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**The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP**  
From the Secretary of State

Dear Tim,

Thank you for your letter of 27 April about the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and representations you have received from the Federation of Cumbria Commoners and the National Sheep Association.

As you are aware, in the first year of this new scheme, with its additional scheme requirements and new administrative checks, the completion of processing of remaining BPS claims has been harder than expected. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has been focused on making payments from the opening of the payment window to help ease farmers with cash-flow concerns, and will continue to pay claims as they are checked and completed. Although the RPA has a programme of engagement to provide more certainty for farmers, unfortunately, the Agency's progress is slower than they had hoped.

I am aware of the financial difficulties faced by the farming and wider rural community. As at 3 July, 85,852 (98.6%) of BPS 2015 claims have been completed. The RPA continues to focus on making top up payments to those farmers who have already received a bridging payment as promptly as possible. Those subject to probate will be resolved once legal proceedings have been completed. We listened to farmers' concerns and took action by introducing bridging payments for those awaiting payments. This reflected the RPA's progress on paying claimants from the opening of the payment window.

We expect BPS 2016 will be easier for farmers and it is off to a good start with 86,821 claims received of which 80% were received online. As in previous years, any farmers with concerns about their BPS 2015 payment or claim details held by RPA should write or email. The RPA will investigate any payment differences and make adjustments over the summer, through the planned payment reconciliation.

Thank you again for your letter.

Best wishes,