

Mr Derek McDonald
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Sent by email to :-
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Dear Mr McDonald

Thank you for your email of 9 January, copying the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment into a letter from the North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group to Commissioner Fischer Boel about the draft European Regulation on Plant Protection Products. Mr Lochhead has asked me to reply.

The Cabinet Secretary has read the Group's letter with interest and considers it to be a comprehensive and reasoned argument for a more proportionate approach. As you know, he has himself made significant efforts over the past few months to influence the outcome of the negotiations which led to the final European text. In these efforts he has stressed the potentially serious impact on Scottish agriculture.

It will I think be some time before the practical results of this week's vote in the European Parliament can be fully assessed. Mr Lochhead was pleased that some improvements were achieved during the protracted negotiations in the run-up to the vote, but he was still disappointed with the overall result. Much will depend on how the new controls are implemented, and the Cabinet Secretary will be monitoring the situation carefully.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm MacPherson