

News Release  
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## RENEWED CALL FOR LANDLORDS TO LET LAND

As the farming industry gets ready for Scotland's largest agricultural show the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association is warning that prompt action is necessary if the tenant farming sector is to realise its true potential and arrest its decline. They are calling upon Scotland's landowners, including the Scottish Government to rent out more land and to allow greater investment by tenants in their holdings.

Speaking on the eve of the show chairman Angus McCall said: "There is a definite lack of opportunity for those hopeful new entrants desperate to get a start in farming and existing farmers who are keen to invest and grow their businesses. Paradoxically there is also a large area of vacant and under-used land, especially in the hills and uplands, which could be making a huge contribution to the rural community, the economy and the environment if landowners would only make use of the new limited duration tenancies and let their land out.

"The landlords' lobby group has re-branded itself as Scottish Land and Estates in yet another attempt to move with the times. I hope that the name change will also herald a change in attitude and a new willingness to work in partnership with Scotland's tenants and new entrant farmers to reinvigorate the tenanted sector.

"Four years ago the new cabinet secretary Richard Lochhead announced a £10m new entrants scheme. He rightly said: "*New blood is essential to sustain the vitality of Scotland's rural communities*". Sadly, although a few young farmers have had a welcome boost from the scheme, in truth very little new blood has been injected into the industry. Much, much more could be done and must be done"

STFA has called upon the Cabinet Secretary to ensure the Scottish Government plays its part in making more land available to let. The government, through its agencies, is a major controller of public land comprising an estimated 12% of rural land in Scotland. An FOI request has revealed that, despite having landholdings of nearly 1.7m acres in Scotland the Forestry commission has spent £40m over the last five years in acquiring a further 50,000 acres of farmland as a future land bank.

Although farms bought by the Forestry Commission are not prime agricultural land, many of them were formally productive upland units. STFA has written the Cabinet Secretary suggesting a proportion of this land be released back into the tenanted sector as starter units for new entrants.

Government rhetoric on assisting new entrants has noticeably cooled in the last year or two, but it is as difficult as ever to get a start in farming. It's now time that the government stopped sitting on its hands and made some positive moves to improve the situation: first of all by setting an example by making some land available to new entrants from its own resources, and secondly by ensuring that other landowners share the land with the next generation who must not be excluded from the opportunity to contribute to the rural economy and community of Scotland. They are our future.

Notes for editors:

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Details of FCS land purchases over the last 10 years can be found at:  
[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCSAcquisitions05-11.pdf/\\$FILE/FCSAcquisitions05-11.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCSAcquisitions05-11.pdf/$FILE/FCSAcquisitions05-11.pdf)