

Sturgeon and Ewing treated parliament with ‘utter contempt’ over latest CAP fiasco

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Scotland’s farming communities are owed an apology from the First Minister and her rural affairs secretary over the latest CAP fiasco, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It was confirmed last night that the Scottish Government has asked Europe for an extension in processing crucial Common Agricultural Policy payments, even though both Nicola Sturgeon and Fergus Ewing denied this as recently as yesterday afternoon.

Now they’ve been accused of treating Holyrood with “utter contempt” and not being up front with the farmers impacted by the failures.

At First Minister’s Questions, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson piled the pressure on the SNP over another delay in CAP payments.

Even though the deadline for processing all payments is a week today, there are still thousands of famers waiting for much-needed cash.

As such, Scottish Government officials have asked the European Commission for that deadline to be extended to mid-October, or they face fines of up to £60 million.

Scottish Conservative MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries Finlay Carson said:

“Nicola Sturgeon and Fergus Ewing have some very serious questions to answer.

“We now know that earlier this week, they went cap in hand to the European Commission to plea for the payment deadline to be extended.

“But, when confronted in parliament over whether they had done, they ducked and dived and avoided the question.

“In addition, we also learn today that Mr Ewing failed to let farming leaders know what he was doing – again in order to avoid scrutiny.

“By failing to make their position clear when they had the chance, the First

Minister and the rural affairs secretary treated parliament with utter contempt and they should apologise immediately.

“And by failing to be clear with farming leaders, it’s clear that Fergus Ewing has lost the confidence of many people in rural Scotland – and he should be considering his position.

“This episode has been a disgrace and has exposed the SNP for what it is: secretive, out of touch, and all at sea. Scotland deserves better.”

The Scottish Conservatives raised the matter at First Minister’s Questions yesterday:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/sturgeon-must-come-clean-on-second-cap-crisis/>

Last night, NFUS said:

“We’ve asked for Scottish Government to have a clear and open dialogue with the industry on payments. Farmers and crofters should have been the first to know that once again there is to be a delay in payments. This does nothing to restore trust or build confidence.

“We have had many apologies about the system. We don’t want to hear sorry again; we want action that will ensure payments arrive in a timely manner.

“Failure to deliver farm support puts the whole of Scotland’s rural economy in jeopardy. Those farmers and crofters attending Day One of Scotland’s premier agricultural event at the Highland Show, are keen to do business, but are having to hold back on making business decisions and investment because of outstanding payments. They deserve transparency and clarity.

“If the extension saves the Scottish taxpayer £60 million in fines, that is good news but it takes the thousands of Scottish farmers and crofters who are still waiting on part or all of their payments no further forward and with no clear timetable provided. Some of those payments have been outstanding for 18 months. That is wholly unacceptable.”