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The SNP has been urged to change its mind about keeping secret a damning report into the farmer payments fiasco.

Earlier today, Audit Scotland revealed it would be 2018 “at the earliest” before the Common Agricultural Payments crisis was sorted, and warned of further problems for farmers across the country.

However, the Scottish Government also has its own report into what went wrong, and has again confirmed its intention not to publish it.

Answering a question from Scottish Conservative MSP Finlay Carson, rural affairs secretary Fergus Ewing merely said “publishing such detail could compromise the security of the CAP payments IT platform”.

He added that “improvements identified in the report are already underway” and that his officials were working with the company behind the failed IT system.

MSPs on the rural economy and connectivity committee saw parts of the report – carried out by firm Fujitsu – and described it as “highly critical” and “damning”.

Despite that, and the fact Audit Scotland’s own report was made public this morning, the SNP still wants to keep the findings secret.

Scottish Conservative Galloway and West Dumfries MSP Finlay Carson said:

“Quite frankly, this stinks of a cover-up, particularly when Audit Scotland feels able to make public its own report into this fiasco.

“The SNP has presided over a CAP crisis which has seen Scotland’s rural communities starved of hundreds of millions of pounds.

“Now, in another blow to farmers, the SNP has ruled out publishing a report that might help us all get to the bottom of these many issues.

“That is an insult to everyone in Scotland who cares about our rural communities.

“It’s clear the Scottish Government is more concerned with saving face and playing politics than getting down to the job of serving our vital rural communities.”

Below is a parliamentary question from Scottish Conservative MSP Finlay Carson, and the answer from rural affairs secretary Fergus Ewing:

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): “To ask the Scottish Government when it will publish the report by Fujitsu regarding the IT system used to process CAP payments.”

S50-01046

Fergus Ewing:

“The report from Fujitsu contains sensitive commercial information as well as technical detail which has implications for cyber-security – publishing such detail could compromise the security of the CAP payments IT platform and, at this critical juncture in the payments schedule, I’m sure the member would agree that would not be a desirable outcome.

I can reassure the member that improvements identified in the Report are already underway and that my officials are working with CGI, the main IT supplier, and Fujitsu on an incremental improvement programme to provide longer term sustainability, scalability and flexibility to the CAP payment system.”

Audit Scotland blasted the Scottish Government’s failed CAP payments in a hard-hitting report published this morning:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-40274009>

When the Fujitsu report was first shown to MSPs, the Scottish Conservatives urged the SNP to publish it in full:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/05/snp-must-publish-secret-report-which-blasts-cap-payment-chaos/>