

Subsidies for the next generation

My sleep deprived thoughts over the last two weeks have found me drawing rather bizarre parallels between my situation as a new father and that of the RPA as it struggles to launch the Basic Payment Scheme. My wife and I have obviously known for some time that parenthood was rapidly approaching and in an effort to convince ourselves and others that we were ready for the challenge have spent a small fortune on baby paraphernalia.

The RPA in its case has known for a number of years that the Basic Payment Scheme was on its way and has spent rather more than a small fortune on the development of a new IT system to manage the scheme while telling anyone that would listen that everything is under control. The launch of the snazzy named Common Agricultural Policy Information System or CAPIS for short is running about as smoothly as my post birth sleeping pattern with system error messages mirroring nappy changes that turn into unexpected baby outfit changes and 'down time' to perform system upgrades imitating the hasty changing of shirts freshly dowsed in milky puke.

Just as the RPA has been comparing notes with its Scottish counterparts in an attempt to ensure that the roll out of the new scheme north of the border learns from the mistakes the RPA made in 2005 we have been exchanging experiences with similarly sleep deprived parents in an effort to keep ourselves



sane. Probably the scariest analogy that I have imagined is this – that as we have rushed head long into parenthood with very little knowledge of what is to come and with our fingers very firmly crossed it very much feels like the RPA are doing the same with the Basic Payment Scheme and CAPIS. While I am certain that come 15 May and for the rest of my life I will continue to remain a very proud father I am not confident that the RPA will have very much to be proud of! The one opportunity created by my sleepless nights that I intend to take full advantage of is that while everybody else is asleep CAPIS may function a little faster than it does during the day allowing me to complete BPS claims for clients without the frustration of the system timing out on a regular basis.

On a more serious note BPS

does create a range of opportunities that should not be ignored. 'New farmers', those who have started farming since 2013, can apply to the National Reserve for free BPS entitlements. Estimates of the BPS payment rate in 2015 are in the region of £190 per hectare and entitlements were trading last October for around £120 plus VAT each so free entitlements are certainly an opportunity that shouldn't be missed. If these farmers have made a Single Payment Scheme claim since 2013 but for one reason or another they do not have sufficient entitlements to claim on all of their eligible ground they can apply to the National Reserve to fill the gap.

'Young farmers', those under 40 in 2015, who have taken charge of a farming business at some point in the previous five years are eligible for an uplift in payment amounting to 25%

on the first 90ha of a claim. So based on current estimates an eligible young farmer could stand to gain up to an additional £4,275 on top of the flat rate payment.

Naturally the RPA will not take just your word for it that you are an eligible new farmer, young farmer or both. You will need to be able to provide documentation that proves your eligibility e.g. land deeds, a tenancy agreement, a partnership agreement, birth certificate etc. Applicants will also need to submit a 'certification form' verified by a solicitor and/or accountant confirming the information in the supporting documents. And this is where we return to the realms of my sleep deprived parallels just as I have not yet found the time to physically register the birth of my son the RPA have not yet designed or published this magical certification form.



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