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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Answers.....1

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Written Answers

Friday, 14 June 2019

Agriculture: Subsidies

Asked by **Baroness Byford**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many tenant farmers in England are awaiting their (1) Environmental Stewardship (ES) payments, (2) Countryside Stewardship (CS) payments, for 2018; and whether all ES and CS payments for 2017 have been made. [HL16082]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Rural Payments Agency has paid all CS 2017 eligible claims bar those held for legal reasons such as probate. On CS 2018, 95% of eligible claimants received an advance payment by early April; 30% of eligible claims have received their final payment and we expect to pay 95% of eligible claims by August 2019.

On ES, around 92% of 2017 eligible claims have now received a payment and we are on track to complete 95% by the end of July 2019. Just over 52% of 2018 eligible claimants have received their advance payment and just under 21% have received their final payment.

Regrettably, we cannot confirm how many of these are tenant farmers as we do not record the agreement holders' occupant status.

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of the timescale of their plan for UK farming subsidies after Brexit. [HL16120]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Health and Harmony Consultation closed on 8 May 2018. Over forty thousand responses were received from a wide range of people including farmers, environmental and food/farming related organisations and the general public. All responses have been analysed and are being used to inform our policies on future farm support.

The Government published its policy response on 14 September setting out a future for food, farming and the environment in a green Brexit, together with reports on its analysis of the impacts of removing direct payments and economic rationales for future government intervention.

The Government's assessment was to adopt a gradual transition from the current approach to the new, avoiding a cliff-edge for farm businesses - noting the negative experiences in New Zealand when rapid changes were adopted. Our proposals therefore outline a 7 year transition period.

We are applying reductions to Direct Payments in a fair way, with higher reductions initially applied to amounts in higher payment bands. All farmers will see some reductions from the start of the transition. We plan to begin making these reductions in 2021, with the final year

for Direct Payments being 2027. We believe that this approach balances the views of those who feel recipients of the highest payments should initially face higher reductions, with the strong calls for the reductions to be shared amongst all farmers from the start of the transition and in a way that prepares the industry for change. The transition period also needs to be long enough to give farmers sufficient time to adapt and prepare for the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme, which starts in 2024.

The ELM National Pilot, starting in late 2021, will assess the end to end operability and deliverability before the scheme is rolled out in 2024. This will allow us to identify and refine any issues or barriers that occur in practice. We are working closely with a range of agricultural and environmental stakeholders to collaboratively design the new scheme, and to test and trial new approaches and investigate innovative mechanisms for the delivery of environmental outcomes.

Defra recognises the challenges around the uncertainty and outcome of the timing of leaving the EU. It is planning for every contingency to ensure a smooth departure from the EU, including detailed 'no deal' plans.

Air Pollution: Monitoring

Asked by **Lord Storey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many of the Automatic Urban and Rural Network continuous monitoring stations that record air pollution have been closed down in each of the last three years. [HL16055]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Automatic Urban and Rural Network has expanded over the last three years from 152 open stations at the end of 2016 to 164 open stations today.

In 2019 one station closed and its relocation is in progress. In 2017, three stations closed, two of which were relocated and one of which was replaced. In 2016, five stations were closed, one of which was replaced, one of which was relocated, and three of which were not replaced or relocated.

Trees: Diseases

Asked by **Lord Patten**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the threats from disease to hornbeam trees (*Carpinus betulus*) in England and Wales. [HL16216]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Details of pest and disease threats to hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), along with other plant and tree species, are included on the UK plant health risk register, which can be accessed here: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/phwi/riskRegister/>. Of the 1,040 entries on the risk register, ten of these have hornbeam specifically listed as a major host species, although hornbeam may be a minor host in relation to certain other pests and diseases listed (e.g. those which

are polyphagous in nature on broadleaved trees). The risk register includes information about current mitigations in place and priorities for future actions.

Water Supply

Asked by Lord Trefgarne

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to whether there will continue to be sufficient supplies of water for all purposes, including domestic purposes, if climate change continues as expected. [HL16066]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Government is working closely with other water regulators and the water industry to improve the resilience of water supplies. The Government recognises continued action is required and it is committed to a 'twin track approach' of reducing demand for water and increasing supply in parallel.

Water companies have a statutory duty to provide clean and reliable water to customers under the Water Industry Act 1991. To fulfil this duty, there is a statutory requirement to maintain water resources management plans, which balance water supply and demand at least twenty-five years into the future.

The Government, Environment Agency (EA) and Ofwat issued guidance to water companies in 2016 on how they should be planning to be resilient to foreseeable risks, including taking appropriate action to respond to climate projections. Water companies are currently revising their plans.

The Government is taking steps to improve water resources planning to ensure that there is better collaboration between water companies and other water using sectors on their water supply resilience. This includes the EA developing a National Framework for water resources, which will identify high priority water users who are unable to meet their demand or are likely to need to expand and set expectations on collaboration at a regional scale. The Government has also consulted on legislative improvements to ensure that water companies' plans are informed by effective collaboration.

The EA is also implementing the abstraction plan published in 2017. This includes work to bring together the EA, abstractors and catchment groups to develop local solutions to existing pressures and to prepare for the future.

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