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Thumbs up for new agriculture Commissioner

Press release by SNP MEP Alyn Smith

SNP MEP and member of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee **Mr Alyn Smith** has today (Friday) given his thumbs up to the Romanian Commissioner-Designate for Agriculture, Dacian Ciolo?.

Mr Ciolo? was present in the Parliament for his official hearing in front of the Agriculture Committee, where he faced three hours of questioning on a wide variety of topics related to the farming sector including CAP reform, imports from third countries, food quality, GMOs, food prices and market stability among other subjects.

Mr Smith was unable to attend in person as he was on a Parliamentary delegation to Gaza. He has, however, already met individually with Commissioner-Designate Ciolo?.

Speaking after the hearing, Alyn Smith said:

"As expected, the Commissioner-Designate gave a polished and considered performance in his hearing, confirming that he has a solid grasp of the issues.

"As in our meeting at the end of last year, he stressed his wish to break down the divisions between east and west, and old and new member states, yet at the very start he expressed his desire to continue to promote diversity in European agriculture. This is very important and clarifies that he has no wish to head up an EU Commission that has removed all power of subsidiarity from individual member states.

"There can be no doubt that he will represent farmers' best interests vocally and with determination within the College of Commissioners. When asked about the declining CAP budget he replied that if it was up to him, there would be more money in the pot for European agriculture. He was blunt on his feelings towards the purpose of CAP: direct payments have proved their worth. They must stay. If Europe wants farming to continue, if we want young people to enter the agricultural sector, then there must be efforts made to maintain the stability of farm incomes and reduce dramatic price fluctuations.

"In our meeting Mr Ciolo? agreed to come to Scotland if he was confirmed in his position and so I hope that it won't be long before the Commissioner comes to see our world-class agricultural sector for himself.

"Of more concern to me was the hearing of John Dalli, the Commissioner-Designate for Health and Consumer Policy. This part of the Commission has an important role in some areas of farming policy, for instance, on pesticides, EID and animal transport. Unfortunately Mr Dalli expressed his wish to see a proposal come forward in one year on the subject of animal transport, a topic that simply refuses to go away. He gave no mention of his preferred content during the hearing and so I have today written to

him asking for clarification on this point."

Notes to editors: A photo of Mr Smith and Commissioner-Designate Ciollo? is available.

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