

ULSTER FARMERS' UNION NEWS RELEASE**Date: 8 October 2012****Cyclo No: 124/2012****UFU WELCOMES RE-OPENING OF THE BIOMASS CHALLENGE FUND**

The Ulster Farmers' Union has welcomed Agriculture Minister Michelle O'Neill's announcement of funding for Tranche 2 of the EU co-financed Biomass Processing Challenge Fund (BPCF).

Speaking after the announcement, newly elected UFU Rural Enterprise Chairman Gary Hawkes said; "The UFU welcomes the re-opening of the Biomass Processing Challenge Fund as a sign of DARD's commitment to support renewables within the agricultural sector. The fund will provide farmers with the financial assistance to adopt renewable technologies such as: biomass boilers with more than 30 kw of thermal output; combined heat and power systems fuelled with biomass; anaerobic digestion systems; and other proven technologies that use biomass to generate heat and/or power".

"The BPCF has the potential to be very beneficial to local farmers providing up to 40 per cent of the cost of an eligible project with a maximum amount of £320,000 per project. However, for the programme to be a success, DARD need to recognise the shortcomings in the first tranche and ensure the administration of the second tranche is more effective".

Under the second tranche applicants may apply for funds individually, or as a group and have until Friday 30 November 2012 to submit their application. Eligible biomass feedstocks for the program include: purpose-grown energy crops; woody biomass from forestry operations; agricultural residues and grasses; cereal; and corn silage.

ENDS//...**Media Contact: Deborah Quinn 028 9037 0222**