

CAP impacts on grazing

Extracts from Nibblers online discussion group (July 04)

I have had an increasing number of enquiries from farmers worried about when Subsidy will disappear altogether. As I understood it was to be phased out after 2012 but I got this response from John Cousins the Head of agriculture at the wildlife trusts:

"At the moment there is no apparent end to subsidy, we know that the flat rate area payment should run until 2012 when it is supposed to run on. Predictions for payment rates are £75 per acre after modulation in 2012. But we must remember that inflation will make these payments less valuable in real terms."

By this quote I do not mean to question Jonhs comments who as always has worked really hard to clear up the complicated tangle of CAP reform for all of us here at the Trusts and elsewhere. But rather to note that there seems to be lots of different information coming from all directions. Has anyone else noticed this from DEFRA or have I been caught out by some Farmer spin?

Cheers.

Rob.
Rob Havard
Woolhope Dome Project Officer
Herefordshire Nature Trust
rhavard@herefordwt.cix.co.uk

The future of SPs appears very cloudy in my crystal ball, Rob. I wouldn't want to bet on anything that far ahead. I suggest you tell your graziers to focus on sorting out the uncertainties involved in implementing this latest set of reforms before they start worrying about the next ones.

If I had to be bold I would probably predict that whatever follows SPS will be more directly targeted at environmental objectives or Pillar II to use the jargon. I am amazed when I reflect back how far we have come to get where we are today: these new payments are a long way from the simple production based subsidies that they are replacing. Or at least they should be if they are properly enforced.

As for the confusion that is evident in the information that filters out I would agree. But I would qualify that by suggesting that it is not altogether surprising when you look at the text of the original EU ruling (not that I have, but odd snippets have been quoted at me by people much nearer the hub). I have made several enquiries from the CAP reform briefing team at DEFRA and sense that they are genuinely trying to shed light on our darkness. On the commons issue for example (Mary Holloway's and others question) they could only say that it is a difficult area that they are trying to resolve and will make a pronouncement when they can. They appear to positively welcome specific questions about actual problems in implementing the proposals in order to help them clarify the practical implications. I thought I might gather together these queries and forward them to Defra on your behalves and see what comes back. I imagine that we could try a similar tack on the other issues that CAP reform is raising.

I imagine that the other devolved administrations will be similarly engaged, although I don't yet know how to access their policy briefing units. I expect that like Defra they will have them tucked away very discretely but hopefully they could still be accessed via the general enquiries and helplines, which is how I tracked down the Defra one. If anyone in Wales, Scotland or N Ireland has any success along these lines please let us know because the fall out from the reforms will of course be rather different in each of the Home Countries.

best wishes
Bill

At the last CAP Stakeholders briefing both the complex issue of cross boundary holdings, and of common grazings, were high on the officials 'to sort' list. There were plans for many of the complex issues to be sorted before the Royal Welsh (next week)... so things may become clearer quite soon.

You may all be pleased to hear that Carwyn Jones has agreed that Wales will have an Entry Level agri-environment scheme - to be called Tir Cynnal. It is being trialed in two areas this autumn, and will open for applications in Spring 2005.

Sue Fowler
Organic Centre Wales
Policy and Development Officer

Thanks to John Cousins (TWTs) for this latest update:

I am attending a Defra meeting on Thursday [in my capacity of Chair of the Wildlife and Countryside Link Agriculture Group] to discuss the Single Payment Scheme and commons and you may have seen this. In summary, a Defra paper states the following: The SPS is an area linked payment but commoners rights are expressed in terms of headage of animals that can be grazed on the common. So Defra need to decide how to convert from headage to area for payment purposes. One simplistic way to address this is one entitlement plus one eligible hectare can lead to payment if the other scheme conditions are met. But because commoners rights are not linked to a specific part of the common, Defra will need to make a notional appointment of the whole of the common. However, this will tend to focus on active commoners yet it would be contrary to the design of the scheme if only active commoners were able to claim entitlement to a share in the SPS allocation [if only active commoners were allowed to claim, there would be no obligation on them to continue commoning - and therefore no apparent reason why active commoners should be distinguished from inactive commoners].
Right To Use.

One option would be to divide the common between those who register a claim to establish entitlements to SPS.

Another option would be to allocate the eligible area making up the common in proportion to all the agricultural common rights.

Commons Associations.

Commoners could concentrate the historic element of the single payment on their in-by land. The whole of the eligible area of the common could be registered and the area payment claimed by the Association [which in turn could assign entitlements to commoners]. This would need full agreement of the commoners and the transfer of all commoners'

rights to the Association so that it could administer the grazing of the common.

Statutory Commoners Associations [SCAs]. It is a possibility that SCAs should be established on a compulsory

basis. The SPS would then be allocated to SCAs and the SCAs could then allocate the sums received among commoners on a fair and reasonable basis.

We must remember that cross compliance conditions must be met across the whole of the common.

I have put the above message on the wildlife trusts cix conference, the full file is attached.

Any comments? I am happy for this to be put on nibblers if you think fit.

John Cousins,
Head of Agricultural Policy,
The Wildlife Trusts.
07867 556614
