

POLICY NOTE

THE SCOTLAND ACT 1998 (FUNCTIONS EXERCISABLE IN OR AS REGARDS SCOTLAND) ORDER 2015

SI 2015 No. 211 (S. 2)

1. The above Instrument is proposed to be made under section 30(3) of the Scotland Act 1998. Section 30(3) confers a power on Her Majesty, by an Order in Council, to specify function which are to be treated as functions which are exercisable in or as regards Scotland. By virtue of paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 7 to the Scotland Act 1998, this Order is subject to affirmative resolution procedures in both Houses of the UK Parliament and the Scottish Parliament.

Policy Objectives

2. This Order will ensure that the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Ministers have competence to deal with Scottish farmers. This Order will define a “Scottish farmer” as having land wholly or partly in Scotland. This is needed because a “farmer” under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is defined by reference to a “holding” across the UK contained in European legislation, and it is otherwise not clear how the new support measures provided by Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council are calculated.

3. A holding consists of all the production units used for agricultural activities and managed by the farmer in the Member State and, therefore, a Scottish farmer (as defined by the Order) may have a holding which straddles the border, or may have holdings which consist of land both in Scotland and England which exist as separate productions units (and, therefore, do not straddle the border). The relevant functions which the Order concerns include those which relate to Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, as well as prerogative and other executive functions which are exercisable in relation to a Scottish farmer (as defined by the Order).

4. The section 30 Order will work in conjunction with an Order under section 106 of the Scotland Act 1998 that will have the effect of creating a separately exercisable function in relation to these Scottish farmers (whose holdings are situated partly in Scotland and partly in the territory of another administration). The two Scotland Act Orders will ensure that the Scottish Ministers can continue to administer claims as the competent authority under the IACS Regulations (see paragraph 7) in respect of these farmers.

Current Situation

5. The CAP provides a system of agricultural support and programmes throughout the European Union (EU). First established in 1957, it currently accounts for almost 39% of the EU Budget. It is split into two Pillars: Pillar 1 relates to direct support payments, which is currently worth about £0.5bn a year to Scotland's farmers; Pillar 2 supports the Rural Development Programme (about £0.2bn a year).

6. The CAP Pillar 1 was reformed in 2003/2004 to provide income support for farmers. The reforms cut the link between subsidies and production but allowed payments to continue (conditional on observation of certain land management, environmental, animal welfare, and food safety standards). It is a long-standing regulatory requirement for farmers participating in the CAP and receiving Pillar 1 support payments that they must be treated by administrations as a single business within the member state. Farm businesses do not always fall neatly within administration boundaries so that there are a number of businesses with land in more than one administration. Such businesses are known as “cross-border farmers”.

7. In order to enable the administration of applications for subsidy for cross-border farmers under the CAP to continue, two Scotland Act Orders were taken forward at that time: (The Scotland Act 1998 (Functions Exercisable in or as Regards Scotland) Order 2004 (SI 2004/3324), a section 30 Order, and The Scotland Act 1998 (Modification of Functions) Order 2004 (SI 2004/2980), a section 106 Order). They combined to define a “Scottish farmer” and to facilitate the transfer of powers to the Scottish Ministers. These Orders also tie in with the UK SI (currently the Common Agricultural Policy Single Payment and Support Schemes (Integrated Administration and Control System) Regulations 2009 (SI 2009/3263) (“the IACS Regulations”) since the EU rules require claims for subsidy to be administered by a single competent authority. These 2004 Orders replicated two earlier Scotland Act Orders (SIs 1999/1748 and 1999/1756) which referred to the previous CAP arrangements and the Orders now proposed do nothing more than continue this long established aspect of devolution.

8. The current CAP arrangements will end on 31 December 2014. The latest reforms for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the framework of CAP are set out in Council Regulation (EC) 1307/2013, which includes repealing Council Regulations (EC) 637/2008 and 73/2009, with effect from 1 January 2015. The new CAP reform proposal seeks to strengthen the competitiveness of the agricultural sector, promote innovation, combat climate change and support jobs and growth in rural areas. To achieve these aims, payments to farmers are being restructured, calculated in a different way and subject to different obligations.

Effect of Instrument

9. As stated above, section 30(3) of the Scotland Act 1998 confers a power on Her Majesty, by an Order in Council, to specify functions which are to be treated as functions which are exercisable in or as regards Scotland. In this case, this Instrument will define a “Scottish farmer” as having land wholly or partly in Scotland.

10. However, before a function can be specified in such an Order in Council as being exercisable in or as regards Scotland, it must be capable of being exercisable separately in or as regards Scotland. Therefore, a separate Order under section 106 of the Scotland Act 1998 (the Scotland Act 1998 (Modification of Functions) Order 2014) is being taken forward to enable subordinate legislation to be made to modify a function to make it so exercisable for the purpose of enabling or facilitating its transfer to the Scottish Ministers.

11. The Order under section 106 will have the effect of creating a separately exercisable function in relation to those farmers whose holdings are situated partly in Scotland and partly in the territory of another administration. This is needed because a “farmer” under the CAP is defined by reference to a “holding” across the whole territory of a Member State and, on its

own, it is not sufficient to identify those individuals over whom the Scottish Ministers have competence. Without the Order, it would not be clear which administration in the UK (as the member state) would be competent to manage applications and related payments in respect of those farmers in Scotland. The section 30 Order will ensure that the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Ministers have competence to deal with Scottish farmers (as defined by the Order). Ultimately, the two Orders will combine to allow the administration of applications for subsidy for cross-border farmers under the CAP scheme to continue when the current arrangements end on 31 December 2014.

12. Under the current CAP arrangements, a farmer with land in the territories of more than one administration has his application forms dealt with by the administration in which the majority of the land lies. There exists for the farmer, however, the option to continue dealing with the administration, which historically has dealt with his claims even if subsequent changes in his land holdings mean that the majority of land now lies in a different administration. This allows the farmer to have continuity of service from the administration holding his relevant business details. The use of a particular administration or the election of a different administration has no impact on the value of support the farmer will receive. This option to choose an administration will continue under the new CAP arrangements.

13. The UK Government has agreed to this proposed course of action, and to the laying of the draft instrument before both Houses of Parliament at Westminster for approval, as required by paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 7 to the Scotland Act 1998.

Consultation

14. Although there has been no public consultation specific to the amendments of this Order, the UK Government, Northern Ireland Executive and Welsh Government departments with responsibility for the legislation which this Order affects have been consulted during the drafting of this Order. All amendments contained in this Order have the approval of the relevant departments.

Financial effects

15. This Instrument (and its companion Instrument – see paragraph 10) does no more than give Scottish Ministers the powers to act. Other detailed provisions will be brought forward in secondary legislation to implement the respective schemes in each of the territories of the United Kingdom. There are, therefore, no financial implications.

16. This instrument has no impact of a regulatory nature on the private sector or civil society organisations and will not impose or reduce costs.

Scottish Government
October 2014