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SNP MEP urges success on European farm price and margin observatory

Press release by SNP MEP Alyn Smith

SNP MEP and member of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee **Alyn Smith** has today (Wednesday) urged fellow MEPs to back his amendment to the EU budget creating a "European Farm Prices and Margin Observatory" with a budget of 1.5million euro to report upon the gap between the prices consumers pay for food and the price the farmer receives.

The full parliament will vote upon the budget in Strasbourg, provisionally on Tuesday, the final hurdle in a long process. The MEP initially proposed the creation of the Observatory with a budget of 3million euro in the Agriculture Committee, and having gained the approval of that committee, was delighted to see the proposal supported by the Budget Committee, albeit with a reduced budget of 1.5million euro. The report of the Budget Committee, including the proposal as Amendment AGRI/ 5255 on budget line 05 02 17 02, will go before the full Parliament, hopefully for approval and subsequent implementation.

Smith said:

"I urge all MEPs to back my proposal, as there is a real and pressing need for this, and I'm delighted we're almost there.

"Obviously there are different issues in the operation of the markets but I think there is a real parallel with the behaviour we have seen of the banks and financial markets in recent years with the behaviour of various actors in the food chain. So long as the money kept rolling in, governments around the world were content to turn a blind eye to unsustainable practices, though when the merry go round stopped taxpayers around the world were hit with massive bills, hundreds of thousands lost their jobs and we're by no means out of the woods yet.

"Imagine if the global food supply chain broke down in the same way as the interbank lending market. We would not be talking about a global financial crisis we would be talking about widespread starvation. I fear that the food supply chain is under similar strain, and it would not take much instability to break it. It is simply unconscionable for us to allow our domestic, Scottish, UK or European food production infrastructure to wither away because we think we can rely on imports from the other side of the world.

"I believe there is a wealth of evidence, not just grumbling farmers, that primary producers across the EU are being put out of business by the combined operation of the Common Agricultural Policy and the operation of a global market which leaves them at the mercy of any price decline, but not able to benefit from any rise.

"It is of course a complicated issue and there are of course no easy answers, so I hope that the creation, and staffing, and operation of this observatory will be a voice of real credibility in the debate. I think any objective analysis of the issue cannot fail to back my calls for action."

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