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AIC Scotland continues to work hard representing the agri-supply industry on a range of strategically important issues. The Scottish Parliament returned from recess in early September, with major policy announcements in a range of areas, full details of which are outlined in this edition under the programme for government.

Crucially, over the next few months we are expecting the Scottish Agriculture Bill to be laid before Parliament. AIC Scotland will work to ensure that the support mechanisms contained within the Bill are in the Scottish agri-supply industry's interests, ensuring a balance between stability and creating a regulatory environment for agriculture which encourages innovation and increased productivity.

Volatility has become the new normal in a range of areas from our more extreme weather patterns to global commodity markets. AIC will continue to work to ensure that Government understands the need for stability to enable our sector to flourish – clarity and detail over future agricultural support will be key to this.

AIC is also in the process of surveying its Members in order to build a comprehensive picture of the economic footprint and importance of the agri-supply industry both in Scotland and across the UK. This work is crucial to ensure that policymakers understand the importance of the wider agri-food supply chain and the jobs that productive agricultural businesses underpin across the rural economy. Look out for an email reminder with a link to complete the short survey.

Programme For Government 2023/24

This is the Scottish Government’s key legislative and policy announcement for the year ahead which covers key areas impacting the agri-supply sector.

A range of announcements have been made in policy areas such as rural affairs, net zero, and the economy.

Full details can be found on the [GOV.SCOT website](https://www.gov.scot), including a list of the proposed bills which will be laid before parliament including an Agriculture Bill.

Key announcements include:

- Food security unit – this will focus on evidence-based monitoring of supply chain risks and help inform agricultural policy development.
- Early payment of Basic Payment Scheme to farmers – in September.
- Development of a new rural support framework through the Agriculture Bill – including a new approach to advice provision and enhanced conditionality for support payments.
- Continuation of the Agricultural Reform Programme – providing funding for carbon audits, soil testing, biodiversity audits, and animal health improvements.
- Identification of opportunities for increasing sustainable production and markets for key commodities such as eggs, poultry, venison, and seed potatoes.
- Industry roundtables on water scarcity and decarbonising rural machinery and equipment.
- New round of funding for the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme in 2024.

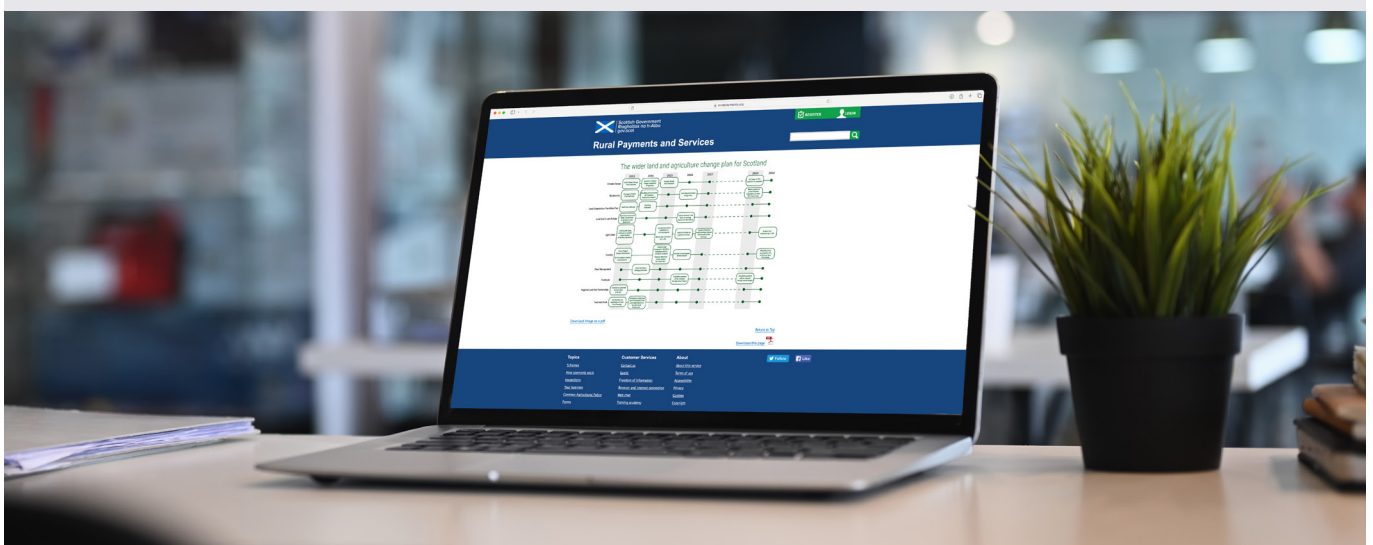
There are a range of other policy developments which AIC will be monitoring closely, such as the planned publishing of an updated climate change plan and associated targets and actions.

The Scottish Government also plans to publish its energy strategy - which AIC responded to earlier in 2023 – focussing on the need for affordable and stable energy prices for businesses.

Government is also considering the recommendations brought forward by the New Deal for Business Group which aims to look at measures to improve relations between government and the business community.

There are a number of positive recommendations contained within the report, for example developing a process to identify and, where appropriate, remove devolved regulations which are no longer required, and recognising the impacts of regulatory divergence within the UK and the need to minimise this where possible. Read the full report on the [GOV.SCOT website](https://www.gov.scot).

A useful infographic highlighting the range of legislative and policy drivers which will steer change within the agricultural industry over the next decade can be found on the Rural Payments website.



Political Engagement

With the Scottish Agriculture Bill scheduled to be laid before the Scottish parliament before the end of 2023, AIC Scotland's focus will continue to be on briefing MSPs, ministers, officials, and parliamentary advisers to ensure that the future support legislation works for the whole supply chain in Scotland.

AIC Scotland met with key rural representatives from across the political spectrum. Parliamentarians were briefed on a range of issues including; the economic importance of the agri-supply industry, the role Members play in providing advice and developing innovative products, our key role in helping to reduce emissions, the need to maintain critical mass in Scottish agriculture, gene editing, and concerns over the spread of Avian Influenza.

This work will continue over the winter to ensure that policy supports active and productive farmers who underpin the critical mass of the agri-supply industry.

Party conference season is in full swing with AIC attending the main conferences including Labour, Conservatives, and the SNP.

With a UK General Election on the horizon, work to engage with MPs and UK government ministers continues, with recent meetings with John Lamont Under Secretary of State for Scotland at this year's Royal Highland Show and further meetings planned with key Scotland Office advisers.

If your business would like to host a visit for its local MSP or MP, AIC Scotland can assist with organising this. Visits provide a valuable opportunity to showcase the agri-supply industry and ensure your concerns are heard.



Ian Muirhead and Scottish Labour Rural Affairs
Spokesperson – Rhoda Grant MSP

Ian Muirhead and Scottish Liberal Democrats Rural Affairs
Spokesperson – Beatrice Wishart MSP

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) update

AIC Scotland continues to foster a constructive relationship between the agri-supply industry and regulators. Most recently, we have been successful in working to ensure the emergency authorisation of four cobalt salts for use in livestock feeds.

Along with key stakeholders, AIC has worked to provide key animal welfare and economic data to help FSS with informed decision making. The authorisation came into effect ahead of the rest of the UK on the 30th of June and runs until July 2026.

AIC met with key FSS officials at the Royal Highland Show to discuss some of the key issues facing Members, including how to speed up authorisation processes across a range of areas such as feed additives or GMOs to ensure the sector has a level playing field with the EU.

Going forward, AIC Scotland plans to have regular meetings with FSS as the Border Operating Model comes into operation.



Precision Breeding update

England is now moving ahead with the development and implementation of a regulatory regime for precision bred (gene-edited) crops. With similar legislative developments in the European Union, pressure continues to grow for the Scottish Government to reconsider its opposition to precision breeding technology. AIC Scotland, along with key stakeholders, continues to make the case to Scottish Government ministers and officials for the need for equivalent legislation in Scotland.

The Scottish Government recognises the direction of travel within the EU and given the policy of dynamic alignment with the EU, there is the possibility that it may change its stance in the coming years.

AIC continues to highlight the positive sustainability benefits of precision breeding and the need for new more resource efficient and climate resilient crops for the future. Alongside this, it is highlighting the cost and complexity of regulatory divergence in this area including the disruption to trade within the UK.

Further details on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) gene editing regulatory proposals, including internal market impacts, are available on the [FSA website](#).



Pesticide Stakeholder Group

This Group meets once a quarter to ensure that industry concerns around plant protection product (PPP) regulation can be discussed directly with Scottish officials and ministers. Pesticide policy is devolved, so officials outlined how the decision-making process works.

- Scottish ministers are the competent authority for pesticide policy and regulation.
- This power is delegated to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), however specific categories of decisions require approval from ministers i.e. decisions which may be contentious.
- Ministers can either agree to HSE decisions or exercise decision-making themselves by "calling in" a decision.

Industry stakeholders have been reassured that where possible, decisions will be taken on a GB-wide basis to avoid divergence. The recent decision on Asulox for bracken control is an example of where Scottish ministers have called in a decision and taken a different stance from UK ministers. AIC will continue to work to ensure divergence is avoided where possible.



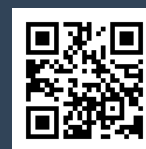
AIC Scotland Sector Meetings and Dinner – 23 November

For those who have not already booked a table at this year's event, please use the [booking link](#) on the [AIC Scotland page](#) of the website.

Tickets can be purchased for tables of 8-10 or on an individual basis. The Dinner will be held at the Westerwood Hotel, Cumbernauld, near Glasgow.

Members are also reminded that the AIC Scotland meetings will take place on the afternoon of the 23 November, commencing at 1pm with a buffet lunch.

Please register your attendance in advance by emailing Julia.corr@agindustries.org.uk.



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Dates for the diary

Fertiliser Industry Dinner – 2 November

AIC Pre-Conference Dinner – 14 November

AIC Conference 2023 – 15 November

AIC Scotland Dinner – 23 November

AIC Seed Trade Dinner – 30 November