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### SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

#### Agri-environment Budget

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what the impact of the proposed reductions in the agri-environment budget will be. (S4O-00634)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead):** In the current financial climate, we have looked carefully at the demand for agri-environment funding in Scotland and consider that our proposed budget will meet this demand.

**Claire Baker:** The cabinet secretary may be aware of concerns that true demand in the sector is masked by the difficulty in getting the right support and advice to apply for agri-environmental support. When that is in place, demand for such support, which contributes to our biodiversity targets and supports land managers, increases. In the light of the cut to the budget, how will the Scottish Government monitor its progress towards the 2020 biodiversity target and assess the contribution that the agri-environment budget is and could be making? Will the annual report to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee provide sufficient information to allow such an assessment to be made?

**Richard Lochhead:** I will happily work with the committee to monitor the situation over the coming years. Against a very difficult budget backdrop, we believe that we have enough money in the pot to meet expected demand. The expected outturn for the current year is about £39 million, and we had budgeted £40 million. Despite there being a lower figure in the first year of the spending review period compared with the previous year, given the number of legacy schemes that have come to an end and the number of new schemes that are expected to come on

stream, we believe that the budget will be there for the next three years, but we will continue to monitor this very closely.

**Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** Will the cabinet secretary agree to review the complex rules that classify land eligible for rural priorities funding for high nature value farming to make the scheme more user friendly and to encourage farmers and crofters to use the scheme and to maintain our precious biodiversity?

**Richard Lochhead:** Rob Gibson correctly highlights the fact that crofters and farmers play a crucial role in protecting biodiversity and Scotland’s precious environment. It is important that we learn the lessons from the current rural development programme, which is due to come to an end in 2014, to ensure that we get the next programme, which will last from 2014 to 2020, correct. We must very much take into account the factors that he raises.

**Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD):** The cabinet secretary said that there was a reduction in the agri-environment budget due to a lack of demand, but does he agree with me and with RSPB Scotland that the demand has been altered by the removal of popular projects such as hedging, which were creating quite a large amount of demand?

**Richard Lochhead:** The budget has been cut not just because of a lack of demand but because the Lib Dem-Conservative coalition Government in Westminster cut Scotland’s budget in the first place, so perhaps the member could direct some of his fire towards his United Kingdom colleagues in London. Individual schemes or measures under the budget headings change from year to year in line with demand, and we continue to keep a close eye on where that demand comes from.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Agricultural Products: Prices

**Roger Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the annual percentage change in the retail prices index was for (a) milk, (b) beef, (c) sheep meat, (d) pig meat, (e) chicken and (f) wheat in each year since 1990. [R] [92928]

**Mr Paice:** The following tables show the annual average retail price index (Jan 1987=100) and percentage change since the previous year for each commodity:

	Bread	Cereals	Beef	Pork	Lamb	Home-killed lamb	Bacon	Poultry	Fresh milk
1990	121.0	123.7	124.2	124.0	112.1	111.3	126.8	115.9	123.3
1991	130.4	131.8	124.7	122.4	107.1	105.6	128.6	114.9	132.6
1992	134.8	135.8	125.4	126.1	113.5	114.9	137.3	111.4	138.0
1993	138.6	139.0	135.3	122.2	124.6	127.3	138.5	110.2	141.0
1994	135.9	137.6	132.5	118.5	127.8	133.5	134.5	107.8	144.9
1995	136.2	140.3	133.7	127.0	128.8	138.9	137.3	106.1	150.9
1996	138.7	141.6	135.0	153.3	148.2	158.6	155.6	112.1	153.7
1997	136.8	141.5	132.1	149.3	154.9	157.1	161.4	112.5	153.4
1998	135.2	141.7	129.5	132.6	144.4	145.8	149.9	111.1	153.5
1999	135.2	140.5	133.0	127.7	145.3	149.7	151.7	110.2	152.2
2000	136.5	137.9	133.2	135.2	150.9	158.8	157.2	107.4	151.0
2001	139.5	139.2	133.7	143.2	158.2	164.3	173.6	110.4	160.1
2002	142.8	138.2	133.3	146.8	169.9	176.4	172.0	108.1	164.6
2003	146.1	140.2	131.9	151.8	179.5	190.1	171.5	109.9	170.4

2004	154.8	140.5	134.3	157.7	187.3	191.6	173.5	118.2	173.7
2005	155.4	144.5	133.1	157.8	188.5	186.6	174.0	113.4	183.0
2006	164.7	144.3	138.3	157.5	187.0	189.8	181.7	109.3	184.5
2007	178.4	148.2	141.3	158.2	188.4	191.4	186.3	113.2	201.3
2008	205.9	167.2	161.9	182.1	205.1	215.6	203.6	128.3	229.9
2009	211.7	179.8	175.5	196.3	229.3	239.6	213.7	130.9	245.0
2010	212.1	182.9	174.6	203.3	241.3	259.3	210.8	130.9	242.8
2011	213.0	183.7	174.6	204.7	243.3	260.1	211.0	131.3	243.0

Percentage change											
	Bread	Cereals	Beef	Pork	Lamb	Home-killed lamb			Bacon	Poultry	Fresh milk
1990-91	7.8	6.6	0.4	-1.3	-4.5	-5.1			1.4	-0.9	7.5
1991-92	3.4	3.0	0.6	3.0	6.0	8.8			6.8	-3.1	4.1
1992-93	2.8	2.4	7.9	-3.1	9.8	10.8			0.9	-1.1	2.2
1993-94	-2.0	-1.0	-2.1	-3.0	2.6	4.9			-2.9	-2.2	2.8
1994-95	0.2	2.0	0.9	7.2	0.8	4.0			2.1	-1.6	4.1
1995-96	1.8	0.9	1.0	20.7	15.1	14.2			13.3	5.7	1.9
1996-97	-1.4	-0.1	-2.2	-2.6	4.5	-1.0			3.7	0.4	-0.2
1997-98	-1.2	0.1	-2.0	-11.2	-6.8	-7.2			-7.1	-1.2	0.1
1998-99	0.0	-0.9	2.7	-3.7	0.6	2.7			1.2	-0.8	-0.9
1999-2000	1.0	-1.9	0.2	5.9	3.9	6.1			3.6	-2.5	-0.8
2000-01	2.2	0.9	0.4	5.9	4.8	3.5			10.4	2.8	6.0
2001-02	2.4	-0.7	-0.3	2.5	7.4	7.4			-0.9	-2.1	2.8
2002-03	2.3	1.4	-1.1	3.4	5.6	7.8			-0.3	1.6	3.5
2003-04	6.0	0.2	1.8	3.9	4.3	0.8			1.2	7.6	2.0
2004-05	0.4	2.9	-0.8	0.1	0.6	-2.6			0.3	-4.1	5.4
2005-06	6.0	-0.2	3.9	-0.2	-0.8	1.7			4.4	-3.6	0.8

2006-07				8.3	2.7	2.2	0.4	0.7	0.9	2.5	3.6	9.1
2007-08				15.4	12.8	14.6	15.2	8.9	12.6	9.3	13.3	14.2
2008-09				2.8	7.5	8.4	7.8	11.8	11.1	5.0	2.1	6.6
2009-10				0.2	1.7	-0.5	3.6	5.2	8.3	-1.3	0.0	-0.9
2010-11				0.4	0.5	0.0	0.7	0.9	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1

Source: Office of National Statistics

**Roger Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the annual percentage change in farm gate prices was for (a) milk, (b) beef, (c) sheep meat, (d) pig meat, (e) chicken and (f) wheat in each year since 1990. [R] [92930]

**Mr Paice:** The following tables show the annual UK prices (GB for sheep) and percentage change since the previous year for each commodity. The prices shown are actual prices and have not been adjusted for inflation:

	Milk (pence per litre) <sup>(1)</sup>	Milk percentage change	Finished cattle (p/kg liveweight) <sup>(2)</sup>	Cattle percentage change	Sheep (p/kg) <sup>(3)</sup> meat	Sheep meat percentage change
1990	18.5	—	106.3	—	174.5	—
1991	19.9	8	106.9	1	148.2	-15
1992	21.0	6	109.6	3	182.1	23
1993	22.0	5	128.0	17	219.0	20
1994	22.4	2	121.7	-5	236.9	8
1995	24.9	11	123.2	1	236.4	0
1996	25.0	0	105.5	-14	283.1	20
1997	22.1	-12	96.9	-8	239.0	-16
1998	19.4	-12	86.1	-11	192.5	-19

1999	18.3	-6	92.1	7	180.3	-6
2000	16.9	-8	89.8	-2	196.4	9
2001	19.3	14	87.5	-3	—	—
2002	17.1	-11	91.4	4	233.4	—
2003	18.0	5	95.2	4	271.1	16
2004	18.5	3	101.2	6	262.6	-3
2005	18.5	0	102.2	1	250.0	-5
2006	18.0	-3	110.6	8	258.5	3
2007	20.7	15	112.3	2	236.8	-8
2008	25.9	25	144.8	29	297.6	26
2009	23.7	-8	154.6	7	360.4	21
2010 (provisional)	24.7	4	147.2	-5	389.3	8

<sup>(1)</sup> Farmgate price of milk including bonus payments—pence per litre. <sup>(2)</sup> Finished cattle (All prime cattle)—pence per kg liveweight <sup>(3)</sup> Finished sheep (GB prices)—pence per kg estimated dressed carcass weight Source: Agriculture in the United Kingdom

	Pig meat (p/kg) <sup>(1)</sup>	Pig meat percentage change	Chicken (p/kg) <sup>(2)</sup>	Chicken percentage change	Feed wheat (£/tonne)	Feed wheat percentage change
1990	—	—	87.0	—	106.0	—
1991	102.4	—	81.2	-7	117.1	10
1992	115.1	12	83.0	2	117.9	1
1993	103.0	-11	87.4	5	117.4	0
1994	99.6	-3	87.4	0	102.4	-13
1995	118.8	19	84.2	-4	110.2	8
1996	137.7	16	91.0	8	111.0	1
1997	110.8	-20	86.2	-5	89.0	-20
1998	80.7	-27	76.7	-11	75.0	-16

## **Bracken**

**Nicholas Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what guidance her Department has issued on the effective control of bracken in upland areas. [91791]

**Richard Benyon:** Natural England, the Government's adviser on the natural environment, publishes guidance on the control of bracken, on DEFRA's behalf, which is available on Natural England's website and via its Wildlife Licensing Unit. The published guidance offers general advice on the control of bracken and also contains specific reference to its control in upland areas.

The Government are concerned about the EU decision not to approve asulam, as this is an important method of controlling bracken in upland areas. The Health and Safety Executive's Chemicals Regulation Directorate is in discussion with the manufacturer regarding a new submission to support EU approval of asulam.

## **Eggs: EU Law**

**Dr Poulter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to how many companies she has written on ensuring that eggs are sourced from production systems which comply with EU Council Directive 1999/74/EC; and how many such companies have not responded. [91766]

**Mr Paice:** In the autumn of last year I wrote to the Food and Drink Federation and the British Hospitality Association to ask them whether their members could follow the British Retail

Consortium's lead and sign up to a voluntary approach to not source conventional caged eggs after 1 January 2012, when the ban on keeping laying hens in conventional cages came into force.

In addition, I also wrote to Compass who hold a number of Government contracts for catering, and DEFRA officials wrote to the major processors to ask the same question. The list of companies who have made this voluntary pledge is published on the DEFRA website.

### **Food and Drink Industry – Economic Contribution**

**Andrew Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the economic contribution of the food and drink industry; and what steps she is taking to support the sector. [91912]

**Mr Paice:** The farming, food and drink sector plays a significant part in our economy. It is worth nearly £85 billion to the UK economy and employs 3.5 million people. Comparing 2010 with 2009 all sectors of the food chain have seen year on year increases in productivity, resulting in a 0.8% rise in total factor productivity of the food chain.

A sustainable food and farming industry is at the forefront of DEFRA's aims. We are working to help increase the competitiveness and resilience of farms, fisheries and the whole food chain to ensure a secure, environmentally sustainable and healthy supply of food, for example through the green food project and the recent growth review. The Government is committed to working closely with industry stakeholders to boost exports, promote innovation and encourage further growth, particularly among SMEs through the Agri-food and Drink Exports Forum and the Green Food Project Steering Group. Across the food chain we all have a role in promoting efficiency and competitiveness, sharing research and knowledge to promote best practice, and eliminating waste.

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman), recently attended the launch of the Food and Drink Federation's 20/20 Vision for growth of the industry and DEFRA will be working with them to help deliver the ambition.

We have recently published an action plan to promote exports and we will be holding an Innovation for Growth summit in March to raise awareness of the resources for innovation. We will also be holding a competition aimed at helping SMEs carry out pilots or feasibility studies for their innovative ideas.

### **Asulam**

**Nicholas Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what guidance she plans to issue to landowners on effective replacement selective herbicides in advance of the prohibition of asulam; [91806]

(2) what steps she can take to extend the use of asulam beyond 2012. [91846]

**Richard Benyon:** The EU prohibition on the use of asulam comes into operation at the end of 2012. Beyond this date it may be possible for the UK Government to issue emergency authorisations for the use of asulam if there are no alternative means of control available. The Chemicals Regulation Directorate has provided guidance to the Bracken Control Group, which is co-ordinating for interested parties on an application for an emergency authorisation for asulam for its key use for bracken control.

I understand that a current approval holder for asulam intends to make a further submission to the European Commission seeking approval of the substance. Since this submission has to be supported by additional scientific studies, a new submission is unlikely to be made soon.

There are currently no selective herbicides approved for use in the UK that could replace asulam for bracken control. I understand that some research has been conducted on several sulphonyl urea herbicides, but no applications for approval have yet been made. In some situations, non-selective herbicides or mechanical control may be appropriate ways to tackle bracken.

Ends