

STATEMENT FROM:



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Armstrong urges more fairness in farm modernisation scheme

Mid Ulster MLA Billy Armstrong has urged the Agriculture Minister to adopt a fairer approach with regard to the allocation of the latest tranche of funding in the Farm Modernisation Scheme.

Mr Armstrong said;

All our farms, whether they are large or small, are important and contribute to our local food industry, the countryside and the economy. Farmers are a vital source of jobs in rural areas, whether they provide full-time employment, as is the case with larger farms, or part-time work, as is often the case with smaller enterprises in which the farmer often has a second job.

There was criticism the last time that applications for the scheme were taken, because a first come, first served policy was used. The method of distribution this time has also come in for criticism, because priority is being given to smaller farmers in less-favoured areas. I do not dispute that farms in less-favoured areas are in need of modernisation, but the same is true of all farms. By their very nature, larger farms tend to be more productive, and it could be argued that the resources should be spent on them, because that would have a greater impact on production and on our economy.

I would rather see the Minister opening the scheme to those farmers who were unsuccessful last year to ensure that everyone has the chance to benefit from at least one tranche of the funding.”

ENDS