

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**NO EXCUSE NOW NOT TO LET LAND SAYS STFA**

The Scottish Tenant Farmers Association welcomed today's reaffirmation of the Scottish Government's commitment to encourage new entrants into the industry and its support for a sustainable and viable tenanted sector.

STFA is pleased that the Cabinet Secretary has now sent a strong message to landowners that there is now no excuse for holding land back from the tenanted sector. STFA has already made its position quite clear that tenants are satisfied with the existing Right to Buy provisions giving them the right of first refusal if their farms are offered for sale and extending the legislation is not on the agenda.

In response to today's announcement Chairman Angus McCall said; "In clarifying its position the Government has now done as much as it can to give landowners the confidence to let land, I hope that landowners will now play their part in helping to regenerate the tenanted sector. Large estates who control much of Scotland's land have a major role to play and a responsibility to take the lead in reversing the decline in the tenanted sector. STFA will be keeping a close eye on developments and expect an early release of land to be let on proper letting agreements. If the current situation of tenancies being squeezed and little land becoming available for let does not improve in the near future, we will be looking to the government to take appropriate action."

STFA further welcomes the Scottish Government's recognition that farming is a long-term business and that short-term tenancies are not in the long-term interest of the rural economy. Voicing STFA directors' views following a board meeting on Monday, Vice Chairman Brian Shaw stated; "The existing letting vehicles are more than fit for purpose and certainly an improvement on the situation in England where the tenanted system seems increasingly fragile with farms let on short term arrangements with minimum security. Tenants need confidence too, that they can rent land with the same sort of security as 1991 tenants and for a realistic length of time."

In responding to the TFF recommendations the Scottish Government has also acknowledged the need to encourage succession into existing tenancies and has pledged to modernise the legislation to take account of changing circumstances. "Encouraging the next generation into family tenancies is as important as bringing new blood into the industry and I am pleased that Richard Lochhead has listened to concerns raised by tenants that there are barriers to succession which need to be raised." said vice chairman Brian Shaw.

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Text of Scottish Government's announcement:

## News Release

December 16, 2008

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO TENANT FARMING FORUM –

#### GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS NO PLANS FOR RIGHT TO BUY EXTENSION

The Scottish Government has today confirmed to the farming sector it is ruling out any extension of 'Right to Buy' legislation for farm tenancies.

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Richard Lochhead, made the assurance today in his formal response to the Tenant Farming Forum's report on barriers to new entrants.

In addition, he reiterated his support for the work being undertaken by the Forum to look at greater flexibility in tenancy leases and looks forward to receiving detailed proposals in due course.

He said:

“As with any industry, new entrants - young people with vision, enthusiasm and new ideas and the entrepreneurial skills to put them into practice – are vital to the future development and prosperity of farming.

“However, it has become increasingly difficult for such people to find a way into the sector, which is why the Scottish Government asked the Tenant Farming Forum to investigate why this is the case.

“Earlier this year the Tenant Farming Forum came to us with a number of recommendations and one of the key issues that kept resurfacing is the notion that fear of an absolute right to buy is a real barrier to anyone considering letting out their land.

“Tenants already have the right to register for their present pre-emptive right to buy and out of 7,400 holdings in Scotland, 990 farmers have done so.

“I am confirming that the Scottish Government has no plans to extend the current right to buy legislation.

“After listening very carefully to the deliberations within the Tenant Farming Forum and to tenant farmers, I have reached the view that one of the biggest constraints facing new entrants and the sector's future is the lack of available tenancies rather than the lack of an absolute right to buy.

“Encouraging more tenancies is therefore my priority and I now expect landowners and the wider industry to make this their priority also.

“We are very serious about the importance of letting agricultural land and I hope this is seen as a strong statement of intent on our part.”

“The aim of this Government is sustainable rural development and we want to see tenancies which work to support this goal in the longer term.

“Continual reliance on short tenancies, or even annual contracting, is simply not in the best long term interests of the rural economy or the environment. We need more appropriate tenancies coming on stream and soon.”

#### NOTES TO NEWS EDITORS

1. In June 2007, the Tenant Farming Forum were asked to investigate the Barriers to New Entrants and to make recommendations. The Forum’s published recommendations “Assisting New Entrants into Scottish Farming – Recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary” can be found at: <http://www.tenantfarmingforum.org.uk/tff/pubs.aspx> .

2. The Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Acts 1991 and 2003 govern the letting of agricultural land in Scotland and provide for appropriate protection to tenants over matters such as rents and compensation for tenants improvements. From 2003, tenants of 1991 Act tenancies were given the options to register their interest in pre-emptively purchasing their farm should it be offered for sale.

3. There are approx 7,400 holdings in Scotland with rented land covering approx 1,456,000 hectares. Currently around 990 farmers have registered their interest under the Pre-emptive Right to Buy (PRTB) provisions with the Register of Community Interest in Land – Agricultural Tenants Interest.

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