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Farmers need increased financial support following 12 months of "brutal" weather for the industry, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Shadow rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman called on the Scottish Government to provide farmers across the country with additional help amid rising death rates of cattle and sheep.

He said the 'Beast from the East' has led to more fatalities of cows and sheep, while the poor weather across the previous summer and autumn reduced the quality of feed, leaving stock in poor condition.

Silage quality is also very poor, he added, with feed and straw stock scarce and expensive.

That comes on the back of farmers already struggling to cope with the SNP's farm payments fiasco, which starved rural Scotland of hundreds of millions of pounds in recent years.

Farming income across Scotland has almost halved in the past six years.

Scottish Conservative shadow rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman said:

"The farming sector has been struggling for some time and it's due to a range of factors.

"It's nobody's fault the weather has been so terrible, and of course there's very little that can be done to mitigate the impact at the time.

"But it's not just the 'Beast from the East' that's hurt farmers – the weather across the whole year has been very poor.

"There has been a big rise in deaths of cattle and sheep, and the quality of silage has been very poor – this all has a cost to an industry already struggling to get by.

"This is where the Scottish Government should step in to help.

"Our hill farmers in particular need some extra help at this time.

“Assistance with the lifting of fallen stock would be one thing that could be easily done.

“Getting rid of the hated three-crop rule for this year would also be warmly received.

“And it would all go some way to reversing the damage caused by the SNP’s shambolic handling of vital CAP payments in recent years.”