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If you have any questions about NFU Scotland's parliamentary activity or if you would like guidance on how to raise an issue with your MPs, please contact Sarah Anderson using the details above.

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SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

Scottish Agricultural Wages Board

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I declare my membership of the trade union Unite. To ask the Scottish Executive when the next review of the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board will take place. (S4O-00603)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): I plan to review the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board again in 2013.

John Wilson: As the cabinet secretary is aware, the Agricultural Wages Board in Scotland has historically benefited those in the agricultural sector and related industries by ensuring not only that wages and conditions keep pace with the national minimum wage, but that they have consistently been better, particularly for those under the age of 22. I seek an assurance from the cabinet secretary that the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board will be retained and that there will be developments that bring wages for agricultural workers in line with those proposed by the Scottish living wage campaign.

Richard Lochhead: Clearly, I cannot pre-empt the 2013 review, but I recognise that John Wilson has a good track record on speaking up for the role of the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board, which provides safeguards relating to the particular circumstances of agricultural workers in Scotland. The board also provides a useful forum for negotiations in an industry that is particularly fragmented. I have no doubt that John Wilson will make his views known at the time

of the review.

Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab): I note what the cabinet secretary says about not pre-empting the review, but will he confirm that there is nothing to prevent him from saying now in response to John Wilson's question that the board will continue?

Richard Lochhead: Nothing, apart from our manifesto commitment to review the future of the board in 2013, which I will stick to. We will listen to views from all parties in the chamber when we come to the next review of the board in 2013.

The Agricultural Holdings (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill

The Agricultural Holdings (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill is currently going through the Scottish Parliament. NFUS Chief Executive gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs Committee on the Bill on 18 January.

To read a copy of the Scottish Parliament's briefing on the subject, please follow this link:
[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_12-02\(2\).pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_12-02(2).pdf)

To read a transcript of Scott's evidence to the Committee, please follow this link:
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=6714&mode=pdf>

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday 25 January

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will publish her objectives for the current round of discussions on common agricultural policy reform; and if she will make a statement. [91528]

Mr Paice: The common agricultural policy (CAP) negotiations are at an early stage. The Commission's proposals were released on 12 October 2011 and are currently being considered by member states in the Agriculture Council, as well as by the European Parliament for the first time, under co-decision.

The UK Government want to see ambitious reform of the CAP. We will continue to argue for a very substantial cut to the CAP budget, focused on Pillar 1. The CAP that remains should provide better value and prepare for a future without income support. It should be used to encourage improved productivity and innovation to increase the competitiveness of the agriculture sector and a higher proportion of CAP funds should be used for the cost-effective delivery of public goods. We will also argue for a less complex CAP, with reduced burdens for administrators and beneficiaries.

Food prices and food poverty

On 23 January the House of Commons held a debate on food prices and food poverty. To read a transcript of the debate, please follow this link:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120123/debtext/120123-0001.htm#12012313000001>

Iain McKenzie MP

As of Monday 23 January, the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Committee in the House of Commons has a new member. Iain McKenzie MP, who won the Inverclyde by-election, took up his seat this week. NFU Scotland will try to meet with him as soon as possible.

Friday 20 January **Agriculture and Fisheries Council**

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mrs Caroline Spelman): The next Agriculture and Fisheries Council is on Monday 23 January in Brussels. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Minister with responsibility for Agriculture and Food will represent the UK. Stewart Stevenson MSP and Alun Davies AM will also attend.

In the morning, following a presentation of the Danish presidency's programme for the next six months, the Commission will present their animal welfare strategy, published this week.

In the afternoon there will be a discussion on the single common market organisation (CMO) Regulation as part of the CAP reform package. This item will cover market intervention measures, role of producers' organisations, crisis management and competition policy.

At lunch the Commission (José Manuel Barroso—president of the Commission and Dacian Cioloș—Agriculture Commissioner) will be hosting an event launching celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the CAP.

HOUSE OF LORDS

Thursday 26 January 2012 **Feed-in Tariffs**

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Lord Marland): My right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Chris Huhne) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

As the House will be aware, the Government's proposed changes to the feed-in tariffs (FITs) scheme are the subject of a judicial review. Specifically, the Government have been challenged regarding their proposal to apply new tariffs for solar photovoltaics (PV) from 1 April 2012 to all new installations with an eligibility date on or after an earlier reference date, which we proposed should be 12 December 2011.

Yesterday, the Court of Appeal handed down a negative judgment on the Government's appeal against an earlier decision by the High Court. We respectfully disagree with the judgment and are seeking permission to appeal to the Supreme Court. In the light of that, we cannot rule out the possibility that lower tariffs could be applied to installations which became eligible for FITs on or after the proposed reference date. It is important that consumers are aware of this.

The reason for appealing is that we want to maximise the number of installations that are possible within the available budget for FITs, rather than use available money to pay a higher tariff to half the number of installations. Solar PV can have strong and vibrant future in UK and we want a lasting FITs scheme to support that future and jobs in the industry.

We have already put before Parliament draft licence modifications that (subject to the parliamentary process) would bring a 21p rate into effect from April for solar PV installations which become eligible for FITs on or after 3 March, to help reduce the pressure on the budget and provide as much certainty as we can for consumers and industry.

In the mean time, we want as far as possible to minimise the uncertainty for PV and other technologies eligible for support under FITs. We are therefore still intending to publish the phase 2 consultation by 9 February. This will include proposed tariffs for other FITs technologies and a set of reform proposals for the scheme. We are also intending to publish the Government's response to the other aspects of the phase 1 consultation that are not affected by the judicial review (namely the proposals on energy efficiency and for multi-installation tariff rates).

Eggs

Lord Kilclooney: To ask Her Majesty's Government what proposals they have to ensure fair competition for United Kingdom egg producers within the European Union.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Taylor of Holbeach): The Government want to protect all producers who have complied with the conventional cage ban, whether in other member states or UK, from any competitive disadvantage. UK enforcement is set out in the Written Ministerial Statement of 6 December 2011. Since then member states have submitted lists of producers who have complied with the ban on conventional cages to the Commission to aid enforcement and to ensure fair competition.

Schmallenberg Virus

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will make Schmallenberg virus a notifiable disease in livestock. [HL15080]

Lord Taylor of Holbeach: To date we do not support making Schmallenberg virus (SBV) notifiable in livestock. This is in line with the thinking of the Commission and the majority of other member states. At present, not enough is known about this new and emerging virus to support understanding the economic impact it may have, how it could be controlled, what an exit strategy for disease freedom would be, and therefore the cost benefit notification would have.

There is a need to act proportionately and avoid unnecessary disruptions to the market and trade. Member states' monitoring is vital and voluntary reporting systems are considered appropriate for the current situation.

The developing disease situation is being monitored closely both here and in other affected member states, and its possible impact modelled to support our considerations. Close collaboration with European colleagues is enabling us to develop a shared understanding of the virus and diagnostics tests, improving our evidence base and knowledge. This allows us to keep our consideration of making SBV notifiable under review.

Ends