

News Release

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Public asked for views on administering the Single Payment Scheme

Farmers, land owners, and the public will be able to have their say on how Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) money could be managed more effectively.

A consultation on changes to the eligibility rules for the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) was launched today by Farming Minister Jane Kennedy.

In England the minimum area for SPS claims can now be set between one and five hectares.

Defra is seeking views on the most suitable size limit in order to assess the potential benefits of a reduced administrative burden balanced against any impacts on the amount of land managed under cross compliance Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition.

The proposals are the result of improvements to the CAP achieved at the CAP Health Check last year and any changes will be implemented in time for the 2010 SPS payments.

Ms Kennedy said:

“The concessions that were won in Brussels last year will help us to simplify the notoriously complex CAP payments system. The introduction of a minimum claim size could also help.

“Ultimately, we want to see a CAP that rewards farmers for the public benefits they deliver, including looking after the environment – benefits which wouldn’t otherwise be provided by the market.”

The 2008 Health Check has resulted in a number of changes to the SPS and other direct payment schemes.

The consultation will run for twelve weeks until 22 July 2009.

Notes to editors

1. The Single Payment Scheme (SPS) was introduced in England in 2005 under the 2003 CAP reforms. Around £1.5 billion is paid out annually under the scheme to English farmers by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), an Executive Agency of Defra.
2. Political agreement was reached on the CAP Health Check at the EU Agriculture Council on 20 November 2008 and the legal text was adopted on 19 January 2009. Further details can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/healthcheck/index_en.htm
3. From 2012 payments for nuts and proteins can no longer be made separately as part of the

CAP and will instead form part of the SPS payments. Defra is also seeking views during this consultation on how and when the nuts and protein funds should be added into the SPS.

4. The consultation document also asks whether we should introduce new criteria to exclude from the SPS claimants for whom agricultural activity is not the main part or purpose of their business.
5. Further details on the SPS can be found on the Defra website at:
www.defra.gov.uk/farm/singlepay/index.htm
6. For full details on the consultation visit: www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/sps/index.htm

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