

News Release  
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27th August 2010

## STFA – CALL FOR NEW FORESTRY FARMS TO ASSIST NEW ENTRANTS

The Scottish Tenant Farmers Association has called for a more integrated and inclusive forestry strategy not only to meet the needs of farmers and foresters, but also to take account of the different set of rules under which tenant farmers operate. STFA used a meeting in Elgin on Thursday with Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead to press home the message that, as things stand, tenant farmers view the government's tree planting targets as a threat rather than an opportunity and are precluded from taking part in initiatives such as the Forestry Commissions land leasing pilot.

STFA Vice Chair Brian Shaw said: "The pilot scheme launched by the Forestry Commission last week actually discriminates against tenant farmers. There is no way that any tenant could possibly take part in what has been proposed, even if they wanted too. There must be far more joined up thinking in policy creation. This sort of ill thought out proposal is just not good enough, especially when it is to be funded by the public purse."

Representatives of STFA have also called upon the Cabinet Secretary to consider the establishment of integrated agricultural and forestry holdings with a view to creating openings for young entrants to farm whilst working part time as foresters. The flagship government policy to encourage new entrants into farming has been foundering because of the lack of available land and apart from a few lone voices the industry has become silent on the subject

Although £6m of the original £10m set aside for new entrants has been used, very little has been taken up by genuine new entrants, most has gone to the families of existing farmers setting up new businesses or re-organising old ones. The publicly owned Forestry Commission and some private estates should look towards re-creating its forestry holdings with the added benefit of helping to repopulate the countryside as well as meeting climate change targets. It is nothing short of a disgrace that no one seems prepared to make an effort to help.

Commenting on the suggestion, STFA Forestry spokesman Alastair Nairn said; " The old Forestry Holdings were an ideal way of getting a foot on the farming ladder, that is how I got started before I acquired a farm tenancy. The Forestry Commission is buying new land up and down the country, and is no reason why some of that land should not be used for Farming/forestry holdings. Let's see some imaginative thinking!"

For further comment:

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