

Axis 1 Newsletter

Issue 1 • Summer 2008



Under Axis 1 (Improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry) there are four measures in the NIRDP.

1.1 Vocational Training and Information Actions

To improve the competitiveness of farm and horticulture businesses in Northern Ireland through the provision of a range of innovative and focused training and information actions. There are 3 sub measures planned to achieve this objective:

1. Benchmarking will provide assistance and support to innovative benchmark learning programmes. The learning programmes will contribute to the accurate collection and collation of farm business data (supported under Measure 1.4) which will enable effective

benchmarking of Northern Ireland's agriculture and horticultural businesses. Benchmarking has proven potential to improve business competitiveness and sustainability. This sub measure has a budget of £1.75m.(includes £1.0m benchmarking of measure 1.4). **(Key contact: John Spence x36293)**

2. Focus Farms will assist in the development of selected farm businesses as Focus Farms to communicate to visiting farmers a range of new and emerging technologies and to provide a coaching/mentoring facility. This sub measure has a budget of £3.2m. **(Key contact: Colin Rea x36398)**

3. Farm Family Options will assist farmers and farm family members to analyse their current position and determine their options for the future. This assistance

NEW !

- This is the first newsletter of the Axis 1 NIRDP 2007 – 2013. It is envisaged that subsequent newsletters will be issued on a quarterly basis although updates may be issued monthly or as required.
- Any comments, editing etc should be directed to Des McCaul, Axis 1 team, RDD South on extension 32258 or direct dial 02830 253258.

will cover economic, technical and social issues and will support farm families to effectively adapt to change. Financial assistance may also be available to help with legal and financial advice. This sub measure has a budget of £2.3m. A **re-skilling** element although not part of the NIRDP 2007 – 2013 Axis 1



measures, will run in conjunction with Farm Family Options and will assist farmers and farm family members to develop skills by training in farm and non farm related courses. These skills may be used on farm or as a stepping stone to diversification. This element, derived from the St Andrew's Agreement, has a budget of £5.0m. (Key contact: Gerard Rainey 028 2563 3815)

Update:

RDD are working with Central Procurement Division (CPD) in drafting a tender for the delivery of **all** of the above sub measures including Farm Modernisation and Supply Chain Development. It is hoped to have that issued for tender by late June/July '08.



1.2 Adding Value to Agriculture and Forestry Products Improving Marketing Capability

To improve the economic performance and international competitiveness of the agri-food, horticulture and forestry processing sectors. There are two sub measures within this measure:



1. Agricultural and Forestry Processing and Marketing Grant (PMG) provides support towards capital expenditure on buildings and new equipment, the cost of a business plan/feasibility study for the project, and directly related general costs such as architects', engineers' and consultants' fees (to a maximum of 10% of total eligible costs). This sub measure has a budget of £21.5m. It no longer has a minimum investment level (previously set at £70k). PMG will provide assistance where the output is for a non-Annex 1 product. This sub measure is delivered in partnership with Invest NI.

2. Agricultural and Forestry Marketing Development Grant (MDG) will provide support for businesses engaged in the marketing of agricultural, horticultural and forestry produce or of agricultural products derived from such produce. This sub measure has a budget of £2.1m.

Update:

1. Process Marketing Grant (PMG) opened on 12 December 2007. Twenty four applications have been received of which 7 are from the horticulture sector. These are currently going through the selection assessment process and it is anticipated the first assessment panel for projects will take place in early July 2008.

2. An economic appraisal of the **MDG** is ongoing. It is expected that this sub measure will open for applications in October 2008. (Key contact: Carol Allen x24880)



1.3 Modernisation of Agricultural Holdings

To contribute to the competitiveness of agricultural and horticultural businesses in Northern Ireland.

1. The Farm Modernisation measure aims to contribute to the competitiveness of agricultural and horticultural businesses in Northern Ireland, financial support will be provided to farmers through small scale capital grants to purchase modernising plant, machinery and equipment under the following 6 priority investment areas:

- Introducing new technologies and innovation;
- Improving animal health and welfare;
- Increasing hygiene control and product storage;
- Enhancing occupational safety and business efficiency;
- Enhancing the environmental status of farms; and
- Increasing energy efficiency

This measure has a budget of £12.0m

Update:

Following consultation with Environmental Policy Division, an additional £3.25m of Investment Strategy NI Capital Expenditure has now been added to increase assistance for Enhancing the Environmental Status of Farms priority investment area through a Manure Efficiency Technology Scheme. The total budget for this measure now stands at £15.25m. An Economic Appraisal is currently being revised to reflect these changes. Following consultation with key stakeholders, including industry, a detailed list of eligible items of modernising plant, machinery and equipment is being prepared. (Key contact: Janet Liggett x32258)

1.4 Supply Chain Development

To increase the number of successful new collaborative initiatives in the agri-food and forestry sectors which will lead to more effective and sustainable supply chains and to compare farm and horticulture businesses through the provision of benchmarking. This measure is aimed at primary producers in the agri-food and forestry sectors co-operating with each other and with partners further along their respective supply chains, for example processors, retailers and other end users. This measure has a budget of £1.99m (excludes £1.0m of sub measure 1.1 benchmarking).

Update:

An economic appraisal of the **Supply Chain Development** is ongoing. It is expected that this measure will open for applications in October 2008. (Key contact: Carol Allen x24880)

