

## Cash to help Farmers out of trough

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Around 13,000 UK farms, mainly in the north, have applied to take part in a new government initiative to help farmers recover from the foot-and-mouth crisis of 2001. The government has set aside £5 million which will be given to farmers who are entitled to financial aid after an assessment.

According to a spokeswoman for DEFRA, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 616 farms have been assessed to benefit from the scheme.

The move comes after some farmers have been breaking government rules regarding the movement of livestock. The 'standstill' rule states that cattle, sheep and pigs should be segregated from other stock, and not moved for 20 days once they have been purchased. This is to ensure that highly infectious diseases, like foot-and-mouth, are not spread to other livestock in different areas of the country. It was the rapid movement of livestock which caused foot-and-mouth disease to spread out of control in 2001. However, farmers are encountering problems with this rule, wishing to move their stock between different markets to secure a good price at sale. Two ways to counter this problem are to ensure that all farm vehicles are disinfected and more local auction marts and abattoirs are established to reduce the influence of the large abattoirs in the south of the country.

The consequences of the foot-and-mouth crisis may have led to many farmers throughout the UK diversifying their crops in an attempt to avoid over reliance on an income from monocultures like sheep farming. During the crisis, as well as the devastation of livestock farming, British tourism was badly affected, with foreign visitors put off by news images of burning pyres of carcasses.