

Rural Affairs Committee
Wednesday 2 September 2026
2nd Meeting, 2026 (Session 7)

Rural Support Plan

Introduction

1. The first [Rural Support Plan](#) was published on 24 March 2026. It is a requirement under the [Agriculture and Rural Communities \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#) and sets out the Scottish Government's plan for providing support to farmers, crofters, land managers and rural communities from 2026-2031.
2. The Rural Affairs Committee agreed in June 2026 to hold a short "snapshot" inquiry into the Rural Support Plan in the Autumn of 2026.

Background

3. Agricultural policy reform began in Scotland following the UK vote to leave the European Union in 2016. After the 2020 departure from the EU, Scotland is no longer subject to the Common Agricultural Policy, which shaped agricultural policy for decades.
4. While there have been several steps in the process to this point ([summarised in more detail in the SPICe Land Use in Scotland subject profile](#)), some of the key milestones include:
 - 2018 – "[Stability and Simplicity: proposals for a rural funding transition period](#)" published. This launched a consultation on "a comprehensive new approach to supporting the rural economy to achieve world class agricultural and environmental outcomes".
 - 2020 – [Agriculture \(retained EU Law and Data\) \(Scotland\) Bill becomes an Act](#). The Act gave powers to Scottish Ministers to make changes to the legacy EU CAP legislation that still governs Scottish agriculture policy today.
 - 2021 - [Agriculture Reform Implementation Oversight Board](#) and [Agriculture Policy Development Group](#) formed to advise the Government on reform.
 - 2022 – [Vision for Agriculture](#) published. It stated that the Scottish Government will "transform how we support farming and food production in Scotland to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture."
 - 2023 – First version of the [Agriculture Reform Route Map](#) published. This proposed the new support framework, which divides support into four tiers. The tiers are:
 - **Tier 1: base** – which includes direct payments to farmers;

- **Tier 2: enhanced** – which is intended to support farmers and crofters to do more for climate and nature;
- **Tier 3: elective** – which is intended to support action that protects habitats or species or improves business sustainability;
- **Tier 4 – complementary** – intended to help to grow skills and capabilities, including training and advice.
- 2024 – [Agriculture and Rural Communities \(Scotland\) Bill becomes an Act](#). The Act was required to deliver the new framework set out in the route map and set out five objectives. The Act requires the Scottish Government to produce a Rural Support Plan every five years.
- 2026 – First Rural Support Plan published.

The first Rural Support Plan

5. The Rural Support Plan sets out five “outcomes” it seeks to achieve, with “sub-outcomes” sitting underneath each one. The outcomes are:
 - High quality food production;
 - enabling thriving rural communities;
 - climate change mitigation and adaptation;
 - nature restoration; and
 - support for a Just Transition.
6. The Plan outlines what financial support will be available to farmers over the next five years, and structures this under four support 'tiers'. This largely mirrors existing support, with some changes, and the Plan signals some shifts in funding over the period.
7. The Rural Support Plan indicates that currently 80% of the funding is allocated to tiers 1 and 2, with 20% split between tiers 3 and 4. It signals this will remain the case for this year and the following three years but commits to moving 10% of the total budget out of tier 1 and into tiers 3 and 4 in 2030-31.
8. The Plan also sets out the broad approach to monitoring and evaluation.

Evidence taken on the Rural Support Plan

9. The Committee launched a targeted Call for Views over the summer recess on the Rural Support Plan and received responses from 19 stakeholders, which are [available on the Committee's webpage](#).

Meeting on 2 September

10. On 2 September, the Committee will hold a roundtable with the following stakeholders:

- Jonnie Hall, Deputy CEO and Director of Policy, National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS);
- Martin Kennedy, Former President, NFUS;
- Professor Davy McCracken, Deputy Head of School of Natural & Social Sciences, Scotland's Rural College;
- David McKay, Co-Director, Soil Association Scotland;
- Professor Dave Reay, Co-chair, Just Transition Commission; and
- Donna Smith, Chief Executive, Scottish Crofting Federation

Future work of the Committee on the Rural Support Plan

11. The Committee will take further evidence on the Rural Support Plan from stakeholders on 9 and then on 16 September. Later, the Committee will take closing evidence from the Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands.

Clerks to the Committee
September 2026