

National Energy Premium Scheme Payments

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The Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with special responsibility for forestry, Mary Wallace TD , has today announced the commencement of payments under the National Energy Premium Scheme. These payments will be initially paid out to 437 farmers and are worth approximately € 341 , 000.

A total of 550 farmers are potentially eligible under the National Energy Premium Scheme and payments will continue to issue as further cases are cleared. Those farmers who are not yet cleared for payment have already received written communication regarding issues highlighted during the processing of their applications. "I would urge anyone who has yet to respond to do so without further delay, in order that their payments may be released. To assist in dealing with outstanding queries , I have had a dedicated telephone number assigned , " added Minister Wallace. The dedicated telephone number is 057 8678709.

The National Energy Premium Scheme, which is worth € 80 per hectare to participants, is fully funded by the National Exchequer and is in addition to the EU funded Energy Crops Scheme which will be paid in January , 2008. Further assistance is available to farmers under the Bio-Energy Scheme , which is also nationally funded and , under which , financial support of up to € 1 , 450 per hectare is available in order to assist with the planting of miscanthus and willow. The number of applications for establishment grants has already reached the 1 , 400 - hectare target set for the first year of the scheme.