important to the wider European community: with climate change and concerns about food security on the European agenda, Scotland has a key role to play in wider efforts to meet these challenges.

The Scottish Government at home is working hard with our rural communities to forge a bright future for Scotland’s farmers and crofters. In Europe, important decisions lie ahead on the future CAP and the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme; SNP MEPs will work with the Scottish Government to ensure Scotland’s voice is heard.

Together we’ve got what it takes to ensure a better future for Scotland’s rural communities.

### **SNP IN GOVERNMENT – offering a new contract for success**

The Scottish Government has a vision of a new contract between society and farmers, offering clear benefits for the economy, our society and the environment - one that puts sustainable food production at the heart of agricultural policy. Listening to and working with our rural industries, the SNP is committed to delivering success.

### **Action on climate change**

Scotland’s rural communities are in the vanguard of efforts to tackle climate change and the SNP Government is working with rural communities to face the challenges ahead as we strive for ambitious targets to address climate change.

### **National Food and Drink Policy**

The SNP have developed Scotland’s first National Policy for Food and Drink and is committed to supporting that vital sector of our economy. We are also working with supermarkets and others to promote local food.

### **Reducing red tape**

The Scottish Government appreciates the need to reduce administrative burdens on farmers and others working the land and is committed to further reducing red tape.

### **Engaging with Europe**

The Scottish Government has taken every opportunity to put Scotland’s case at crucial EU Agriculture Council meetings and hosted the Agriculture Commissioner’s recent visit to Scotland to ensure our voice is heard.

### **Tackling the downturn**

In times of economic uncertainty, the SNP regards the important agriculture industry as having a pivotal role in securing Scotland's recovery. We are accelerating SRDP payments, will investigate the role public procurement can play in supporting Scottish food and are determined to help our hill farmers.

### **SNP IN EUROPE – Scotland's voice in the European Parliament**

The SNP has a long record of continuous representation in the European Parliament – and a history of standing up for Scotland's rural communities in Brussels. We regard farming and crofting as a priority area of the EU's work and this is reflected in the fact that in the last session of the European Parliament, SNP MEP Alyn Smith was Scotland's only full member of the parliament's Agriculture Committee.

The SNP in Europe – our ministers in the European Council and our MEPs in Parliament – have won some important successes for Scotland:

#### **CAP Healthcheck**

The SNP achieved success for Scotland, including a reduction of the burden of cross compliance; a fairer deal on modulation and winning the right to retain the Beef Calf Scheme.

#### **Country of origin labelling**

The SNP has pushed for support in the European Parliament for a mandatory country of origin label and believes that a Scottish country of origin label is a mark of quality.

#### **Sheep EID**

The SNP has spear-headed the campaign against sheep tagging and will continue to fight for Scotland's sheep farmers.

Working in partnership with farming organisations SNP MEP Alyn Smith has led delegations of Scottish farmers to the European Commission and UK Government to put Scotland's case. The SNP is also working across nations building support from Agriculture ministers across the EU for our efforts to support Scotland's farmers. Our campaign is meeting with success and we shall continue in our efforts to make individual tagging of sheep voluntary.

#### **Brazilian Beef**

In Europe and at home the SNP led calls for a total, precautionary ban on all EU imports of Brazilian beef until the country proved that it complied with the necessary EU standards.

#### **Animal By-Products**

The SNP successfully reduced burdens on farmers through changes to the rules to allow for the burning or burial of animals on farms in remote areas. These steps will save Scotland's farmers time and money.

## **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

The coming years will see important decisions taken on the future shape of the CAP post-2013. Scotland's diverse rural economy has unique needs and it is vital that Scotland's specific interests are addressed in EU reforms.

The SNP is the only party which is able to put Scotland's interests first and we will ensure that Scotland's voice is heard.

### **Ongoing direct payments**

The SNP rejects the UK Government position on the immediate phasing out of pillar 1 of CAP support and believes that Scotland's unique circumstances require that direct payments are kept.

The SNP will continue to push for fairer modulation rates in other EU member states, creating a level playing field for our farmers and minimizing the rate of progressive modulation. We will engage fully with ongoing Commission discussions into the decoupling of the Single Farm Payment.

### **Less Favoured Area criteria – designed for Scotland's needs**

The SNP considers that it is essential for Member States to retain existing flexibility with regard to Less Favoured Areas – allowing decisions to be made in tune with the needs of our traditional agricultural landscapes.

SNP MEPs will work to ensure the Less Favoured Area Support Scheme is available to those farmers and crofters who are agriculturally active to allow the continued use of agricultural land and the maintenance of the countryside.

### **A Fairer Deal for Rural Communities**

Scotland gets a poor deal from the EU in terms of a share of rural development cash. SNP MEPs will campaign for a better deal for our rural communities.

### **Reducing Red Tape**

Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services initiatives serves as a model for reducing red tape and CAP reform must reduce the bureaucratic burden on farmers. Reform of the CAP must make further moves to reduce the red tape burdens on the sector.