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The Parliamentary Update is a record of recent and upcoming events in the Scottish Parliament, Westminster and the European Parliament, including committee work, debates and questions, both written and oral, to the Scottish and UK governments. For further information about any aspect of this document please contact Sarah Anderson on 0131 472 4108 or e-mail sarah.anderson@nfus.org.uk

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SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

ORAL QUESTIONS

21 January 2010

Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill (Proposals)



Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with stakeholders regarding its proposals for the wildlife and natural environment bill.



The Minister for Environment (**Roseanna Cunningham**): I have held meetings with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that their views are taken into account in developing the provisions of the wildlife and natural environment bill. Those discussions will continue until the bill has completed its parliamentary passage.

Irene Oldfather: Is the minister aware of the plethora of examples of legally set free-running snares that do not operate as intended and which, as a consequence, catch non-target species, including protected species such as badgers, and cause inordinate animal suffering? I draw to her attention a leaflet produced by Advocates for Animals, which graphically illustrates that point. Will the minister respond to public opinion, as expressed in the Government's consultation, and support an amendment banning snaring completely?

Roseanna Cunningham: I have, of course, consulted widely on that issue and on the other issues in the proposed bill. I have spoken to Advocates for Animals, the League Against Cruel Sports and the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; I have also spoken to land management organisations, because there is a balance to be struck. As a Government minister, I must take into account all sides of the argument. We are trying, through both the snares orders that have just been laid and the provisions in the wildlife and natural environment bill, to strike the right balance to increase the professionalisation of those who set snares and ensure that the snares are identifiable back to those who set them. Through that professionalisation, I believe that we can reduce the number of non-target species that are caught in snares.



Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): Following the question session on snaring in which the minister took part at the Public Petitions Committee last Tuesday, does she have any plans to encourage police forces to increase the number of wildlife crime officers across Scotland? I know that such officers are not present across the country. Perhaps she could consider the use of professional gamekeepers in the detection of wildlife crime, which is a serious problem.

Roseanna Cunningham: We are in the middle of continuing discussions on precisely those issues. Indeed, I met the Solicitor General last week to discuss the way in which the approach to wildlife crime is being developed. I want to encourage very strongly all police forces in Scotland to take the issue extremely seriously. Much of what is discovered is illegal snaring. Snaring is a legal activity, but the way in which it is done can be illegal and that, rightly, gets a great amount of publicity. We want to encourage a much stronger and more forceful attitude to wildlife crime across Scotland. That includes the police taking the issue as seriously as they can.

New Entrants



Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many new entrant farmers it has supported in North East Scotland since 2007.



The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (**Richard Lochhead**): New entrants who meet the European Union definition of a new entrant to farming can apply for support under the setting up young farmers—interest rate relief measure within the Scotland rural development programme rural priorities scheme.

Since 2008, when the SRDP rural priorities scheme was first set up, 19 applications for support that included that measure have been approved throughout Scotland. Taking account of all the measures that were included in those applications, they amounted to support for those new entrants totalling about £4.5 million. Two of the applications, involving about £387,000, were from new entrants in Grampian and three of them, involving some £863,000, were from Tayside. The Scottish Government does not collect statistics on other new entrants or new entrants who do not apply for those specific measures. However, there is a wide range of support measures for which such new entrants can apply.

Richard Baker: What further work will the Scottish Government do to increase the number of new entrant farmers throughout Scotland and particularly in the north-east, given the figures there? Does he agree that the United Kingdom Government support for the appointment of an ombudsman to ensure fairness between producers and

retailers is welcome and will help to encourage new entrant farmers into the industry as well as helping those who are already in the sector?

Richard Lochhead: Measures are being taken to attract even more applicants for the existing schemes. The issue is complex. A lack of capital and access to land are some of the obstacles to new entrants to farming. We have announced plans to take advantage of new flexibility in the rural development regulation to increase the level of support from €40,000 to €70,000, and within that we are adding a provision for an establishment grant of up to €30,000.

I welcome the UK Government's proposal for a supermarket ombudsman, but it is a great pity that, after 12 years in government, the UK Government has decided to support that only a few months before a UK election and after much pressure from the Scottish Government, the other devolved Administrations and primary producers and other parts of the supply chain. Ultimately, the member pinpoints an important issue, which is that a profitable and sustainable agriculture sector is the best way in which to attract new entrants to the industry.



Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary believe that the tenant farming sector is an important route for new entrants into farming and that the changes to limited duration tenancies and short limited duration tenancies that the tenant farming forum recommended in August 2009 would help to encourage more new tenant farmers?

Richard Lochhead: The member is right that the tenant farming route is an extremely important one for new entrants. That is why, after coming to office, we set up the tenant farming forum to consider some of the obstacles that are in the way of new entrants to the tenancy sector. Accessing a tenancy is very difficult and complex for many young farmers and new entrants. We hope that some of the measures that the forum has proposed will make a difference and will make it a lot easier for new entrants to get into the sector.



John Scott (Ayr) (Con): The minister will know that the interim report of the Pack inquiry, which is published today, recognises that not enough is being done to encourage new entrants. The Pack report looks to possible solutions beyond 2013, and the minister has acknowledged that only 19 new entrants have gone into farming since the scheme was introduced. I know that the conditions are enforced by the European Union, but can he tell us what representations he has made to EU commissioners to further relax the scheme to assist new entrants into farming?

Richard Lochhead: The member raises an important point about the inability of new entrants to access the single farm payment, which is of course crucial to making many farming operations in Scotland viable. As he rightly points out, the Pack review addresses that point. Basing single farm payment on historic activity from 2000 to 2002 is not very helpful for new entrants who were not farming back then, which is why it is helpful that the Pack review refers to the issue.

On representation to the European Union, I mentioned in an answer to a previous question on the subject that we have secured changes that have allowed us to introduce more flexibility in the existing measures to help new entrants. We continue to make representations to the European Union on the future of the common agricultural policy. We will take guidance from the Pack review on that.

RURAL AFFAIRS AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

On 20 January the Committee discussed the draft Crofting Reform Bill. For minutes of the meeting, please follow this link:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/rae/mop-10/rumop10-0120.htm>

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

28 January 2010

Weather



Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what support has been provided to dairy farmers in Ayrshire during the recent adverse weather conditions.

Richard Lochhead: I have set up a short life working group to assess the extent of the damage caused by the recent adverse weather conditions to farm buildings across Scotland and make recommendations to ministers.

27 January 2010

Nanette Milne: To ask the Scottish Executive what financial support and advice it will give to farmers whose farm buildings have collapsed or been damaged as a result of recent adverse weather conditions.

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government has set up a technical working group to assess the extent and impact of collapsed buildings on agricultural and horticultural businesses. The working group will have its first meeting on 28 January 2010 and I look forward to receiving its findings shortly.

21 January 2010



David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what support it provided to assist farmers during the recent winter freeze.

Richard Lochhead: Scottish Government was immediately in direct contact with the farming community and its representatives as soon as the bad weather started. This included phoning farmers in the worst affected areas every day. I chaired a meeting on 11 January with rural stakeholders where the collapse of sheds was identified as the single biggest ongoing issue. We have now established a working group of stakeholders to look at this further.

We have provided guidance on spreading slurry on frozen ground; we suspended our inspection programme; we supported the relaxation on enforcement for drivers' hours for groups supplying essential rural supplies; extended the deadline for applications for rural priorities, and offered the use of the 224 4x4 vehicles owned by rural public bodies. The farming community coped well in difficult circumstances and often went the extra mile to help each other.



Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive how many projects supporting the environment and rural economy of Angus there have been since 2007; how much was invested in them, and what the employment benefit has been.

20 January 2010

Single Farm Payment - Penalties

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with European Commission officials regarding the single farm payment penalty system since May 2007.

Richard Lochhead: Officials from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland met with Commission officials in February 2009 to discuss proposals to revise the Cross Compliance payment reduction systems as a result of the 2008 audits in England and Wales. The Commission made it clear at this meeting that they expected the majority of Cross Compliance breaches to result in a 3% payment reduction otherwise significant disallowance (EC fines) would apply. This approach was further confirmed and clarified in the Commission audit letters to Wales and later to Northern Ireland following their audit in spring 2009.

At our request the UK raised the issue of Cross Compliance penalties at the Council of Ministers on 16 December 2009 and we will press for meetings to be held with the new Commission to keep our concerns on the agenda.

Liam McArthur: To ask the Scottish Executive when it next expects to meet European Commission officials to discuss the single farm payment penalty system.

Richard Lochhead: No meetings are scheduled at present as the new commission has yet to be agreed and finalised by the European Parliament.

Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what the (a) national and (b) European spend was on the Scotland Rural Development Programme 2007-13 in 2009, broken down by programme components.



Richard Lochhead: Scottish Government outturn for financial year 2009-10 will be published in the Consolidated Accounts later in 2010 following the end of the current financial year.

15 January 2010

Soil Carbon and Organic Farming



Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will consider investigating the practices identified in the Soil Association's report, *Soil Carbon and Organic Farming: A review of the evidence on the relationship between agriculture and soil carbon sequestration, and how organic farming can contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation*, as a means of helping Scotland meet its emissions reduction targets.

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government welcomes the Soil Association's report. It is a useful contribution to the debate, and evidence base, informing the implementation of our Farming for a Better Climate (FBC) action plan (www.farmingforabetterclimate.org). FBC focuses on mitigation measures which can be delivered on-farm and which deliver "win-wins" – good for the farming business and good for the environment, including carbon sequestration. As part of the policy making process, officials plan to meet with Soil Association Scotland colleagues to discuss the detail of the report, and its relevance for Scotland.

Crofting Reform Bill



John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what the total cost has been of developing the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill to date, also showing the cost of (a) the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting, (b) analysing the results of the Draft Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill consultation, (c) staff time in drawing up proposals and drafting the Bill, (d) the public launch, (e) travel and subsistence costs and (f) any other costs.

John Farquhar Munro: To ask the Scottish Executive what the total cost was of the Draft Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill, also showing the cost of (a) staff time in drawing up proposals and drafting the draft Bill, (b) publication and distribution of documents, (c) advertising and publicity, (d) holding consultation meetings, (e) travel and subsistence costs and (f) any other

costs.

Roseanna Cunningham: The total cost of developing the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill to date is approximately £1,023,658. A breakdown is provided in the following table. The Committee of Inquiry on Crofting was established by the previous administration during the 2006 Crofting Reform (etc) Bill. The committee of inquiry was established from December 2006 and ran till May 2008. Subsequent government costs have been incurred in taking forward the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting recommendations.

	Cost (£)
Committee of Inquiry on Crofting	654,647
Staff time in drawing up proposals and draft Bill	174,099
Publication and distribution of documents	34,364
Holding consultation meetings	21,755
Advertising and publicity	6,836
Analysing the results of the draft Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill consultation	14,232
Staff time in drawing up proposals and Bill	106,042
Public launch of Bill	3,032
Travel and Subsistence	8,651
Total	1,023,658

Single Farm Payment - Penalties

Liam McArthur: To ask the Scottish Executive what its position is on the fairness and proportionality of the single farm payment penalty system.

Richard Lochhead: The rules for CAP payment reductions under cross-compliance are laid down in European legislation. In general breaches of cross-compliance should result in a reduction of 3% being applied to a beneficiaries payments for one year under the Single Farm Payment Scheme, Scottish Beef Calf Scheme, Energy Crop Scheme, Protein Crop Premium, Less Favoured Area Support Scheme and certain management options claimed under the Land Managers Options Scheme and Rural Priorities.

Prior to 2009, most breaches of cross-compliance in Scotland were resulting in a 1% reduction or a warning letter as this was considered to be appropriate for the seriousness of the breaches that were being found. We have now been forced to increase the payment reduction levels under cross-compliance because recent EC audits in Scotland, the UK and across Europe, have ruled the current penalty systems too lenient.

These increases must be implemented to avoid potential, costly penalties on the Scottish Government from the EU which could have a detrimental and unjust effect on the level of funds available to all farmers and other land managers. The cross-compliance payment reduction systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland were also tightened up in 2009 following their EC audits.

Liam McArthur: To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with stakeholders regarding the single farm payment penalty system.

Richard Lochhead: Stakeholders were alerted to the review of payment reduction levels in January 2009, following the audits in England and Wales in 2008. We had meetings with them and kept in touch as the review progressed. The revised cross-compliance payment reduction system was discussed with stakeholders at a meeting on 5 November 2009, prior to writing to land managers later that month.

Liam McArthur: To ask the Scottish Executive when it next expects to meet stakeholders to discuss the single farm payment penalty system.

Richard Lochhead: We have regular meetings with stakeholders and these matters will be discussed if appropriate. Although no meetings are scheduled at present to discuss this specific topic, we expect this to be raised at forthcoming meetings.

Liam McArthur: To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to ensure that penalties imposed under the Single Farm Payment Scheme are fair and proportionate.

Richard Lochhead: All cross-compliance inspections are carried out according to clearly laid down procedures across Scotland and the results and any penalties that are applied are monitored on a national basis.

Liam McArthur: To ask the Scottish Executive what research it is undertaking to examine the fairness and proportionality of fines imposed under the Single Farm Payment Scheme.

Richard Lochhead: We are looking at the detailed results of European Commission audits across the rest of Europe and speaking to other member states who have been audited to confirm the position in their countries.

Liam McArthur: To ask the Scottish Executive what support it is providing to farmers who believe that they may have been disproportionately penalised under the Single Farm Payment Scheme.

Richard Lochhead: Land managers who are penalised under cross-compliance can submit an appeal under the new EU Rural Payments Appeal Procedure which was launched on the 20 November 2009.

Jim Hume: To ask the Scottish Executive how much it planned to contribute to the Scotland Rural Development Programme 2007-13 at the start of the programme, also expressed as a percentage.

Richard Lochhead: The total value of the Scotland Rural Development Programme at the time of approval was just under €2.3 billion, or £1.6 billion at the £/€ exchange rate prevailing at that time. The Scottish Government's contribution was planned to be around 68% of that amount at €1.55 billion.

Jim Hume: To ask the Scottish Executive what the projections are for its spending on the Scotland Rural Development Programme 2007-13 over the course of the programme, also expressed in percentages.

Richard Lochhead: At 1 January 2009, the projected spend on the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) from its commencement in 2007, to the end of the current Spending Review Period at 31 March 2011, was £751.1 million. Of this, £511.8 million (68%) is from Scottish Government and £239 million (32%) is from the EU. Financial year 2010-11 is the last in the current three year Spending Review period. At this stage we cannot pre-empt discussions on the profile of SRDP expenditure in the next spending review period prior to ministerial consideration and Scottish Parliamentary scrutiny in relation to the budget setting process, or indeed knowing what the overall envelope of resources available to the Scottish Government will be.

Jim Hume: To ask the Scottish Executive what the projections were as at 1 January 2009 for the (a) national and (b) European spend on the Scotland Rural Development Programme 2007-13 until the end of 2009, broken down by programme components.

Richard Lochhead: The projections for expenditure for financial year 2009-10 for the Scotland Rural Development Programme from the Scottish Government's budget documents total £218.3 million. Of this, £146.6 million (67.2%) is from domestic sources and £71.6 million (32.8%) is from the EU. Total predicted expenditure for 2009-10 by programme component is as follows:

Scotland Rural Development Budget Component	Total £m
Business Development	33.4
Less Favoured Area Support Scheme	61.0
Agri-environmental Measures	58.3
Forestry	32.6
Rural Enterprise	18.2
Rural Communities	8.7
Leader	5.8
Technical Assistance	0.3
Total	218.3

SRDP



Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive for what reason it does not publish the national score benchmarks, which determine an application's success under the Scotland Rural Development Programme, before the date of the meetings of the regional proposal assessment committees that consider the applications.

Richard Lochhead: The scoring benchmarks under the Rural Priorities element of the Scotland Rural Development Programme are agreed by a national committee, in advance of regional assessment committee meetings, and are intended as a guide for the regional committees.

Regional committees retain the discretion, in exceptional circumstances, to approve cases below the threshold, or reject cases above the threshold, taking account of the full range of local circumstances. Individual applicants can obtain information on request from their case officer, on scoring thresholds, and how their own case was scored.

To date we have not received any request to publish the national thresholds, but would be happy to do so.

Tavish Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive how long after meetings of regional proposal assessment committees it has made its decisions to endorse or overturn the committees' recommendations to grant aid under the Scotland Rural Development Programme, broken down into each (a) round of applications since the programme became operational and (b) committee area.

Richard Lochhead: The Regional Proposal Assessment Committee (RPAC) system only relates to the Rural Priorities element of the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). We endeavour to make decisions on RPAC recommendations as soon as possible after the final committee has sat. However, there are a number of internal procedures to be followed in order to collate and validate the accuracy of the figures before the recommendations can be considered. As the recommendations from all regions are considered by the Scottish Government within the same timescale, there is no regional breakdown of the figures.

The following table sets out, for each round, the date of the last RPAC meeting and the date of the formal announcement of the results.

RPAC (last day)	Announcement
26 August 2008	11 September 2008
31 October 2008	26 November 2008
9 December 2008	29 December 2008
26 February 2009	2 April 2009
14 August 2009	16 September 2009
27 November 2009	7 January 2010

Tavish Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive how long it has taken, after announcing the successful applications for grant aid under the Scotland Rural Development Programme, to send contracts to the successful applicants, broken down by regional proposal assessment committee areas.

Richard Lochhead: We are not able to report average contract issue times for each region. We issue contracts for successful Rural Priorities applications as soon as possible after approval is given. The time taken to issue contracts can be affected by a number of factors, including the complexity of the case, the accuracy of the information provided by the applicant and changes to payment rates. In such cases, officials remain in contact with applicants to keep them informed of the situation.

Any applicant with concerns should speak to their case officer in the first instance.

Tavish Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive how long it has taken to review the tenders for grant aid for capital projects made under the Scotland Rural Development Programme, broken down into each (a) round of applications since the programme became operational and (b) regional proposal assessment committee areas.

Richard Lochhead: The consideration of all supporting documentation is an integral part of the project assessment process. All applications for grant are considered within the published framework and timescales for the assessment of applications. These timescales may vary due to the size and complexity of cases. Further details are available on the Rural Priorities website at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP/RuralPriorities>.

For information on the time taken between assessment rounds and the announcement of results, I refer the member to the answer to question S3W-30514, on 15 January 2010. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/Business/PQA/Default.aspx>.

Tavish Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive whether the formal guidelines it issues to applicants for grant aid under the Scotland Rural Development Programme include a requirement or recommendation that applicants' bridging loan arrangements should be made with a commercial bank.

Richard Lochhead: There is no specific recommendation or requirement in the guidance for the Rural Priorities element of the Scotland Rural Development Programme regarding the arrangements for any bridging loan that may be necessary.

Ultimately it is for applicants to provide adequate evidence that sufficient match funding is available to enable the project to go forward.

Tavish Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive how many applications were made in 2009 to the Scotland Rural Development Programme by Shetland applicants; how many of these included agri-environment proposals, and how many of the agri-environment applications were (a) successful and (b) rejected.

Richard Lochhead: In 2009, 113 applications were made by Shetland applicants for funding under the Rural Priorities element of the Scotland Rural Development Programme. Ninety-one of these included agri-environment options.

(a) 63 proposals with an agri-environment element gained approval, either in full or in part.

(b) 28 proposals had their agri-environment element rejected.

15 January 2010

Genetically Modified Crops

John Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has expressed a view to the European Commission or the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on proposals to allow member states to make their own decisions on GM approvals based on socio-economic criteria and, if so, what that view was.

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government has long argued that socio-economic criteria should be taken into account in the European GM approvals process. The government has expressed this view to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on numerous occasions at both official and ministerial level. Although the European Commission is seeking views on the subject, it has not made any formal proposals to date.

Livestock Penalties

John Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions its officials have had with the European Commission regarding new cross-compliance enforcement procedures, particularly in relation to livestock penalties.

Richard Lochhead: Officials from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland met with Commission officials in February 2009 to discuss proposed changes to discuss proposals to revise the cross-compliance payment reduction systems as a result of the 2008 audits in England and Wales.

The Commission made it clear at this meeting that they expected the majority of cross-compliance breaches to result in a 3% payment reduction otherwise significant disallowance (EC fines) would apply. This approach was further confirmed and clarified in the Commission audit letters to Wales and later to Northern Ireland following their audit in spring 2009.

John Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the answer to question S3W-27485 by Richard Lochhead on 1 October 2009, whether it will permit producers to carry out, record and report within-business moves of sheep more than five miles from the main holding on a batch basis following the introduction of EU Regulation 21/2004 on the identification of sheep and goats.

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government is still considering this issue in the wider context of the rules to be introduced regarding the new provisions of EU Regulation 21/2004. Once decisions have been made, guidance will be issued to all sheep and goat keepers explaining the requirements.

John Scott: To ask the Scottish Executive, with reference to EU Regulation 21/2004 on the identification of sheep and goats, whether the implementation of critical control points will be dependent on the introduction of a fully funded central database and, if so, whether it will provide that funding.

Richard Lochhead: Implementation of critical control points (CCP's) is not dependant on the introduction of a new database or continued use of the existing animal movement database. CCP's are being introduced to assist with the recording of individual animals for the purpose of completing holding registers and movement documents; the main purpose of CCPs is not to provide individual information to a central database.

12 January 2010

Sheep EID

Liam McArthur: To ask the Scottish Executive, with reference to EU Regulation 21/2004 on the identification of sheep and goats, what research it is undertaking to examine the continued viability of within-business moves.

Richard Lochhead: Within-business moves is not currently applied to the sheep and goat identification system and therefore there is no question of continued viability. As with all proposals, the Scottish Government utilises all available information to assist with the decision making process. With regards to within-business moves, the following information has been considered: data and movement populations, epidemiological issues and risks, legal aspects and practical issues faced by farmers.

Liam McArthur: To ask the Scottish Executive, with reference to EU Regulation 21/2004 on the identification of sheep and goats, when it plans to publish guidelines or regulations on within-business moves.

Environmental Impact Assessment



Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many screening decisions the Scottish Ministers have issued for projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and how many such projects have been deemed to require the consent of the Scottish Ministers and the submission of an environmental statement to assist with its assessment.

Roseanna Cunningham: Scottish ministers have issued screening decisions on 27 projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Scotland) Regulations 2006, and the Environmental Impact Assessment (Uncultivated Land and Semi-Natural Areas) (Scotland) Regulations 2002 which they replaced. For 20 of those projects the decision was that there was no significant environmental effect; for five others it was that they were outwith the scope of the regulations. The decisions on two projects concluded that they were "relevant projects" likely to have a significant effect on the environment and accordingly could not be carried out without consent of the Scottish Ministers. An Environmental Statement was received for one of the proposals on 11 July 2009 and following consideration, consent was refused and the applicant notified on 4 November 2009. An Environmental Statement has not yet been received for the other project; consequently no consent decision has been made whether or not to grant consent.

Details of proposals submitted for screening can be viewed on the public register maintained under regulation 7(7) (b) of the 2006 regulations on the Scottish Government website at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Agriculture/Environment/16808/Publicregister/publicregister>.

Sarah Boyack: To ask the Scottish Executive how often the public register is required to be updated by the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Scotland) Regulations 2006; how often it is updated, and when it was last updated.

Roseanna Cunningham: The regulations do not specify how often the public register should be updated. However, in practice it is done on a quarterly basis. It was last updated on 16 December 2009.

Sarah Boyack: To ask the Scottish Executive when it next plans to review the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and whether it is required to do so by a given date.

Roseanna Cunningham: There is no specific statutory obligation to review the regulations and I have no immediate plans to do so.

The European Commission has indicated its intention to bring forward proposals for revision of the EIA Directive 85/337/EEC later this year or early in 2011.

Sarah Boyack: To ask the Scottish Executive whether it considers that the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 apply to all agricultural or estate management activities potentially damaging to semi-natural areas.

Sarah Boyack: To ask the Scottish Executive what part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 addresses drainage of moorland for purposes other than intensive agriculture.

Roseanna Cunningham: The Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture)(Scotland) Regulations 2006 contribute to protecting and enhancing the rural environment by guarding against possible negative environmental effects arising from the restructuring of rural land holdings on agricultural land and/or the use of uncultivated land and semi-natural areas for intensive agricultural purposes.

Other EIA consent systems may apply to agricultural or land management activities. Exemptions to the provisions of the 2006 Regulations are provided for in Regulation 3 (2) and include projects which constitute development for which the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999 apply and projects as described in Regulation 3(2) of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry)(Scotland) Regulations 1999.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

DEBATES

19 January 2010

EU Budget

Mr. Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on progress on reform of the EU budget; and if he will make a statement. [311319]

The Minister for Europe (**Chris Bryant**): Reform of the EU budget was last discussed at the December European Council. Heads of Government called on the Commission to produce a report in order for the Council to lay out its priorities during 2010. The Government remain committed to far-reaching reform of the EU budget.

Mr. Hollobone: When Tony Blair abolished Margaret Thatcher's rebate, we were promised significant reform of the EU budget and of the common agricultural policy, instead of which Britain's membership fee for the European Union has more than doubled, there is no significant reform to the common agricultural policy, and EU accounts remain dodgy at best. Is this not another broken promise by a failed Labour Government?

Chris Bryant: If the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about broken promises, he should speak to the leader of his own party. I am sure the hon. Gentleman is pretty depressed by the end of the cast-iron guarantee, but he should not mischaracterise what happened. The abatement still exists. It is worth billions of pounds for the UK. We, however, not only willed the end-namely, the enlargement of the European Union-but we were also prepared to will the means, by being prepared to pay an element of the advantage that other countries coming into the EU would provide to the UK in the form of trade and jobs.

Mr. Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): When can citizens of the United Kingdom expect to see a reasonable and fair deal for membership of the European Union?

Chris Bryant: I think that all citizens of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland get a very good deal out of the EU. It guarantees jobs, and more than 50 per cent. of this country's trade is wholly dependent on our membership of the EU. If the hon. Gentleman wants to take Britain out of the EU, he should table a motion.

18 January 2010

Holiday Lettings (Taxation)

Mr. Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the effects on the tourism industry of changes in taxation of furnished holiday lettings.

The Minister of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (**Margaret Hodge**): I met my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury in December to discuss the tourism industry's concerns about the potential impact of the rule changes on the self-catering sector. I also helped to convene a meeting in December between representatives of the Tourism Alliance, the Financial Secretary and Treasury officials.

Mr. Goodwill: Well, I actually managed to speak to the Chancellor about this before Christmas in one of the Division Lobbies, when I told him how angry farmers in the north Yorkshire moors area are that some of their diversification projects have been holed below the waterline by these changes. If only 10 per cent. of the jobs in this sector go, that will amount to 2,400 jobs. Is it not beyond the bounds of possibility to think of a way to give an exemption to genuine businesses, and not to throw the net around those private people who have holiday cottages, who were previously getting this exemption?

Margaret Hodge: I would be delighted to hear from the hon. Gentleman if he has ideas as to how we can ensure that we implement this change, which is required because of European legislation, in a way that does not damage the particular sector that he mentions. I have been in constant discussion with people in the sector. They have put forward three proposals so far, none of which actually work-we have examined them in detail. If he or any other Conservative Member has any practical proposals to make that would enable us to meet our EU obligations and benefit the sector, I would be more than happy to listen to those and take them forward.

Mr. Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth, East) (Con): I am afraid that this is yet another example of tourism being pushed to the back of the queue by this Government. The tourism industry is right to ask, "What have this Government done for us?" The tourism budget has been slashed, the sea change funding has all but dried up, the responsibility for English tourism has been thrown into confusion by the introduction of regional development agencies, nothing has been done to harness the opportunities provided by the Olympics and now there has been a raid by the Treasury on the furnished holiday lets. So I ask the Minister: what have this Government done for tourism? The Romans can at least point to the aqueducts and the roads. Let us hear from her as to how the industry is going to be helped.

Margaret Hodge: The Government invest some £2 billion in support of our tourism industry, and the Conservatives, with their plans to cut public spending before we are properly out of the recession, would damage it far more than we would. May I give a few examples? This Government introduced free admissions to our museums. Eight out of 10 of the most popular destinations for visitors in the UK are those museums, so we supported the tourism industry in the way that we have made our museums more attractive. This Government introduced the sea change programme, which has enabled us to invest, through heritage funding and in other ways, to bring back - *[Interruption.]* May I say to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Ellwood), who is speaking from a sedentary position, that that programme is funded and has been funded? I look forward to a commitment from those on the Conservative Benches that they will continue to fund it in the way that we intend to do.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am grateful to the Minister. Her answer was a little on the long side, but it was prolonged by excessive chuntering from a sedentary position by Opposition Front Benchers, of which we need to see no repetition.

14 January 2010

Grocery Ombudsman

Andrew George (St. Ives) (LD): What plans he has to respond to the Competition Commission's recommendation for the creation of a grocery supply chain ombudsman.

The Minister for Further Education, Skills, Apprenticeships and Consumer Affairs (**Kevin Brennan**): My Department published the Government's response to the Competition Commission's recommendation for the creation of a grocery supply chain ombudsman yesterday. The Government have accepted the need for independent enforcement of the grocery supply code of practice, and we will consult on the detail of the body and its powers.

Andrew George: As I chair the grocery market action group, perhaps I should declare an interest. I have been campaigning for this for the best part of 10 years. Therefore, I warmly welcome the Minister's announcement yesterday-I have to say, it was not before time. What timetable does he envisage for the implementation of this vital recommendation, bearing in mind that although the grocery supply code of practice will be unenforced, it will be implemented on 4 February?

Kevin Brennan: On the time taken, the Competition Commission made its formal request to the Government only last August. In the meantime, I have met the hon. Gentleman and his group, the British Retail Consortium, the National Farmers Union, the Food and Drink Federation, Consumer Focus, Divine Chocolate and the Office of Fair Trading, so a proper consultation has been taking place. The formal consultation will start shortly after the code comes into force on 4 February. How quickly we can implement the measures depends on the solution and whether or not it needs legislation, and that will ultimately depend on the design of the body.

Mr. Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) (Lab): Of course we welcome movement on this from the Government, but we need real teeth and real power. The power of the supermarkets puts pressure on the farmers, and we want fair farm-gate prices and a purchasing policy for local communities. That would provide the teeth and the power we need. We need that commitment from the Minister.

Kevin Brennan: Of course the purpose of the enforcement body is to enforce the code, which has been broadly welcomed by everyone as having the teeth necessary. We just need to ensure that it is independently enforced, and we have accepted the case for that. Ultimately, we accepted it on the grounds that the Competition Commission made it clear that it believed that in the long term this was in the interests of shoppers and consumers, because it would provide the kind of certainty in the supply chain that will produce better prices and choices for them.

Mr. Mark Field (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): Does the Minister regard the appointment and powers of this ombudsman to be complementary to or in addition to the existing powers of the OFT and the Competition Commission, which, as he will know, have held almost continuous inquiries into the supermarket sector over the past decade or so?

Kevin Brennan: The powers of those bodies remain as they were previously in the event of there being matters that they need to investigate. The job of the independent ombudsman will principally be to enforce the code, but we are also consulting, as part of how we design the body, on exactly what the powers will be.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

26 January 2010

UK Food Production

Tim Farron: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the percentage of (a) meat, (b) eggs, (c) bread, (d) wheat, (e) fruit, (f) vegetables and (g) milk consumed which was domestically produced in each of the last three years.

Jim Fitzpatrick: Estimates of the percentage of meat, eggs, wheat, fruit, vegetables and milk consumed and which were produced domestically are provided in Table 1. Figures for the last three years are fairly stable.

These figures are based on volumes of production and trade. Figures are affected by market conditions in the UK and abroad. Factors affecting market conditions include exchange rates, weather conditions, animal disease and consumer demand. When interpreting the figures it is important to look at the trends over time, rather than concentrating on figures for individual years.

Information on the percentage of domestically produced bread consumed is not available. However, data on the tonnage of wheat grain used for milling and the proportion of wheat grain that is home grown are shown in Table 2. This is also based on volumes but is for the crop year rather than calendar year. The grain will be milled into flour for a range of purposes including bread, biscuits, cakes and starch. It is not possible to provide information that

distinguishes home grown wheat grain milled for bread flour alone. The lower percentage home grown wheat in the last two years is a reflection of the lower quality of the domestic crop for milling.

Percentage	2006	2007	2008
Meat	66	65	65
Eggs	81	77	77
Wheat	92	90	92
Fruit	6	7	8
Vegetables	57	55	56
Liquid drinking milk	99	99	99

Source DEFRA

	Percentage
2006-07	85
2007-08	79
2008-09	78

Source DEFRA

Tim Farron: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the amount of domestic (a) meat, (b) eggs, (c) bread, (d) wheat, (e) fruit, (f) vegetables and (g) milk consumed which was domestically produced in each of the last three years. [313470]

Jim Fitzpatrick: The volume of UK production of meat, eggs, wheat, fruit, vegetables and drinking milk available for use in the UK is provided in the Table 1. This information is not available for bread.

These figures are calculated as UK production minus exports from the UK. This leaves the volume of UK production that is available for use in the UK. These products may be consumed in the UK, but they could also be used in the manufacture of other products, which could later be exported. In the case of wheat availability this includes wheat that is used for animal feed or seed production.

Table 2 shows the tonnage of UK produced grain which is used by the milling industry to produce flour for a range of uses including bread, biscuits, cakes and starch. It is not possible to provide this information specifically for bread.

	2006	2007	2008
Meat (thousand tonnes)	2,981	2,904	2,793
Eggs (million dozen)	725	704	730
			26 Jan 2010 : Column 742W
Wheat (thousand tonnes)	12,619	11,309	14,461
Fruit (thousand tonnes)	215	259	279
Vegetables (thousand tonnes)	2,514	2,382	2,506
Liquid drinking milk (million litres)	6,249	6,212	6,255

	2006	2007	2008
UK grain (thousand tonnes)	4,744	4,693	4,918

Source DEFRA

GM Animal Feed

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will commission a study into the possible effects of consumption of genetically modified maize on animal health.

Dan Norris: We have no plans to commission such a study. Under European Union rules, genetically modified (GM) crops are cleared for animal feed use only if they pass a robust safety assessment carried out by the European Food Safety Authority. The assessment takes account of any potential effects on animal health.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment he has made of the effects of consumption of genetically-modified feedstuffs on animal health in the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Dan Norris: We have not made such an assessment. Under European Union rules, genetically modified (GM) crops are cleared for animal feed use only if they pass a robust safety assessment carried out by the European Food Safety Authority. The assessment takes account of any potential effects on animal health.

26 January 2010

Supermarkets - Waste Disposal

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what his most recent estimate is of the amount of food produce disposed of by supermarkets which has passed its sell-by date and not its best-before date;

(2) what recent assessment he has made of trends in the practice of supermarkets of rejecting supplies of fruit and vegetables on the grounds of minor imperfections;

(3) what recent estimate he has made of the amount of fruit and vegetables that is rejected by supermarkets due to minor imperfections; and what recent discussions his Department has had with supermarket representatives on this practice;

(4) what his policy is on the practice of supermarkets discarding supplies of fruit and vegetables rejected owing to minor imperfections.

Dan Norris [*holding answer 21 January 2010*]: No estimate has been made of the amount of food disposed of by supermarkets which is beyond its sell-by-date but not its best-before-date.

There has been no assessment of the practice of supermarkets disposing of food on the grounds of minor imperfections and no estimate of the amount of waste involved is available.

The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) plans to publish research by early March 2010 on the food waste produced at each stage of the supply chain—from manufacture through to distribution and retail. However, both the amount of food disposed of by supermarkets which is beyond its sell-by-date but not before its best-before-date, and the amount of food waste disposed of by supermarkets due to minor imperfections, are beyond the scope of this project. WRAP, the Food Standards Agency (FSA), representatives from the food industry, consumer groups and the UK Government Departments are also working closely to help reduce this food waste by changing retailers' practices on date labelling and food storage guidance.

25 January 2010

Genetically Modified Organisms: Nature Conservation

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent research he has evaluated on the effects on mammalian health of genetically modified products.

Gillian Merron: Since September 2007, the Food Standards Agency has sought advice from the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) on the conclusions which may be drawn from the following published research on the effects on mammalian health of genetically modified organisms (GMOs):

1. Malatesta et al., (2008), *Histochem Cell Biol*, 130, pp967-977

2. Kilic and Akay, (2008), *Food and Chemical Toxicology*, 46, pp1164-1170

3. Finamore et al., (2008), *J Agric Food Chem*. DOI: 10.1021/jf802059w

4. Lelimiriv et al., (2008), *Forschungsberichte der Sektion IV*, Band 3/2008, published by the Austrian Ministry of Health. The ACNFP considered these publications at its meetings in September and November 2008 and February 2009. It advised that it was not possible to draw any conclusions about cause and effect in these publications or to assess the significance of these reports for mammalian (including human) health. The minutes of these meetings are available on the ACNFP website at:

www.acnfp.gov.uk/meetings/acnfpmeet08/acnfpmeet20nov08/acnfpmin20nov08

www.acnfp.gov.uk/meetings/acnfpmeet09/acnfpfeb09/acnfpmin190209

18 January 2010

Genetically Modified Organisms: Regulation

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations he has received on the (a) safety and (b) regulatory approval process of genetically modified crops and foods.

Dan Norris: DEFRA has received various items of correspondence recently from members of the public and other stakeholders on the environmental safety and regulatory control of GM crops. The Food Standards Agency has lead responsibility for the safety and regulation of GM foods and animal feeds.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which genetically-modified products are authorised for sale in the UK.

Dan Norris: Decisions on the commercial release of genetically modified (GM) products are taken at European Union (EU) level. Currently there are 31 GM products that are authorised for food and animal feed uses in the EU. Full details are available on the European Commission website. Only one type of GM crop seed has EU approval for cultivation and is being sold in some EU member states, but it is not being marketed in the UK because it is unsuitable for our growing conditions. It is a type of insect-resistant maize known as MON 810.

13 January 2010

Carbon Sequestration

Mr. Dai Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the effects on climate change of the practice of mob-grazing of cattle to sequester carbon dioxide in soil.

Jim Fitzpatrick: DEFRA has not carried out any formal research on the potential for mob-grazing (an extra intensive version of rotational grazing) to permanently sequester carbon in soil. However, an initial assessment from an UK perspective suggests that mob grazing has limited potential to increase soil carbon and may increase soil compaction and erosion, resulting in a subsequent loss of soil quality and soil carbon. As a result of the density of livestock, mob-grazing practices would also be likely to lead to nutrient 'hotspots' which could lead to increase nitrous oxide emissions (a more powerful greenhouse gas) or increased nitrate leaching into watercourses.

Climate Change

Mr. Pelling: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will take steps in consultation with farmers and supermarkets to undertake research into the effects of climate change on the preservation of foodstuffs grown in an extended growing season.

Jim Fitzpatrick: The Government have not funded research to look specifically at the impacts of climate change on storage of food products. However, we have funded research to improve storage of products to extend storage time, maintain quality in storage and therefore reduce losses. This has been achieved through improvements in storage technology and crop management.

We have also commissioned research to develop storage technologies that are more sustainable. The knowledge and improved technologies delivered provide greater resilience to climate change because they provide options for adaptation. A non-exhaustive list of relevant research projects is shown in the following table.

Further information on these projects is available from the DEFRA website at:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Location=None> &Module=FilterSearchNewLook&Completed=Q

Code	Title	Start	End	Cost (£)
FO0308	Development of diffuse browning disorder in relation to physiological and biochemical changes in apple fruit during development and storage	April 2007	March 2009	201,094
LK09105	A novel strategy for reducing wastage in potato storage by improved control of tuber dormancy.	October 2007	March 2008	42,468 7 Jan 2010 : Column 493W 7 Jan 2010 : Column 494W
LK0985	Defining and managing risks to safety and quality during food and feed grain storage	July 2006	July 2011	648,020
LK0967	Biopesticides for the control of storage insect pests	April 2005	September 2009	393,114
AR0603	Interaction of biology and behaviour of storage insects with environmental conditions in bulk grain	April 2002	March 2006	655,327
AR0604	Safe storage of grain by preventing and controlling the development of mite pests	April 2002	March 2006	614,325
HH2602SFV	Molecular and biochemical characters of post harvest quality in brassicas	January 2002	December 2005	539,903
LK0929	Improving the detection and monitoring of storage beetle pests by development of a multi-species lure	October 2002	September 2005	221,329
HH2603STF	The potential for manipulating the orchard microflora to control storage rot fungi	April 2001	March 2005	208,399
HH2604STF	Storage rots in plums and cherries	September 2001	August 2004	154,852
HH2606STF	Identify the mechanisms of a naturally-occurring, heritable trait for reduced ethylene production in apple fruits	April 2001	March 2004	494,252
LK0919	Control of potato storage diseases by laser treatment	October 2001	September 2004	116,015
HH2118STF	Integrated control of new storage rot problems in apples and pears.	April 1998	March 2001	153,781
HH2120TTF	Expanding the potential of the UK stone fruit industry by the use of modern storage technology	April 1998	March 2001	246,847
HH2114STF	Investigation into improving storage of horticultural produce by control of ethylene metabolism.	October 1997	September 2000	306,013

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND REPORTS

21 January 2010

Report from November 2009 Agriculture Council

Hilary Benn: The Minister responsible for marine and the natural environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Huw Irranca-Davies) and the Minister responsible for food, farming and environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Canning Town (Jim Fitzpatrick) represented the United Kingdom at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in Brussels on 20 November. Richard Lochhead MSP and Michelle Gildernew MLA also attended. Due to the European Council, Agriculture and Fisheries Council was shortened to one day, with the majority of agriculture business now being taken in December.

On agriculture, the Council approved Poland's state aid application enabling farmers to purchase agricultural land. The UK, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Spain, Netherlands, Austria, Germany all abstained, agreeing with the Commission that the application was not justified, and on the overriding of state aid rules, but stopped short of blocking the application. Latvia and Hungary would now bring similar applications for approval at the December Agriculture Council.

There was a brief discussion to clarify member states' voting intentions with regard to the authorisation of GM maize for use in the EU. There was no qualified majority in favour of the authorisation and the proposal will now revert to Commission competence and be adopted.

A number of issues were raised under any other agriculture business. Belgium and France requested that export refunds for the fresh and frozen pigmeat be reactivated. Only the UK and Malta expressed dissatisfaction with the use of such market management measures. The Commission sympathised with the request but also did not agree with reactivating export refunds.

France outlined its support for the Commission's forthcoming Green Paper on forest protection, emphasising the importance of taking a holistic approach - covering everything from the benefits that forests bring in respect of climate change to forest-based industries. A number of member states supported, including the UK, emphasising the importance of the EU forest action plan and a member state led-approach. The Commission agreed.

France requested more details about the parameters within which the Commission intended to prepare for and conduct the forthcoming WTO ministerial conference. The Commission emphasised that these were regular events, and that trade colleagues within the Council were informed of the Commission's approach.

Hungary, supported by the Czech Republic and Slovakia, presented a paper seeking to resurrect a proposal, previously rejected through comitology, that sheep and goats going direct to slaughter on intra-Community trade do not have to be electronically identified. The UK also intervened to sympathise, and while making it clear that it would not go back on its agreement not to seek further changes, urged the Commission to thoroughly review implementation of the regulation at the earliest opportunity.

20 January 2010

Report from December 2009 Agriculture Council

Hilary Benn: The Minister responsible for the marine and the natural environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Huw Irranca-Davies) represented the United Kingdom at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in Brussels on 14 and 16 December. Richard Lochhead MSP and Michelle Gildernew MLA also attended.

On fisheries, Council agreed the annual fishing opportunities regulation for 2010 which sets fishing quota and effort limits, principally for the North sea, Irish sea, Channel, and Atlantic. Discussions were narrower than in previous years as technical and control measures are no longer included in this measure, since they are now subject to co-decision with the European Parliament. However, the recent failure of talks between the EU and Norway on the annual fisheries agreement meant that the regulation would need to find an interim mechanism to allow fishing of the stocks concerned. This led to unexpected complexity and difficulty in the final negotiations.

Following a ministerial lunch on animal health, discussions then turned to the substantive agriculture items. First, the Council took note of the Commission's report on options for animal welfare labelling and animal welfare reference centres; which was followed by a brief state of play report from the presidency on the negotiations to agree a revision to the current rules governing the welfare of laboratory animals (expressing confidence that a deal could be struck with the European Parliament early in 2010).

Continuing a trend of set-piece discussions on the future of the CAP, the Commission then presented its views on rural development policy post-2013 (it should be greener and better aligned with the Lisbon strategy), noting in summary that it saw no justification for continuing to finance Pillar II via modulation. Member states broadly welcomed the Commission's thoughts.

Next, Council unanimously approved requests for state aid for agricultural restructuring from Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary. The UK, Denmark, Czech Republic, Estonia, Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Austria abstained.

Council then reached partial political agreement on the timber due diligence regulation, though with further work needed on comitology provisions. The UK, Denmark, Spain and Belgium abstained, with the Netherlands voting against, because the final compromise did not include an express prohibition of the placing of illegally logged timber on the Community market. The dossier would now be handed over to future presidencies, starting with Spain, to handle negotiations with the European Parliament.

Ministers took the opportunity to comment on the Commission's work on the 39 simplification proposals they had presented during the CZ presidency. A number of the proposals had been addressed, but others had not been taken up. Denmark tabled a letter suggesting further discussions on the outstanding proposals at a political level. There was general support for two UK concerns: (1) that the Commission needed to be more joined-up and look at burdens on farmers beyond DG Agri and include DG Sanco and DG Environment; and (2) that the Commission should take a more risk-based approach to audits and controls, including the way penalties were applied. Work on this dossier would continue.

The Commission then presented the latest instalment of its dairy market quarterly report noting that both commodity prices and farm gate prices had risen, that EU production remained lower than in 2008, and that the market was likely to be in balance in 2010. They also made reference to the recently established dairy fund, as well as to deliberations on improving the dairy supply chain in the high-level group, as measures aimed at ameliorating the dairy crisis. The UK welcomed the positive trends and rising prices detailed in the report, urged the Council and Commission to focus on modernising the sector in preparation for the abolition of dairy quotas.

The Commission presented its communication on a better functioning food supply chain, a follow-up to last December's report on food prices to the European Council. Its aim was to examine the contractual relations across the chain, to monitor the development of competition issues, and to provide the basis for further in-depth discussions during the Spanish presidency.

Under any other business:

- The presidency presented its report of the conference of the EU paying agencies;
- Council took note of the progress made to update on EU food labelling rules;
- The Commission gave an update on the ongoing difficult negotiations with Russia on sanitary and phytosanitary issues;
- The Netherlands informed Council of the outcome of a conference on GM policy held in the Netherlands from 25 and 26 November.

Tuesday 5 January 2010

UK Government Food Strategy

Hilary Benn: I am today publishing the Government's new food strategy - "Food 2030", which follows up the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit July 2008 report "Food Matters".

Last August, we published our assessment of the UK's food security, and we held an online discussion forum on the future of food between August and October 2009. In total, over 600 people and organisations responded.

Food security has come to the fore following food prices rising sharply in 2008 for the first time in a generation, provoking riots in some parts of the world. With a growing global population, a changing climate, and pressure being put on land, we are going to need to produce more food, to do so sustainably, and to ensure that the food we eat safeguards our health.

"Food 2030" sets out the steps that all those involved in food can take to put us on this path, in particular by helping consumers to be better informed and able to buy healthy food from sustainable sources; by minimising waste; by making sure every part of the supply chain is resilient, competitive and has the skills that match the challenge; and by using science and technological advance to assist us.

All of this will require leadership and co-operation from all those involved in farming, fisheries, food production and public health. I will update the House as the strategy is implemented.

Copies of the strategy are available in the Libraries of both Houses and on DEFRA's website.

25 January 2010

Draft Animal Health Bill

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Hilary Benn): Today, I am laying before Parliament a draft Animal Health Bill that sets out major changes I am intending to implement on responsibility for, and management of, animal health in England.

The draft Bill would establish a new body in England, headed by an independent board and chair, with responsibility for animal health policy and its application; matters that currently rest with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The draft Bill draws upon extensive consultation over a number of years on the policy of responsibility and cost sharing for animal health. It is based on a partnership working approach that will be

increasingly central to the development of animal health policy and the means by which it is carried out on the ground. This will enable the experience and expertise of those making a living in the livestock and other animal related sectors to contribute to the policies and decisions on animal health.

Central to long term success in combating animal disease, reducing its incidence and cost, and increasing the nation's resilience to its impacts, is bringing about behaviour change among those directly affected. The development of responsibility sharing in the provisions of the draft Bill will help to secure the needed changes in business practices and attitudes.

The other part of this new approach, as proposed by Iain Anderson in his report on the lessons to be learned from foot and mouth in 2001, is a degree of sharing of the costs involved with those who both benefit directly from animal health measures and whose businesses bear the brunt of animal disease. Accordingly, the Government will bring forward in due course separate measures relating to cost sharing.

Copies of the draft Bill are available in the Vote Office.

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

27 January 2010

Dairy Farms

Baroness Byford: To ask Her Majesty's Government what were the levels of (a) imports, and (b) exports, for United Kingdom dairy industry products for each year from 2003 to 2009.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Davies of Oldham): The Answer to the Question is given in the tables below. The latest information available is up to October 2009.

Table 1

UK trade in liquid drinking milk (pasteurised or UHT), 2003 to Oct 2009							
Million litres							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Jan to Oct 2009 (Prov)
Exports	193	251	485	512	423	457	377
Imports	37	55	47	84	88	134	75

Table 2

UK trade in milk products, 2003 to Oct 2009								
		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Jan to Oct 2009 (Prov)
Exports	Butter	44	35	45	36	32	24	22
	Cheese	90	93	96	104	97	88	87
	Condensed Milk	20	18	4	6	6	3	4
	Cream	114	81	93	94	78	62	51
	Milk powders	173	186	102	96	105	98	60
Imports	Butter	118	114	129	147	103	81	74
	Cheese	316	335	353	378	403	422	342
	Condensed Milk	20	25	33	45	41	39	31
	Cream	15	15	30	37	43	55	54
	Milk powders	45	68	78	51	61	66	67

Source: HMRC

Baroness Byford: To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (a) dairy farmers, and (b) dairy cows, there were in each year from 2000 to 2009.

Lord Davies of Oldham: Changes in the number of farmers and dairy cows are just two elements of the structural changes that have taken place in the sector. The long-term trend in dairy production is towards fewer, larger and more productive herds. The table below provides the fuller picture on the structural changes in the sector and shows

how the decline in the number of dairy farms and farmers has been offset by an increase in average herd size and milk yields.

The number of principal farmers on dairy holdings is not yet available for 2009, so the most recent data cover up to 2008. The 2009 data will be released in March 2010.

The decrease in the numbers of dairy farmers in England between 2000 and 2008 (-26 per cent) is less than the fall in the number of holdings with dairy cows between 2000 and 2009 (-36 per cent). This reflects a rise in the average number of farmers per farm over the period as the average farm size has increased.

However, the number of dairy cows has decreased by less (-24 per cent), reflecting a rise in the average herd size.

	Number of dairy farms		No farmers ^(a) on dairy holdings		Number of dairy cows (thousands)	
	(b)	(c)	(b)	(c)	(b)	(c)
2000		15,219		31,418		1,576
2001		14,293		30,178		1,490
2002		14,537		30,425		1,462
2003		13,770		28,918		1,435
2004		13,264		28,057		1,374
2005		12,918		26,168		1,311
2006	11,522	11,079	22,483	25,706	1,259	1,290
2007	10,907		21,082		1,236	
2008	10,331		20,122		1,199	
2009	9,805	--	--	--	1,163	
% change between 2000 and 2009(e)		-36%		-26%		-24%

-- not yet available

(a) Farmers are defined as principal farmers, partners, directors and spouses if working on the holding.

(b) Sourced from the Cattle Tracing System (CTS). Defined as the number of holdings on 1 June each year with more than 10 dairy cows in the milking herd. CTS became the main source of cattle data from 2006 onwards. Results prior to this were sourced from the June Survey of Agriculture but are not directly comparable.

(c) Sourced from the June Survey of Agriculture. Defined as the number of holdings with dairy as the predominant farming activity.

Baroness Byford: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they hold statistics on the market value of female dairy animals sold in English livestock markets.

Lord Davies of Oldham: Statistics on the market value of dairy animals sold in English livestock markets are held by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board. These statistics are provided to Defra on a monthly basis, split into 13 categories by age and pedigree or non-pedigree status. The information is then published on the Defra website at <https://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/amr/default.asp>.

13 January 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Supermarket Ombudsman - Statement

The Minister for Trade and Investment (**Lord Davies of Abersoch**): My honourable friend the Minister for Further Education, Skills, Apprentices and Consumer Affairs (Kevin Brennan) has today made the following Statement. Today the Government are publishing the government response accepting the Competition Commission's recommendation to establish an enforcer to monitor and enforce the Groceries Supply Code of Practice (GSCOP). The Government want to ensure that the GSCOP can be independently enforced and have the important power to hear anonymous complaints. However, the Government are mindful of placing unnecessary costs on to business especially in a period of economic difficulty, which is why we plan to issue a consultation on how best to take matters forward.

We have also taken the decision to revoke the Land Agreements Exclusion Order following a recent public consultation resulting from a related Competition Commission recommendation. We will proceed to make the revocation order at the earliest opportunity but give businesses a transitional period to ensure that their agreements are compatible with competition rules.

Copies of the responses have been deposited in the Libraries of the House and will be available on the BIS website at www.berr.gov.uk/files/file54194.pdf

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

26 January 2010

AGRI	Food information to consumers	Vote on draft opinion. <u>Opinion amendments</u>
AGRI	Evaluation of animal welfare action plan 2006-10	Consideration of <u>draft report</u>
AGRI	Fair farm revenues: Better functioning supply chain in Europe	Exchange of views
ENVI	Adapting to climate change (Prodi report)	Consideration of <u>draft report</u>
ENVI	Report back from Copenhagen	Exchange of views

27 January 2010

AGRI	Hearing on Agriculture and Climate Change (Le Foll report)	<u>Hearing agenda draft report</u>
AGRI	Spanish Presidency Agriculture Minister Espinosa	Exchange of views
AGRI	Special health check for areas with natural handicaps (LFA report)	Consideration of <u>draft report</u>
AGRI	Biowaste	Consideration of <u>draft opinion</u>
ENVI	Agricultural Product Quality	Adoption of <u>draft opinion amendments</u>
ENVI	Food information to consumers	Consideration of amendments**
ENVI	Spanish Presidency Environment Minister Espinosa	Exchange of views

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