



## In this Issue

Raising Member concerns  
with FSS

Political Engagement roundup

Changes to farm support

Agricultural Support changes

Advocating Precision  
Breeding's value



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**AIC Scotland has been busy over the summer months working on a range of issues affecting Members. In this issue, you will find key updates in a range of areas from new developments in agricultural policy to the latest from Food Standards Scotland.**

The weather has provided many challenges across the agri-supply chain. The cold spring impacted on livestock farmers and delayed spring crop sowing resulting in a late harvest in Scotland. This highlights the importance of ensuring government continues to strategically support the agricultural sector in Scotland and enable innovation, whether that is in the form of gene-edited crops or innovative feed products. AIC Scotland have been working hard to ensure government act on these issues and many more besides.

Finally, I will be stepping down from my role as AIC Scotland Policy Manager towards the end of this year after six years in the job. I want to take this opportunity to thank Members for all of their support and input into the work of AIC Scotland over what has been a tumultuous period of change encompassing everything from EU Exit impacts to the difficult days of Covid lockdowns. I wish all Member businesses well for the future.



# Raising Member concerns with Food Standards Scotland

AIC recently met with Food Standards Scotland (FSS) Deputy Chief Executive Officer Ian McWatt and senior colleagues providing an opportunity to hear key updates and highlight key Member concerns.

FSS continues to play an increased role in the in-house delivery of official feed controls where local authorities are unable to effectively deliver these. To enable this, they have increased the numbers of feed officers which is to be welcomed in providing a consistent approach across Scotland.

Importantly, FSS has noted the key role of earned recognition, such as with the Universal Feed Assurance Scheme (UFAS) which enables more targeted inspections at a reduced frequency.

Following EU Exit, we are seeing increased scrutiny by countries we export to in terms of assurance and inspection standards/regimes. FSS recently underwent scrutiny from assurance and trade missions from a range of countries and trading blocs, including the EU and South Korea. This covers issues relating to food and feed exports.



## Political Engagement roundup

AIC Scotland through membership of Food and Agriculture Stakeholder group (FAST) hosted a reception at Holyrood on 22 May.

The reception was designed to raise awareness amongst MSPs and ministers about the economic importance of the agri-food supply chain to the Scottish economy in terms of jobs and economic activity and therefore to highlight the need for continued investment in the sector.

The parliamentary event was very well attended with a range of AIC Members, stakeholders, and MSPs from across the parties in attendance. Key MSPs signed the FAST pledge card.



Jim Fairlie MSP

Rachael Hamilton MSP

Rhoda Grant MSP

AIC continues to promote the key findings of the [“Powering Productivity for Sustainable UK Food Security”](#) report which was published in 2023. It provides an important platform to promote our key asks with government officials and politicians.

The Royal Highland show included meetings with SG ministers including Jim Fairlie, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, and officials from the Scotland Office. Key topics covered included highlighting the impacts of UKFRC & EUDR, the need for further detail on support scheme guidance, and the need for regulated product authorisation reform to enable greater consumer choice in feed additives including for methane suppressants.

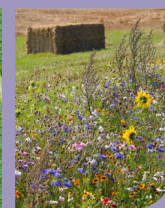
AIC Scotland also attended the SNP Conference in late August as it represents a strong opportunity to meet with key ministers including Mairi Gougeon MSP, Jim Fairlie MSP, and Jenni Minto MSP who has portfolio responsibility for FSS. Productive talks were also held with NFU Scotland President Martin Kennedy and Director of Policy Jonnie Hall.

## Changes to farm support in 2025

From next year there will be new requirements for Basic Payment Scheme recipients. The key change will be a requirement to start to complete a Whole Farm Plan. In the first instance, farmers are required to complete two out of five segments of the plan as a minimum.

The components of the whole farm plan:

- Carbon audit
- Soil sampling and analysis
- Animal health and welfare plan
- IPM plan
- Biodiversity audit



Where a farm business has some or all of these plans in place already (i.e. equivalent plans through farm assurance schemes or supply contracts, IPM plan requirement for SQC membership), they will qualify as meeting the requirement.

Going forward, a further segment of the Whole Farm Plan will be introduced in the form of a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) from 2028. The purpose of the Whole Farm Plan is to help farmers establish key business baselines from which they can focus on actions to improve key metrics to reduce emissions and improve profitability.

AIC Scotland has been working closely with Scottish Government officials on the detailed design of various parts of the new four-tier support framework. Each segment of the plan has minimum standards and requirements which can be found on the [Scottish Government website](#).

It is likely that the support changes will create opportunities for Members in a range of key areas. The guidance includes a recommendation to use a FACTS qualified adviser when making nutrient management decisions and a BASIS qualified adviser when creating an IPM plan.

Help through the "[Preparing for Sustainable Farming Scheme](#)" is still available to support carbon audits, soil sampling and analysis, and animal health and welfare interventions.



## Update on regulated product authorisations

A key area discussed was around making improvements to processes given the backlog of applications to the system. FSS has highlighted a number of ways in which improvements will be made.

Part of this will include the grouping of applications into tranches for formal ministerial approval. Generally, plans are in place to speed up the applications process and provide more support for applicants. AIC supported the key recommendations in our recent response to the FSS/FSA consultation on proposed reforms to the regulated products authorisation process. Read more about this on our [website](#).

One key area for Members is around the need to speed up application processes for methane suppressing products. FSS is considering prioritisation of applications in this area or indeed a separate process. AIC's Head of Feed James McCulloch has put forward a number of suggestions on how this could be done.

## Agricultural Support changes – what you need to know

On 18 June, the Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Act was passed by the Scottish Parliament. This is a framework piece of legislation which provides broad powers to Scottish ministers to provide flexible support payments in a range of areas. Whilst the flexible approach is welcomed, the downside of this is a lack of detail at this stage, which is needed to enable the agri-supply sector to plan.

In contrast to English farm support policy, the Scottish Government's policy is to evolve existing support mechanisms which in time will be rebranded into the four-tier support scheme. The Government has stressed that there will therefore be no cliff edges in payments, which should provide stability of cash flow within the agricultural economy.



## Advocating Precision Breeding's value for Scottish agriculture

AIC, along with key industry stakeholders, continues to advocate strongly for Precision Breeding legislation in Scotland that is equivalent to that already enacted in England, to enable the cultivation of gene-edited crops and realise the potential benefits of this technology.

Alongside this, we continue to have conversations with FSS regarding the regulation of gene-edited commodities and the serious concerns our Members have around the impact on trade if an aligned approach is not taken within the UK.

Due to the recent General Election, FSS has pushed back its timetable for publishing an initial options paper on regulation of gene editing in Scotland - this will now be published in the first half of 2025. Discussions between Defra and FSS on the direction of travel will be held.

AIC Scotland and agricultural stakeholders have written to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs Mairi Gougeon MSP, making the positive case for this and are calling on the Government to establish an independent expert working group to consider the key issues in relation to precision breeding technology.

It is envisaged that the group would consider key issues such as impact of regulatory divergence, impact on agricultural productivity, and trade impacts before reporting back to government with recommendations on next steps.



## Roundtable on decarbonising rural equipment and machinery



This meeting marked the first step in the development of Scottish Government policy in this area, and key organisations and industry leaders were present including some of the key manufacturers. This work runs in parallel to similar work being carried out by Defra with a commitment from Scottish Government to work closely with ministers across the UK.

The purpose of the meeting was to understand what trials and technologies are available for the various sectors and to allow industry to highlight key sector concerns.

AIC Scotland highlighted key Member concerns around the cost of alternative technologies, need for infrastructure, consistent approach across the UK, and the need to adapt existing efficient supply chains to minimise disruption to business. The Scottish Government has undertaken to consider the range of industry feedback before considering the next steps with UK Government.

## Dates for the diary

For those who have not already booked the AIC Scotland Meetings and Dinner, this annual highlight will be held on 28 November at the Westerwood Hotel, Cumbernauld. Members are asked to book their place at both the Meetings and Dinner.

We are delighted to announce that this year, Wallace Currie will be our after-dinner speaker. Based on the Isle of Arran, Wallace has had a varied career including time as a lecturer in agriculture and working for a social media influencer marketing company.

Alongside this, he produces [Rural2Kitchen](#), one of the largest food and farming social media accounts and podcasts in the UK.



MEETINGS  
BOOKING



DINNER  
BOOKING