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Ministers have been urged to make public a “highly critical” report into the recent CAP cash crisis, which delayed payments worth hundreds of millions of pounds to Scottish farmers.

Members of Holyrood’s rural economy and connectivity committee were today given sight of a report commissioned by the Scottish Government in the wake of the fiasco.

However, the MSPs have been ordered to keep the paper private amid claims publishing it would breach commercial sensitivity.

The Scottish Government adds that the report – carried out by firm Fujitsu – contains details of live contracts which could be jeopardised by its release.

It was triggered after the Scottish Government’s IT system processing CAP payments failed to get the money through to farmers, causing massive delays and pushing many to the brink of going out of business.

Various MSPs who were given an executive summary said it was “damning” and “highly critical”, while convener Edward Mountain said it was “unacceptable” the full report had not been published.

At today’s meeting, Scottish Government civil servants confirmed the report highlighted the need for “remedial action” and that there were “system defects”.

In contrast to the SNP’s secrecy in the issue, the Scottish Conservatives last year pledged in their rural manifesto to hold an official probe into the CAP payments crisis.

Scottish Conservative shadow rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman said:

“This was a scandal which starved Scotland’s rural communities of hundreds of millions of pounds.

“Yet now the SNP appears to want to keep secret a damning report on the issue.

“How is the Scottish Government supposed to improve these systems in future

if it's not willing to be transparent?

"Farmers across the country will be furious at this attempt to bury a report which clearly contains very severe criticism for the SNP and its ability to help Scotland's rural communities."

The Scottish Conservatives have been repeatedly critical of the SNP on CAP payments:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/04/farmer-income-plummeted-as-snp-blotched-cap-payments/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2016/03/probe-into-cap-payments-fiasco-will-be-at-heart-of-rural-plan/>