

NEWS RELEASE  
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TENANTS ASSOCIATION CONDEMNS BULLYING TACTICS IN RENT REVIEWS

The Scottish Tenant Farmers Association condemns the bullying tactics being used once again to increase rents in the run up to the traditional term date of 28<sup>th</sup> November. STFA has been inundated with calls from tenants facing unreasonable and unjustified demands for big rent increases from some factors and agents using “terror tactics” rather than facts and figures to pile the pressure on tenants. There have even been reports of attempts to hoodwink tenants into an immediate rent rise even without the serving of a proper rent notice.

This behaviour shows a complete disregard of the recommended code of practice by the cross industry stakeholder body, the Tenant Farming Forum which advocates communication, respect and trust. Legislation also sets out clear rules within which both parties must operate.

Farm rent notices must be served at least one year and not more than two years before the term date. They must be correct and properly served and tenants should only be paying rent on land and equipment provided by the landlord and not on their own improvements. If tenants are at all unsure or confused about their rights they should take proper advice and not be coerced into a paying too high a rent for the next three years.

Commenting on the situation, STFA chairman Angus McCall said; “ Rent reviews in Scotland have become dire for many tenants. There are some agents out there trying to take advantage of vulnerable tenants who may not be fully aware of their rights. Also with no rents having been settled by the Scottish Land Court in over a decade there are effectively no benchmarks for guidance and the rent review process has degenerated into a free for all.

“Rent review cases can be vexatiously prolonged for years at the Scottish Land Court, so it is not surprising that the prospects of getting fair rents set seem further away than ever. If tenants are to have rents set fairly, quickly and affordably, the system needs to be overhauled and scope for abuse removed. This is crucial with the increasing volatility of agricultural markets and the precarious nature of tenant farming.

“High rentals recently paid by agri-industrialists for arable tenanted land in Scotland have been used to raise the rent stakes. The recent difficult harvest will prove the economic folly of this crazy inflated market in agricultural rented land. Land agents will paint a rosy picture in the livestock sector but with high inputs, an analysis of actual margins prove that in real terms profitability hasn’t moved on significantly in twenty years.

“Times are hard and in all honesty there are no opportunities for genuine new entrants in a completely profit driven industry. The recession and mistakes being made in the world of banking world should be reflected upon. There is a bigger picture out there and I sympathise with the view expressed to me by many tenant farmers of a sense of disillusionment and vulnerability.

“It will be up to politicians to shape the future of the family tenanted farm, if indeed there is to be future for these farms. I hope in the 2010 election run up, they will have some rural vision, curb rampant greed and offer some hope and protection to ensure the sustainable future of family run farms. These are the backbone of the countryside in Scotland particularly in the more remote, peripheral and fragile areas.”

For more information

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