

Email received 10 March 2009 – Name and contact details supplied

To whom it concerns,

I've taken a time to read the LFA review and am concerned that the options presented in the executive summary do not necessarily meet my individual needs to maintain my farming activity within the LFA area.

Currently I lease 340 acres of SDA hill land on which I sustain a suckler herd and sheep enterprise. I'm 34 years old and have farmed this land for the last 9 years. In that time profits from production will have averaged a negative figure. My accounts for the year ending April 2008 shows my best performance to date with a production profit of £1700, whilst my worst production loss in the last 9 years was £7800.

There is no future for such an enterprise without LFA support. In my case there are no other sources of income from this land, it is part of an ESA scheme which is paid to the landowner. This has the dual effect of adding cost to my production by preventing me from grazing the hill for 4 months, hence winter grazing and addition meal feed must be paid for, and the ESA also restricts my livestock numbers so there is no opportunity to alter my production in any significant way. I comply with an ESA agreement, for the benefit of a non-farming land owner. I gain no single farm payment for this land either, as when my livestock subsidies were decoupled as a tenant farmer I was forced to give up my entitlement whilst the non-farming land owner claimed all the entitlements on the land and pocketed the money. So when I consider the options presented the following are my anticipated outcomes;

Option 1; Withdrawal of the scheme: I stop farming this land without hesitation or delay. My sheep & cattle business instantly becomes non-viable.

Option 2; Funding moved to invest in the competitiveness of farms: this means investing capital on a tenanted farm whilst I cannot alter stock levels to maintain my income. Capital expenditure on a tenanted farm is largely unrecoverable should my tenancy end, therefore I stop farming this land as soon as possible.

Option 3; Funding moved to expand the Countryside management scheme, this fund is already paid directly to the landowner, I would now have to be paid by the landowner to keep farming the land otherwise there is no profit for me. No land owner is about to pay their tenants. Therefore I stop farming this land.

Option 4; A new LFA scheme emerges where the farmer is paid to farm in a way that protects habitats in disadvantaged areas. Depending on the conditions for payment I may have a chance to farm this land and make a very modest profit, all whilst I maintain the conditions of the landowners ESA agreement for their benefit not mine, and meet all cross compliance requirements for SFP again for the benefit of the landowner not my own.

Basically there is a fundamental flaw in the way agriculture is subsidized in this country whereby landowners who are not involved in farming collected significant amounts of money in agricultural subsidies while the peasant farmer meets all the requirements for payment to be made. Now again there is a real danger that one of the last large farmer directed funds is to be diverted away for the farmer and into the hands of the landowner.

All agriculture subsidies (including ESA, CMS, SFP, LFA) in my opinion should only be paid to ACTIVE FARMERS without exception wither they be the landowner or not.

Regards