

Political Round-Up 2011
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In mid October the European Commission published its legal proposals for the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. Naturally for the many thoroughbred breeders who receive the Single Farm Payment, this development is of great importance.

The proposals have left most stakeholders disappointed - 'green groups' said that the proposals did not go far enough in terms of putting an end to intensive farming practices, and farming groups said that there was nothing to improve the profitability of the farming sector.

For the thoroughbred breeding sector there are some changes which could be positive, such as the increased emphasis on support for the maintenance of permanent pasture land. Other proposals, such as the move to narrow the definition of active farmer, need to be carefully watched to ensure that horse breeding is not unintentionally (or even intentionally) excluded.

The European Commission, and indeed other European governments consider that horse breeding is definitely an agricultural activity. As we know, UK governments and devolved administrations have not always been so positive in their support of horse breeding, and of course, the Single Farm Payment in Scotland excludes horse breeders. We hope that the proposals in this document to move away from the different systems of the Single Payment Scheme towards a new 'Basic Payment Scheme' might correct this anomaly.

Other key points of the proposals which could be relevant to breeders include a new 'Green Payment' for preserving long-term productivity and ecosystems - spending 30% of direct payments specifically for the improved use of natural resources including maintenance of permanent pasture. There is also a proposed measure for stimulating rural employment and entrepreneurship with a series of measures to stimulate economic activity in rural areas and encourage local development initiatives. For example, a "starter kit" will be created to support micro-enterprise projects with funding up to € 70 000 over five years.

The approval of the different regulations and implementing acts is expected by the end of 2013, with a view to having the CAP reform in place as from 1st January 2014.

Therefore it is a TBA priority for the next year to be active on this issue at local, national and European level. We certainly hope we can count on the active support of the local Newmarket area Member of Parliament James Paice, as he is also the Minister of State in DEFRA directly responsible for this issue – while some of the changes will mean that decisions are taken directly in Brussels it will most probably be the case that national governments will still have a significant decisive role in how CAP funds such as Single Farm Payments are distributed, and to whom.

The TBA will also be active on behalf of its members in Brussels through its position as one of the leading members of the European Federation of Thoroughbred Breeders' Associations. This work will include not only the aforementioned CAP proposals but also other issues including the outcome of the Gambling Green Paper and the forthcoming Commission review of the Animal Welfare in Transport Regulation.