

Y Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru
National
Assembly for
Wales



Rebecca Evans AM
Deputy Minister for Farming and Food
Welsh Government

20 January 2015

Annwyl Rebecca

Common Agricultural Policy: Basic Payment Scheme regions

In light of your announcement that the regulations that defined Basic Payment Scheme regions will now be quashed and that new payment regions will need to be designed, and in advance of your appearance before the Committee on 11 February, the Committee would be grateful if you could provide information on:

- when a formal consultation is likely to be published and what the timescales will be for that consultation;
- when farmers are likely to be informed of how their land will be classified and if there will be an opportunity for farmers to appeal any new classification;
- when farmers are likely to find out how much basic farm payment they are likely to receive;
- the likely impact these changes will have on the issuing of payments in 2015;
- if the modelling of the new payment regions demonstrates that different groups of farmers are likely to be affected by a redistribution of payments, than was previously the case, and whether you will need to consider re-designing some of the schemes contained within the RDP;
- how many Stage 2 Technical Review process appeals were outstanding when the decision was taken to quash the regulations;

Bae Caerdydd
Caerdydd
CF99 1NA
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

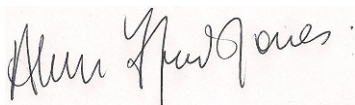
- what the cost of reimbursing Stage 2 claimants who had employed contractors to undertake technical reports will be; and
- whether approval was given by the European Commission to the original payment region classifications prior to the regulations being laid before the Assembly.

In addition, a number of stakeholders have drawn to the Committee's attention the issue of the measurement of trees in fields for the purposes of calculating ineligible areas for the basic payment scheme. Stakeholders have expressed serious concerns that measuring the canopy of the tree as opposed to the area covered by the tree trunk will mean that some land will now be classified as ineligible for the basic payment. The Committee has been told that this could encourage landowners to remove environmentally valuable trees from fields. The Committee notes that your officials have outlined that this change is due a European Commission requirement to establish a consistent assessment for land containing ineligible features, but the Committee would be grateful if you could provide further information on:

- the number of land parcels and hectares previously eligible for direct payments that are now likely to be deemed ineligible;
- whether this land was taken into consideration when modelling of the payment regions was completed;
- what information has been provided to those affected by the change and what support is being offered to them;
- what account was taken of this change in the re-design of Glastir and other relevant schemes under the RDP; and
- whether a similar approach to this issue is being taken by other administrations in the UK and, if not, why Wales has selected this particular option?

I would be grateful if you could provide responses to the above points by Friday 30 January.

Yours sincerely,



Alun Ffred Jones AM
Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee