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SNP success on 'EID Relief Fund' and farm prices EU budget boost

A press release by SNP MEP Alyn Smith

SNP MEP **Alyn Smith** has today (Wednesday) hailed a vote in the Parliament's Agriculture Committee on the EU budget, which saw his amendment to create a €125,000,000 "EID Relief" fund for farmers coping with the costs of implementing EID backed by the Committee. A further Smith amendment to fund the creation of a "European Farm Prices and Margins" watchdog with a €3,000,000 set up budget was also backed by the Committee, along with a number of other successful amendments. However, further amendments to end tobacco subsidy and subsidy for bullfighting were defeated.

The Committee's recommendations will now be considered by the Parliament's Budget Committee, then voted upon by the full Parliament, but for the EID Relief fund to win the backing of the influential Agriculture Committee is remarkable.

Speaking after the vote Smith said:

"This is a real coup. I put down the amendment to create an "EID Relief" fund more in hope than expectation, I am delighted to see it win through. Though I would caution that the argument is far from over. I have long argued that the individual identification legislation, agreed to by the UK government in 2001, is unnecessary and unworkable, and have missed no opportunity to argue against it. With some success. A number of other countries have backed our calls for the package to be made voluntary, and recent months have seen agreement over more workable ways the legislation could be implemented in Scotland.

"The clock is ticking, and while a number of recent derogations won by the anti EID campaign have been welcome, I think there are still further concessions to be won, and an obligation to find €125,000,000, if agreed to by Parliament, will certainly focus minds in the Commission. Certainly the view of the MEPs from all parties and states in the Agriculture Committee is clearly hostile to the package.

"The Prices Watchdog is also a real boost for farmers. The Parliament has issued report after report about the difference in the amounts paid to farmers compared to those paid by consumers, and yet we have seen little real action beyond warm words and sympathy. The idea to fund the creation of a formal watchdog came to me in a presentation from farming organisations (under the auspices of trade body COPA-COGECA) in which they called for a watchdog to be created, and this budget would see the

creation of a potentially powerful ally for farmers across Europe.

"Other budget amendments were more mixed, though I am grateful to colleagues for their support on all those which were successful."

ENDS

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NOTE TO EDITORS
Smith put down a number of amendments to the EU budget, the result of the vote in the Committee is summarised below.

Successful Amendments

* 125m EUR to help fund electronic tagging of sheep - to pay for the electronic tags. Urges the Commission and Council to provide the funds to help farmers implement this policy.
* 3m pilot project for a European Farm Prices and Margins Observatory to examine the supply chain and supermarket buying power, and the producer's share.
* Increase in appropriations for school fruit and school milk.
* New dairy fund of 600m to help through crisis - includes money to help farmers organise in co-ops.
* 2m pilot project for initiatives for low carbon emission, low energy consumption and locally marketed food chains.

Unsuccessful Amendments

* 3m pilot project to help farmers organise themselves in co-operatives so they can negotiate prices better.
* All amendments to abolish export refunds, or at least to cut amounts going to export refunds, intervention prices etc.
* Nutrition standards for food distribution to deprived persons.
* School fruit should be locally produced and organic. Ditto school milk.
* Tobacco premium deletion.
* Bullfighting.
* Reducing aid for energy crops or increasing aid for protein crops.

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