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Finlay Carson MSP
Convener of the Rural Affairs and Islands
Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

26 June 2023

Dear Finlay,

I am writing to the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee to provide an update on the forthcoming Agriculture Bill. Following my previous letter on 26 August 2022 to notify the committee of the launch of the Agriculture Bill public consultation, the consultation analysis has now concluded and a report has been published on Thursday 22 June 2023.

A public consultation on proposals for a new Bill, “Delivering our Vision for Scottish Agriculture. Proposals for a new Agriculture Bill” closed on 5 December 2022. The Agricultural Reform Implementation Oversight Board (ARIOB) supported and informed the development of this consultation and the proposals for a new Agriculture Bill. The consultation sought views on proposals which aim to deliver the Vision for Agriculture and transform how we support farming and food production in Scotland to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture.

The Scottish Government commissioned research company, Diffley Partnership, to undertake an independent analysis of all consultation responses and feedback received during the consultation events. Careful consideration has been given to the diverse range of views received. A total of 392 valid responses were received to the consultation from a range of stakeholders and from members of the public across Scotland, in addition to feedback from approximately 600 attendees at the consultation events. These responses will help inform the new Agriculture Bill.

It is intended that the new Agriculture Bill will be introduced in 2023, as per previous commitments under the Bute House Agreement, and the Programme for Government 2021. More recently, the commitment in the First Minister’s vision for Scotland aims that by 2026 we will ensure that, through the publicly committed Route Map to transition, agriculture support is delivering increased conditions on Direct Payments to better incentivise sustainable and regenerative practice, on-farm nature restoration and climate mitigation and adaptation efforts, while supporting our producers in high-quality food production. The Bill is an important step in seeking to realise that vision.

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Yours sincerely,



MAIRI GOUGEON

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