

Modernisation grants awarded to 1,268 farms

IT has been confirmed that 1,268 Northern Ireland farmers have successfully received letters offering grants from the Countryside Agri-Rural Partnership.

Under the Farm Modernisation Programme (FMP), grants up to a maximum of £5000 are available on eligible expenditure of £12,500, with additional support of up to £10,000 available under the Manure Efficiency Technology Scheme (METS) to purchase specialist slurry spreading equipment.

However, the successful applicants have been warned that if they do not return the necessary forms in time they could miss out on the cash.

David Mark, Countryside Services Managing Director commented: "The high demand for this type of rural development support was clearly demonstrated when applications opened for the first tranche of the Farm Modernisation



David Mark, Countryside Services, MD,

Programme last February.

"Unfortunately, due to limited available funding, several thousand farmers have been informed that their applications were unsuc-

cessful. This is very disappointing, but there is further funding for the programme and we wish to encourage farmers to now move forward and apply again in 2010 for the subsequent tranches," he continued.

"We have already approved a number of projects for payment. As our aim is to have grants recommended to DARD for payment within weeks rather than months, farmers must return forms on time and order equipment promptly to facilitate the purchase and delivery of items before the deadline. Remember, grants can only be paid if documentation is provided within four months of the offer, proving the project has been carried out in compliance with the requirements of the Programme and the expenditure incurred is eligible for financial support.

"We would also encourage farmers to take time to carefully read the necessary forms and complete

them using a handy checklist in the booklet supplied and available at www.countrysiderural.co.uk."

Mr Mark concluded: "This primary investment of £6m from the public purse under the Farm Modernisation Programme is excellent news for NI agriculture. Successful applicants for funding come from many sectors of the province's agricultural industry with purchases ranging from automated calf feeders on dairy farms to Spanish tunnels for horticultural enterprises. The agricultural supply industry will also indirectly benefit through provision of modernising plant, machinery and equipment to the value of some £15m to successful farmers."

The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).