

Farmers forced to borrow more

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Farmers are borrowing more and having to pay staff less, according to figures released by the Scottish Government.

According to 'Agricultural Facts and Figures' published today, agricultural borrowing has doubled in the last ten years, capital investment has stayed the same, and agricultural workers are earning £1560 less on average compared to last year.

The figures show that farm borrowing has almost doubled from £1.38 billion to £2.28 billion between 2007 to 2017, while capital investment has stayed the same at £210m.

This demonstrates that farmers are investing much less in their machinery and equipment, the Scottish Conservatives said, while still having to borrow ever-increasing sums to remain viable.

Scottish Conservative shadow environment secretary Donald Cameron said:

"The scale of the increase in farm borrowing, coupled with the lack of investment, clearly demonstrates the impossible situation farmers now find themselves in.

"The reality is that the SNP has no interest in rural Scotland.

"Its central-belt agenda has ignored and undermined farmers for too long, and this important sector is now stuck in a vicious circle, the effects of which will impact the wider rural economy too.

"With farmers still struggling with debts relating to the CAP payment fiasco caused by the SNP Government several years ago, they have been left feeling deeply uncertain of their future.

"This is leading directly to a lack of capital investment and farmers are – quite sensibly – reluctant to take on agricultural workers if they are struggling to pay them.

"The lack of any sort of plan from the SNP on farming support post-Brexit is also a major contributor to the fact that capital investment in farming is simply stagnating."