

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

77% of Scots want farming to deliver for our environment and climate, poll suggests

3 May 2018 – A poll of 1,000 Scots conducted by Survation on behalf of Scottish Environment LINK reveals overwhelming public support in favour of a farm subsidy system that delivers for the environment.

77% of respondents would like to see farm support be conditional to land managers showing that they are supporting wildlife and are reducing climate impacts.

The poll suggests that people want to see a variety of issues addressed by our farming sector such as reducing the use of pesticides and antibiotics, promoting organic production and increasing animal welfare. To pursue those objectives, farmers also need support to enhance skills and knowledge, sustain the sector in the long-term by supporting young farmers and enabling farmers to supply local shops, markets, schools and hospitals.

This poll confirms public support for Scottish farming as a sector and an appetite to see Scottish farmers thrive while enhancing our environment and landscape.

Commenting on the survey results, Pete Ritchie Leader of LINK's food and farming subgroup said:

"We knew the Scottish public were concerned about the environment, but this poll shows very high levels of cross-party support for a food and farming policy which delivers public goods and a strong local food economy. The forthcoming Good Food Nation bill offers a great opportunity to refocus public support for farming on delivering public value."

Vicki Swales, Head of Land Use Policy for RSPB Scotland and Convenor of LINK's Land Group commented:

"We think it is right that public money is used to support farming and crofting but it must be well targeted and focused on delivering public goods. That means supporting farmers and crofters for managing their land in ways that are good for wildlife, reduces climate warming greenhouse gases and improves water quality, amongst other things. This poll shows that is what the majority of the public also want. We urge the Scottish Government to develop farming policy now that will deliver this."

Scottish Environment LINK wants to see farming thrive in Scotland, as part of a sustainable rural economy and cohesive rural communities. Farming can increase biodiversity, deliver positive animal welfare for farm animals, support nature tourism, create good jobs and deliver a wide range of public goods such as clean water, flood protection, locking up carbon and iconic landscapes. This can be best achieved by ensuring that public policy on farming is part of wider policy debate on the sort of Scotland we want to live in – linked in to our commitments on the Sustainable Development Goals, on biodiversity, on climate change, on land reform, and on reducing poverty and inequality.

To do this, regardless of the outcome of current Brexit discussions, and with respect for the devolution settlement, Scottish Environment LINK members support that we:

- 1) Retain** current levels of public investment in our rural areas. The challenges facing farming, crofting and other rural land use businesses and the environment are too great to ignore and we cannot afford to

lower the level of public expenditure in the rural sector. Without public investment, these challenges will not be met and opportunities will be missed.

- 2) **Reshape** how we spend public money, allocating resources in three main ways:
 - public money for public goods with the lion's share of resources focused on this;
 - investments to facilitate change such as helping farming, crofting, forestry and other rural businesses adapt and develop, improve business efficiency and explore market opportunities; and,
 - investments in supporting activities including research, knowledge transfer, advice and training.
- 3) **Renew** our rural areas for the benefit of all of us: rewarding farmers, foresters and other land managers for the full range of goods and services they provide and helping rural businesses become more profitable and sustainable; protecting and enhancing the environment and the natural resources that underpin economic activity; and, spending taxpayers' money effectively, helping to create good livelihoods and jobs and contributing to our health and wellbeing.

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Editors' Notes

[1] Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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[2] Suration is market research firm who are trusted partners to well-known brands and organisations in the UK.

<http://suration.com/who-are-we/>

[3] The survey results were published in "The Scotsman", read the full article here:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/environment/poll-most-scots-want-farmer-payments-tied-to-nature-protection-1-4734005>

[4] Full survey results available here: <http://suration.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/CAP-Poll-ScotLINK-Tables.pdf>

[5] LINK's position paper on the "Future of Farming and Rural Land Use in Scotland" is available here:

http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/LINK-Future-of-Farming-and-Rural-Land-Management_March2017.pdf

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