

NEWS RELEASE
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RECORD NUMBERS OF TENANTS FACE LAND COURT

The Scottish Tenant Farmers Association (STFA) is highly critical of the decision of some landlords to press ahead with rent reviews through the Land Court in the face of continuing economic uncertainty and widespread opposition from tenants who see no justification in rent rises with the current parlous state of farming.

Following telephone calls from tenants, STFA has discovered that a record number of over 20 rent review cases were referred to the Land Court in the closing days before the term date of 28th November. Commenting on the situation, STFA Chairman Angus McCall said; “This will be a bleak Christmas for the tenants concerned and does not bode well for landlord/tenant relations. Squeezing tenants in a recession smacks of greed and desperation.

“With the country facing an economic crisis the industry should be pulling together rather than creating unnecessary conflict. As usual, it is a tiny minority of land agents calling the shots and they seem to be determined to pursue their campaign to hike up rents to an extent that will do long term damage to farming businesses. Under threat of survival, tenants are uniting to fight back. They have no option but to resist to survive and are demonstrating that they are well organised. Well practised tactics of picking off, dividing and ruling are being counter attacked in the face of unsustainable and crippling rent demands”.

STFA is also concerned at the ominous number of rent review notices that have been served in the last few weeks for rent reviews in November 2009. “It appears a large number of landlords (or their agents) are waiting to see the outcome of these Land Court cases. Tenants will stand their ground and articulate well-presented arguments in front of the Court where in many cases rent reductions would be more appropriate in the current economic climate.”

Most of these cases referred to the Scottish Land Court will be put on hold to allow negotiations to continue. It is hoped that commonsense will prevail and fair, just rents will be settled. Farm tenants can do their sums too and the huge rents being demanded just don't stack up. At a time of rising living costs when every penny is needed by farming businesses, it is totally ludicrous that money which would be better invested in the agricultural holding and within the industry, is going to professional fees in these unnecessary, expensive and very stressful land court cases.”

* Note for editors

Rent review notices have to be served at least one year and not more than two years in advance of the term date. If a rent cannot be agreed by the term date the pursuer of the rent notice can:

- (a) Refer the matter to the Land Court
- (b) Serve another notice for the following year
- (c) Take no action in which case he has to wait a year before serving another notice

For further details please contact Angus McCall: 01408 633275 or 07767 756840