

EXECUTIVE NOTE

THE CROFTING COUNTIES AGRICULTURAL GRANTS (SCOTLAND) VARIATION SCHEME 2011

SSI 2011/72

The above instrument is made in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 42(1), (1A), (2) and (3) and 46(4) of the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993. The instrument is not subject to any Parliamentary procedure.

Policy objectives

The purpose of the above instrument is to amend the current Crofting Counties Agricultural Grants (Scotland) Scheme 2006 (CCAGS) and it incorporates modifications to the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) which were approved by the European Commission in October 2009.

The above instrument amends CCAGS by making provision for a number of changes to the scope of, and assistance to, eligible applicants to the Scheme.

The amendments being made will allow the Scheme to:

- offer assistance to owner-occupier crofters without the requirement to fulfil an economic status test. This will bring them into line with the arrangements for tenant crofters;
- continue to offer assistance to the sub-tenant of a croft or part of a croft granted under section 27(2) of the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993;
- offer assistance to the tenant of a croft under a short-lease of an owner-occupied croft. This category of tenant has been recently introduced into section 29A of the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993 through amendment by the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010;
- offer enhanced assistance to all eligible applicants, or groups of eligible applicants, who are under 40 years of age; and
- cease to offer assistance to occupiers of holdings other than a croft.

The amendments also remove the appointment of the Crofters Commission as the Scottish Minister's agent for the purpose of administering the Scheme. The Scheme is currently administered by the Scottish Government Rural Payment Inspection Directorate, which also administers other grant schemes under the SRDP.

Purpose of the Scheme

The purpose of CCAGS is to provide financial assistance to crofters and certain occupiers of land in the Crofting Counties to assist the improvement of crofting agriculture, as part of the general policy of compensating crofters for disadvantages of climate, scale, terrain and remoteness and to preserve an agricultural base in the Highlands and Islands. Crofters, crofting groups and others of a similar status are eligible for grant assistance.

Consultation

The amending instrument has been fully discussed with the Crofters Commission in accordance with the consultation obligation referred to in section 42(1) of the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993. As there is no change to the purpose of CCAGS, its measures or level of support, it is anticipated that the amending instrument should receive the support of the crofting community.

Financial Effects

CCAGS is estimated to cost £3 million per annum and the Scottish Government has provided for that amount in its future allocations. There is no change to the level of support provided by the Scheme.

Scottish Government Rural and Environment Directorate
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