

The quality of PRIVATE EYE articles on Brexit has been very high of late - very concise and accurate, SAYS Edward Spalton of the CIB.] [campaignforanindependentbritain.com]

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"AS the Westminster government reveals its plan to phase out the £ 2.5 billion a year in acreage* subsidies to English farmers, and Environment Secretary Michael Gove finally concede that the UK's national governments and devolved assemblies can determine their own farm policies after Brexit, is the UK heading for anarchy in agricultural policy?"

The recent announcement of a transitional period for Brexit from 29 March next year to December 2020 deliberately excludes farm subsidies. This means there could now be significant differences in how farms are subsidised - depending on where they are in the UK - from as early as the beginning of 2020.

In England, Gove seems increasingly in a world of his own, developing policy that focuses almost exclusively on paying farmers for what he terms the delivery of "public goods" for "public money" rather than for food production. His focus on environmental protection appears guided by unintelligible or random academic concepts like the value of "natural capital". He even told 1,500 bemused farmer delegates that his policy would "uphold the trinity of values identified by EF Schumacher - - health, beauty and permanence".....

..... In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, however politicians are likely to take a more down-to-earth approach to the effect that withdrawing EU subsidies will have on their farmers.....This suggests farmers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be offered such "headage" payments, guaranteed agricultural commodity prices or other forms of subsidy, while their English counterparts will be denied such incentives to actually produce food. "

"BRITAIN AND ITS AGRICULTURAL POLICY FEBRUARY 2013 BY EDWARD SPALTON

The EU system has now "decoupled" most farm subsidies from food production. At the same time they agreed that an increasing part might be "recoupled to food production,,,"

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have wide discretion on CAP matters and are treated almost as separate EU countries So farmers in one part of the UK could be in competition with farmers in another part who are receiving subsidy whilst they get none..... It has been one of the achievements of this policy to create unfair situations, setting people in one part of the country against each other....."

* (Towards the end of the attached article) * Acreage is of course "Hectareage" these days.

Nice to see that Private Eye has caught up! But to be fair, nobody could have foreseen the full gallop of Mr Gove away from the mundane business of food production on his philosophical hobby horse.