

SNP should give farmers ‘certainty’ on payments by matching new clauses in Agriculture Bill

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- [All News](#)
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The SNP government should give the farming industry “certainty” on post-Brexit payments by matching new clauses in the UK Agriculture Bill, the Scottish Conservatives have said today.

DEFRA Minister George Eustice has tabled amendments to the legislation working its way through Westminster to clarify the legal status of payments from 2020 onwards.

The changes ensure there is a legal mechanism for payments to continue after the UK leaves the EU. At present, the bill only covers the period up to 2020.

The SNP government has refused to join the rest of the UK on the Agriculture Bill. The legislation allows for Wales and Northern Ireland, as devolved administrations, to develop their own support systems to replace the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy, under UK-wide frameworks.

Colin Clark MP, the Scottish Conservative spokesman on farming at Westminster, sits on the agriculture bill committee that is scrutinising the legislation.

He said: “Scottish farmers need clarity from the Scottish Government on the future of payments.

“The National Farmers Union Scotland has said ‘the engine is running’ on the Agriculture Bill currently going through parliament, and it is time for the SNP to get on board.

“The new clauses in the Bill clarify the legal status of payments from 2020 on. It is essential that Scotland, like Wales and Northern Ireland, is covered by this act of collective responsibility to the internal UK market.

“The UK Government has made a clear financial commitment up to the end of this parliament in 2022.

“As a member of the agriculture bill committee, I will hold the government to account to continue financial support to the farming industry.

"I would implore Fergus Ewing to use the new Clause 3 to give farmers clarity.

"As a farmer myself, I recognise the historic problems on payments have been painful. We cannot afford any further prevarication."