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News release

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*For immediate use*

**Monitor Farm programme launches Contract Farming Agreement Q&A Guide**

With Contract Farming Agreements (CFAs) growing in popularity in Scotland, the Monitor Farm programme has just published an in-depth [Q&A Guide](https://www.monitorfarms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Contract-farming-QA.pdf) on the topic, aimed at helping farmers and contractors understand more about the opportunities and challenges involved.

Following a Roxburghshire Monitor Farm meeting earlier in the year, the four panellists who spoke at the meeting were interviewed, and their practical business advice captured for anyone considering Contract Farming.

Scotland’s Land Reform Bill has transformed the way agricultural land is owned and managed and CFAs are becoming ever-more popular. While it’s a very different approach from tenancies, it gives both established contracting businesses and new entrants an opportunity to grow their businesses, while still allowing farmers (the party with the land) to retain their land and business taxation status, and to be as involved in the business as they would like to be.

Jack Frater, agricultural consultant at Edwin Thomson, who chaired the meeting, gives his views in the Q&A: “In the last 10 years, contract farming has really increased in Scotland. It used to be mainly arable, but it’s now common in livestock too. Now it’s sometimes the only route available to expand a business.”

Annabel Hamilton, who manages 2,700 acres (1,093ha) on the Berwickshire coast with her parents, says the maxim in their contract farming business is ‘solving problems, not creating them’. It is a crucial part of building and maintaining trust between parties, she says.

For Ali Freeland-Cook who, along with his family, runs six farms with various CFAs and 5,200 lambing ewes plus 450 lambing ewe hoggs, excellent communication is vital: “You need to be good at justifying what you are doing, especially if you are changing things or making financial decisions – and you have to discuss any issues.”

Rob Playfair-Hannay runs a beef, sheep, and arable enterprise in the Borders in partnership with his parents covering 4,300 acres (1,740ha), and is both a contractor and farmer in contract farming agreements. His advice is to anyone interested in the opportunity is to do it: “Make sure you have a good agreement between parties. The devil is in the detail, and it is not until things go wrong that you realise that it is.”

Maura Wilson, Monitor Farm regional adviser says: “This Q&A guide on Contract Farming Agreements is full of practical and business advice from farmers, contractors and agents with direct experience in these types of agreements. It’s fantastic that they have shared what they have learned and are happy to highlight some of the key challenges they have experienced.”

The 14-page Q&A guide is on the Monitor Farm Scotland website: <https://www.monitorfarms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Contract-farming-QA.pdf>

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

About Monitor Farm Scotland:

· The Monitor Farm Scotland programme is managed by Quality Meat Scotland with support from AHDB.

· The programme is fully funded by the Scottish Government Knowledge Transfer Innovation Fund.

· The nine farms chosen to take part in this four-year programme reflect the diverse tapestry of livestock and mixed farming across Scotland.

· The aim of the programme is to help to farms reach full economic, social, and environmental sustainability by optimising production.

· The programme is farmer led and farmer driven with support from specialists and experts to assess farm performance, explore opportunities, and develop solutions to the challenges faced.

· Each Monitor Farm will be steered by a management group of 10 to 12 farming businesses with support from the local community group.

· The learnings and the example set by Monitor farms aims to benefit farmers across the whole of Scotland.

· The programme is managed by an in-house delivery team, who are funded through the programme and managed by QMS.

· For more information visit: https://www.monitorfarms.co.uk/

About QMS:

QMS is the public body responsible for promoting the PGI labelled Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb brands in the UK and abroad and also promoting Scottish pork products under the Specially Selected Pork logo.

Please note that the use of the word Scotch in the Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI brands is correct and should not be substituted for an alternative such as Scots or Scottish. The history of the use of the word Scotch in this way, traces back to the 18th century.

QMS also helps the Scottish red meat sector improve its sustainability, efficiency and profitability and maximise its contribution to Scotland's economy.

The quality assurance schemes run by QMS cover more than 90% of livestock farmed for red meat in Scotland. They offer consumers in the UK and overseas the legal guarantee that the meat they buy has come from animals that have spent their whole lives being raised to some of the world’s strictest welfare standards.

Scotland’s beef, lamb and pork producers make an important contribution to the country’s economic, social and environmental sustainability, contributing over £2 billion to the annual GDP of Scotland and supporting around 50,000 jobs (many in fragile rural areas) in the farming, agricultural supply and processing sectors.

For more information visit www.qmscotland.co.uk or follow QMS on Facebook or Twitter.