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Alyn Smith comments on CAP reform

SNP MEP praises proposals for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

SNP MEP **Alyn Smith** has today (Wednesday) praised the long-awaited and much leaked unveiling of the formal proposals to reform the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as a solid start to the negotiating process, and issued a briefing to Scots organisations with a call for them to get "all over this" to ensure we get the best result we can.

EU Agriculture Commissioner Dacian Ciolos formally outlined the proposals to the Agriculture Committee in Parliament this morning.

Alyn Smith MEP said:

"Finally, the shadow boxing is over, and after all those reports, declarations and deliberations which some were so keen to present as of earth-shattering importance, we can now get down to business.

"On our initial scan of the documents, they are little changed from the various leaked versions we have seen over the summer. I could fall back on clichés like 'the devil will be in the detail' but when is it not? This is a complicated package and we will need to model the various proposals properly to see what works best.

"On balance, I like the tone of the proposals in their aim, but am nervous that for every lofty ambition there will need to be a complicated and expensive paper-chase to create a scheme that works. We risk replacing an already admin-heavy CAP with an even more burdensome paper-chase.

"On greening, I see little to dislike. 7% set aside is a way of actually rewarding existing practice of putting unproductive scraps of land to ecological purposes. I've yet to see a farm that is 100% productive, so opposition from some to this proposal seems to me to miss the point that it will reward current best practice and change little on the ground.

"There are some additional LFA wrinkles, including a new criterion related to "Limited Soil Drainage" which sounds pretty familiar to Scottish ears. That will need some thinking too, but we have a solid history on using LFA well so I am confident the new criteria will work for us with a bit of tweaking.

"I urge all organisations to get all over this. Scotland has only a few representatives in these negotiations and we will need all the support we can get. I'm confident that Scotland is at the mainstream of European agricultural thinking, and confident too that we can build allies for our goal of a profitable, productive and sustainable EU agricultural sector."

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