



A new £20 million fund to help rural businesses increase profits and reduce their impact on the environment has been launched today by Agriculture Minister Jim Paice.

Farmers, foresters and horticulturalists can apply for grants of up to £25,000 to invest in green projects and new machinery so their businesses can grow in an environmentally friendly way.

The Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme will fund new profit-boosting green schemes that:

- save energy and reduce carbon emissions;
- reduce dependence on artificial fertilizers through better use of manures;
- improve soil quality;
- improve animal health and welfare;
- save and recycle water; and
- promote woodland management by processing timber more efficiently.

Agriculture Minister, Jim Paice said:

“Growing our economy goes hand-in-hand with protecting and improving our environment. We want rural businesses to thrive and this new fund will help farmers, foresters and horticulturalists to boost their profits and use greener and more efficient ways of working.”

The Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme is part of Defra’s Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

Funds will be allocated between now and December 2013. Grants will cover a maximum of half of the total cost of projects in uplands areas and at most 40% of the total cost of projects in non uplands areas.

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) aims to improve competitiveness in the agriculture and forestry sectors, safeguard and enhance the rural environment, foster competitive and sustainable rural businesses and thriving rural communities.

Under the Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme, all farmers, foresters, contractors and horticulturalists in England are invited to apply for grants of between £2,500 and £25,000. Applicants will be assessed on their ability to meet one or more of six objectives.

Some grants are available to enable farmers to improve soil quality and reduce their use of artificial fertilisers through better use of farm slurries and manures. Others will help businesses to reduce or recover energy, saving money and reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Farmers, foresters and horticulturalists can apply for funding that will help them to save, recycle and reuse rainwater, or to improve the health and welfare of farm animals. Money will also be invested in new mechanical equipment to process timber more efficiently, giving land owners a financial incentive to manage woodland and improve biodiversity.

Notes

Applicants are invited to either contact their local RDPE delivery team, or visit <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/11/10/pb13678-ffis-guidance/>.