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Finlay Carson MSP  
Convener  
Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment  
Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

3 May 2022

Dear Finlay,

As set out in the Vision for Agriculture, we want Scotland to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture. Our farmers, crofters and land managers have a crucial role to play in helping us meet our climate emissions and nature restoration targets.

In October last year, I announced that a National Test Programme (NTP) would be developed to support farmers and crofters to play their part in meeting those targets. The work on the NTP has been co-developed with industry to ensure that they have what they need as we move towards the new Scottish Agriculture Bill which will be brought forward in 2023 and will provide a replacement for the Common Agricultural Policy.

The first track of the NTP: '[Preparing for Sustainable Farming](#)' went live on Friday 29th April with the publication of Guidance for producers.

The Guidance outlines how farmers, crofters and land managers can prepare for and make a claim towards the cost of carbon audits and soil analysis with links to supporting information. These actions are designed to help businesses prepare for conditions of future agriculture policy and support, which will include targeted outcomes for biodiversity gain and a drive towards low carbon approaches.

While many are already leading the way having carried out carbon audits and soil sampling work we are offering support to encourage all farmers and crofters to undertake this.

We have been clear in our commitment to supporting farmers and crofters to produce more of our food more sustainably which will ultimately help make our food system more resilient. To help them on this journey, we will continue to support active farming and food production with direct payments.

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As we take the sector on a journey towards a new framework for agriculture support, we want to encourage all eligible people to participate once the portal is open, we have published the guidance now to allow the sector to prepare or indeed conduct the necessary work to access this support. I will keep you informed as we take the next step towards the future of Scottish agriculture. We have made the process as simple and straightforward as possible and it can be completed and accessed online.

I do hope you and members of the committee will support this work and share details of this programme and the support being offered to those with an interest within your networks.

Yours sincerely,



**MAIRI GOUGEON**

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