

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**STFA MAKES ITS' POSITION CLEAR ON NEW ENTRANT ISSUE**

Last week the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association (STFA) reaffirmed its commitment to helping new entrants into farming at the launch of the Tenant Farming Forum's paper making recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary.

Responding to critics of the launch and calls to scrap the 2003 Act Chairman Angus McCall said: "The recent consultation has demonstrated the complexity of the issues inhibiting entry into agriculture and how difficult it is to get agreement amongst the various organisations involved.

Scottish agriculture desperately needs to address the ageing profile of its farmers and encourage new blood into the industry. Increasing land values also mean that tenancies are virtually the only route into farming. The tenanted sector, therefore, has a pivotal role to play in allowing young people the opportunity to farm.

"The TFF has come forward with some proposals which can be developed with the help of the Scottish Government but access to land is the most crucial factor and the large landowners who control the bulk of land in Scotland\*\* must be prepared to look at the bigger picture and make more land available for let. With Scotland's predominance of livestock farming, tenants require the confidence to take land for rent under sustainable conditions with the prospect of reasonable term lengths allowing them to forward plan, gain access to SRDP schemes and satisfy the borrowing requirements of the banks.

"Tearing up the 2003 Act and introducing freedom of contract is not an option. When all the cards are stacked on one side, there is no chance of potential, new tenants achieving fair, sustainable deals. Freedom of contract, which effectively would deregulate letting to new entrants, would be turning the clock back by more than half a century and would create a landlord's charter signing a death warrant for the tenanted sector in the longer term.

"Recent court cases show how far some landlords are prepared to go to prevent young farmers inheriting family tenancies and highlight the need for regulation. These cases are only the tip of the iceberg. Incremental rises in land values since 2003 have increased the attractiveness of vacant possession. This immediately gives the landlord a 50% uplift in value and the opportunity to maximize returns from annual lets so the tenant's position has become even more vulnerable. These harsh economic facts have in reality as much to do with the reluctance to let as any lack of confidence.

“Much has been made of landlords’ political fears and their need for reassurance that future governments will not extend right to buy provisions or legislate retrospectively. Changes in the 2003 Act made the tenanted system fairer for tenants and the pre-emptive right to buy between a willing seller and buyer was introduced to give the sitting tenant an opportunity to buy their farm if it came on the market, a chance denied to many under previous legislation.

STFA has made its position crystal clear; landowners contemplating letting land have nothing to fear from the extension of any rights to buy to new tenancies. In the TFF report ‘*STFA emphasise that existing provisions of right to buy legislation, as embodied in the Agricultural Holdings Act 2003, should not be extended to tenancies established since the commencement of the Act.*’

“STFA represents a broad church of members who hold varying views on rights to buy, usually a reflection of the tenancy held by individuals. Any future extension of the pre-emptive right to buy is **not** on our agenda and would be a political decision for government as part of the land reform programme. STFA would react to any future proposal for change in consultation with its’ membership and in the best interests of the tenanted sector of Scotland at that time.

“In addressing the difficulties experienced by new entrants, the Scottish Government must look to regulate and legislate to ensure that new entrants gain access to the necessary capital and grant aid by providing the same degree of support as evident in other EU countries. If there is to be a future for new entrants and the tenanted sector of Scotland, opportunities must be created for the next generation of young farmers in the new climate of national food security awareness. These young entrants represent a huge untapped potential contribution to the rural economy of Scotland. We need new blood and they deserve their chance.”

Any queries relating to this can be made to:  
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\*\* less than 400 landowners own half of Scotland