

News story: UK Government Agriculture Bill – Scotland myth-buster

The UK Government's Agriculture Bill was introduced on 12 September 2018. Agriculture is devolved to the Scottish Government and will remain devolved. This Bill does not change that. Claims of 'power grab' are completely false and misleading.

The UK Government is not seeking consent from the Scottish Parliament on this Bill as we are not legislating in areas of devolved competence in Scotland.

No powers that could constrain devolved policy choices in Scotland are being introduced.

For example, there is nothing in the Agriculture Bill which will stop existing Scottish Government policies – including the Voluntary Coupled Support and Less Favoured Area Support Scheme. They will still be possible under both retained EU law and the Agriculture Bill.

Contrary to claims, Scottish farmers will continue to receive the same level of funding as they currently do until the end of this Parliament in 2022

As we leave the EU, it is our intention that each administration can independently design policies that support their farming sectors and enhance their environment.

While these policies are still under development, the Agriculture Bill demonstrates a continued commitment by the UK Government to World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations on domestic support.

The Scottish Government has claimed powers enabling us to comply with our WTO obligations should be exercised jointly; however, the Scottish Parliament does not have the legal competence to act in this area.

While this is a reserved matter, the UK Government will work closely with the devolved administrations on this given their interest. Just as we did ahead of the Agriculture Bill's introduction.

We have offered to extend powers in the Agriculture Bill to the devolved administrations which would enable them to create their own farming support systems to replace the CAP.

Wales and Northern Ireland have accepted the offer.

The Scottish Government has chosen not to take any powers in this Bill. Agriculture is devolved and that is their choice. But our offer remains on the table.

We remain in discussions with the Welsh and Scottish Governments regarding red meat levy funds and legislative options.

We will continue to work with all parts of the UK to put in place a wider common framework relating to agriculture once we leave the EU.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

The UK Government has already agreed to commit the same cash total in funds for farm support for Scotland until the end of this Parliament.

This Bill ensures that new systems of farming support can be put in place after 2020 in England and Wales.

Farmers in Scotland need the same reassurance – and time is running out for the Scottish Government to act.

It is simply not acceptable for Scottish farmers to be kept in the dark about the future of agricultural policy in Scotland.