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The Scottish Government's cabinet was told about plans to seek an extension in processing vital farming payments, days before both Nicola Sturgeon and the rural affairs secretary evaded the issue.

It was revealed in Holyrood today that Fergus Ewing informed members of the cabinet that he was likely to seek permission from Europe to extend the deadline for delivering CAP payments to Scotland's farmers.

This is despite the fact, on Wednesday and Thursday last week, both he and the First Minister – when directly asked – dodged the question.

It means the Scottish Government's most senior members – including the First Minister – would have had this information before the issue was publicised at the end of last week.

At today's rural economy and connectivity committee, following questioning from Scottish Conservative MSP Jamie Greene, Mr Ewing conceded cabinet had been informed that the extension would be requested.

He then added he was unsure if Nicola Sturgeon herself was present at the meeting, though she will have been informed of what was discussed. Scottish Government cabinet meetings take place every Tuesday.

At today's committee, Mr Ewing also admitted payments would not be made by the Friday deadline, meaning farmers have been left waiting for cash for two years running.

Scottish Conservative shadow rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman said:

“We now know that the Scottish Government's cabinet was told that this extension would be requested.

“Despite knowing this, both Fergus Ewing and Nicola Sturgeon pleaded ignorance last week, even after the disclosure had been made to cabinet.

“This is yet another incident of the SNP completely lacking in transparency.

“It's simply not good enough for figures as senior as the First Minister to shrug her shoulders when repeatedly asked something, even though her cabinet

had already been informed.

“It’s insulting to the parliament and, more seriously, a slap in the face to thousands of farmers who are yet again waiting for crucial CAP payments.”

Scottish Government cabinet meets on Tuesdays.

Today, Fergus Ewing said he had informed cabinet that the extension would be sought.

But last Wednesday, when asked by shadow rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman if the extension had been requested, he refused to say.

A day later, Ruth Davidson repeatedly asked Nicola Sturgeon the same question. She also declined to tell MSPs.

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/sturgeon-must-come-clean-on-second-cap-crisis/>