**Farming Innovation Programme - Feasibility Projects Competition Round 2**

**Description**

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) will invest up to

£5.5million in innovation projects.

This funding is part of Defra’s Farming Innovation Programme which is delivered in partnership with UKRI’s [Transforming Food Production Challenge](https://www.ukri.org/our-work/our-main-funds/industrial-strategy-challenge-fund/clean-growth/transforming-food-production-challenge/).

The aim of these funding competitions is to:

* investigate early stage solutions that have the potential to substantially improve the overall productivity, sustainability and resilience of farming, and move existing agricultural sectors to net zero
* prioritise solutions that will have positive outputs for farmers, growers and foresters in commercially relevant situations
* accelerate research and development of new agricultural solutions by actively engaging collaboration with the wider UK research community in the innovation process

Your proposal must be able to demonstrate how the project will benefit farmers, growers or foresters in England.

This is one of two competitions:

* Farming Innovation Programme - feasibility round 2 (this competition)
* [Farming Innovation Programme - small R&D partnership projects round 2](https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/1280/overview/9b0deb7f-6cfe-492f-ba78-4ec248b565c5)

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they are applying to the correct competition for their project.

If you apply to the wrong competition you will be made ineligible and will not be sent for assessment. You cannot transfer your application.

In applying to this competition, you are entering into a competitive process. This competition closes at 11am UK time on the deadline stated.

**Funding type**

Grant

**Project size**

Your project’s total costs must be between £200,000 and £500,000.

**Who can apply**

If your application is successful, any awards given to primary agricultural producers are subject to the green box exemption under the WTO Agreement on Agriculture.

Please see further guidance on green box subsidies [WTO Guidance for support in Agriculture](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/agric_e/agboxes_e.htm). Applicants receiving this type of support must ensure that there is minimal to no distortion of trade and comply with the requirements of [Annex 2 of the Agriculture Agreement](https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/14-ag_02_e.htm#annII).

**Your project**

Your project must:

* have total costs between £200,000 and £500,000
* start by 1 April 2023
* end by 31 March 2025
* last up to 24 months
* be collaborative
* carry out all of its project work in the UK
* intend to exploit the results from or in England
* have a minimum of 50% of any grant requested by farmers, growers or foresters, allocated to farmers, growers or foresters based in England

You must only include [eligible project costs](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/costs-we-fund/) in your application.

Under current restrictions, this competition will not fund any procurement, commercial, business development or supply chain activity with any Russian or Belarusian entity as lead, partner or subcontractor. This includes any goods or services originating from a Russian or Belarusian source.

**Lead organisation**

To lead a project your organisation must:

* be a UK registered [business](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/#contents-list) of any size
* collaborate with other UK registered organisations

[Academic institutions](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/#contents-list) cannot lead or work alone.

**Project team**

To collaborate with the lead, your organisation must be a UK business of any size or a UK registered:

* [academic institution](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/)
* [charity](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/)
* [not for profit](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/)
* [public sector organisation](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/)
* [research and technology organisation (RTO)](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/)

Each partner organisation must be invited into the Innovation Funding Service by the lead to collaborate on a project. Once accepted, partners will be asked to login or to create an account and enter their own project costs into the Innovation Funding Service.

The lead and at least one other organisation must claim funding by entering their costs during the application.

Your project can include partners that do not receive any of this competition’s funding, for example non-UK businesses. Their costs will count towards the total project costs.

**Subcontractors**

Subcontractors are allowed in this competition. All subcontractor costs must be justified and appropriate to the total project costs.

Subcontractors can be from anywhere in the UK and you must select them through your usual procurement process. You can use subcontractors from overseas but must make the case in your application as to why you could not use suppliers from the UK.  
  
You must provide a detailed rationale, evidence of the potential UK contractors you approached and the reasons why they were unable to work with you. We will not accept a cheaper cost as a sufficient reason to use an overseas subcontractor.  
  
**Number of applications**

A [business](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/#contents-list), can only lead on one application but can be included as a collaborator in a further 2 applications.

If a business is not leading any application, it can collaborate in any number of applications.

Academic institution, research and technology organisation (RTO), charity, not-for-profit or public sector organisation can collaborate on any number of applications.

**Previous applications**

You can use a [previously submitted application](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/before-you-start-an-application/#contents-list) to apply for this competition.  
  
We will not award you funding if you have:

* [failed to exploit](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/before-you-start-an-application/#contents-list) a previously funded project
* an overdue [independent accountant’s report](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/before-you-start-an-application/#contents-list)
* failed to comply with grant terms and conditions

**Subsidy control (and State aid where applicable)**

This competition provides funding in line with the UK's obligations and commitments to Subsidy Control. Further information about the UK Subsidy Control requirements can be found within the [EU-UK Trade and Cooperation agreement](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/948093/TCA_SUMMARY_PDF.pdf) and the subsequent guidance from the department of [Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complying-with-the-uks-international-obligations-on-subsidy-control-guidance-for-public-authorities) (BEIS).

Innovate UK is unable to award organisations that are considered to be in financial difficulty. We will conduct financial viability and eligibility tests to confirm this is not the case following the application stage.

EU State aid rules now only apply in limited circumstances. Please see our [general guidance](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/#contents-list) to check if these rules apply to your organisation.

**Further Information**

If you are unsure about your obligations under the UK Subsidy Control regime or the State aid rules, you should take independent legal advice. We are unable to advise on individual eligibility or legal obligations.

You must at all times make sure that the funding awarded to you is compliant with all current Subsidy Control legislation applicable in the United Kingdom.  
This aims to regulate any advantage granted by a public sector body which threatens to, or actually distorts competition in the United Kingdom or any other country or countries.

If there are any changes to the above requirements that mean we need to change the terms of this competition, we will tell you as soon as possible.

**Eligibility overview**

Here is a diagram showing a summary of eligibility.

This is a new way of showing you eligibility. Your [feedback](mailto:support@innovateuk.ukri.org) will help us to improve it.

[Eligibility Tree Farming Innovation Programme - feasibility round 2.pdf (opens in a new window)](https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/1279/download/10766)

**Funding**

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) has allocated up to £5.5 million, working in partnership with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Transforming Food Production Challenge, to fund innovation projects in this competition. Funding will be in the form of a grant.

If the majority of your organisation’s work on the project is commercial or economic, your funding request must not exceed the limits below. These limits apply even if your organisation normally acts non-economically.

For feasibility studies you could get funding for your eligible project costs of:

* up to 70% if you are a micro or small organisation
* up to 60% if you are a medium sized organisation
* up to 50% if you are a large organisation

For more information on company sizes, please refer to the [company accounts guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/life-of-a-company-annual-requirements/life-of-a-company-part-1-accounts#micro-entity). This is a change from the [EU definition](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en) unless you are applying under State aid.

If you are applying for an award funded under State aid Regulations, the definitions are set out in the [European Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en).

**Research participation**

The research organisations undertaking non-economic activity as part of the project can share up to 50% of the total eligible project costs. If your consortium contains more than one research organisation undertaking non-economic activity, this maximum is shared between them.

Of that 50% you could get funding for your eligible project costs of up to:

* 80% of full economic costs (FEC) if you are a Je-S registered institution such as an academic
* 100% of your project costs if you are an RTO, charity, not for profit organisation, public sector organisation or research organisation

**Your proposal**

The aim of this competition is to fund feasibility studies investigating new solutions that will address major on-farm or immediate post farmgate challenges or opportunities.

Your solutions must significantly improve:

* productivity
* sustainability and environmental impact
* progression towards net zero emissions​
* resilience

Your project must be able to demonstrate how the project will benefit farmers, growers or foresters in England.

**Portfolio approach**

We want to fund a variety of projects across different technologies, markets, technological maturities and research categories. We call this a [portfolio approach](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/what-happens-after-you-have-submitted-your-application/#contents-list).

**Specific themes**

Your project must address a significant industry challenge or opportunity in at least one of the four industry subsectors below:

* livestock
* plants
* novel food production systems
* bioeconomy and agroforestry

**Research categories**

We will fund feasibility projects as defined in the [guidance on categories of research](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/categories-of-research-and-development/#contents-list).

**Projects we will not fund**

We are not funding projects that:

* do not benefit farmers, growers or foresters in England
* are equine specific
* involve wild caught fisheries
* involve aquaculture for fish production or human consumption
* involve cellular or acellular production systems, fermentation systems for bacteria, yeast or fungi​ for human consumption
* are for the production of cannabis for medicinal or pharmaceutical use
* are dependent on export performance
* are dependent on domestic inputs usage

**Before you start**

You must read the [guidance on applying for a competition on the Innovation Funding Service](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/your-application/#contents-list) before you start.

**What we ask you**

The application is split into 3 sections:

1.Project details.

2.Application questions.

3.Finances.

**1. Project details**

This section provides background for the assessors and is not scored.  
  
**Application team**

Decide which organisations will work with you on the project. Invite people from those organisations to help complete the application.

Team members must each complete an Equality Diversity and Inclusion survey. The lead applicant must complete their survey to submit the application.

**Application details**

The lead applicant must complete this section. Give your project’s title, start date and duration.

**Research category**

Select the type of research you will undertake. We will only fund feasibility studies projects in this competition.

**Project summary**

Describe your project briefly and be clear about what makes it innovative. We use this section to assign the right experts to assess your application.

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.  
  
**Public description**

Describe your project in detail and in a way that you are happy to see published. Do not include any commercially sensitive information. If we award your project funding, we will publish this description. This could happen before you start your project.

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

**Scope**

Describe how your project fits the scope of the competition. If your project is not in scope it will be immediately rejected and will not be sent for assessment. We will tell you the reason why.

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

**2. Application questions**

The assessors will score all your answers apart from questions 1, 2 and 3. You will receive feedback for each scored question. [Find out more about how our assessors assess.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyHgqGjxeCU)

You must answer all questions. Your answer to each question can be up to 400 words long. Do not include any website addresses (URLs) in your answers.

**Question 1. Applicant location (not scored)**

You must state the name and full registered address of your organisation, any partners and subcontractors working on your project.

We are collecting this information to understand the geographical location of all applicants.

**Question 2. Farmers, growers or foresters location (not scored)**

Provide a list of the addresses of any farmers, growers or foresters claiming or receiving grant funding in the project. This is required for Subsidy Control and eligibility purposes.

Please note, you must have a minimum of 50% of any grant requested by farmers, growers or foresters in the project, allocated to farmers, growers or foresters based in England.

**Question 3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (not scored)**

How have you incorporated equality, diversity and inclusion into your project delivery and project outcomes?

Describe or explain the details relating to any challenges or opportunities relating to equality, diversity and inclusion arising from your project and the methods and approaches used to address them:

* during project delivery
* for governance
* for project team and advisory boards
* for stakeholder and end-user engagement
* for design thinking

Please note: Questions relating to equality, diversity and inclusion will not form part of the funding decision but will be used to inform the development of EDI activities for the competition cohort.

**Question 4. Need or challenge (worth 20 points)**

What is the business need, technological challenge or market opportunity behind your innovation?

Explain:

* the farming or agricultural problem, need, technological challenge or market opportunity identified
* how your project outputs would deliver large improvements in productivity, resilience and sustainability, while significantly decreasing the environmental impact of farming
* how your project is helping the industry transition towards net zero emissions, and benefiting farmers, growers or foresters in England
* the wider economic, social, environmental, cultural or political challenges which are influential in creating the opportunity, such as incoming regulations, using our [Horizons tool](https://ktn-uk.co.uk/programmes/horizons) if appropriate

**Question 5. Approach and innovation (worth 16 points)**

What approach will you take and where will the focus of the innovation be?

Explain:

* what is the approach or innovation and how will it address the identified problem, need or challenge
* any work you have already done to respond to this need, for example, if the project focuses on developing an existing capability or building a new one
* how your project will complement existing technologies to deliver a more efficient and sustainable farm production systems
* the nature of the outputs you expect from the project (for example report, demonstrator, know-how, new process, product or service design) and how these will help you to target the need, challenge or opportunity identified

You can submit one appendix to support your answer. It can include diagrams and charts. It must be a PDF, up to 2 A4 pages long and no larger than 10MB in size. The font must be legible at 100% zoom.

**Question 6. Team and resources** **(worth 8 points)**

Who is in the project team and what are their roles?

Explain:

* the roles, skills and experience of all members of the project team that are relevant to the approach you will be taking
* the resources, equipment and facilities needed for the project and how you will access them, particularly in the light of any continuing COVID-19 restrictions
* how you will work with farmers, growers or foresters throughout the project to ensure outputs remain focussed on end-users’ needs
* the details of any vital external parties, including subcontractors, who you will need to work with to successfully carry out the project
* the current relationships between project partners and how these will change as a result of the project

You can submit one appendix. This can include a short summary of the main people working on the project to support your answer. It must be a PDF, up to 4 A4 pages long and no larger than 10MB in size. The font must be legible at 100% zoom.

**Question 7. Market awareness** **(worth 16 points)**

What does the market you are targeting look like?

Describe:

* the target markets for the project outcomes, any other potential markets (domestic, international or both)
* the size of the target markets for the project outcomes, backed up by references where available
* who are your actual target customers or end users, what is the value to them and why they would use or buy your product or service
* the structure and dynamics of the target markets, together with predicted growth rates within clear timeframes
* the target markets’ main supply or value chains and business models

**Question 8. Outcomes and route to market** **(worth 8 points)**

How will you commercialise your project outputs? How will you grow your business and increase long term productivity as a result of the project?

Explain:

* your current position in the market(s) and supply or value chains outlined, and whether you will be extending or establishing your market position
* your route to market for your project outcomes, particularly if COVID-19 has changed market dynamics
* how you will protect and exploit the outputs of the project, for example through know-how, patenting, or designs
* how you are going to profit from the innovation, including increased revenues or cost reduction
* how the innovation will affect your productivity and growth, in both the short and the long term

If there is any research organisation activity in the project, describe:

* your plans to spread the project’s research outputs over a reasonable timescale
* how you expect to use the results generated from the project in further research activities

**Question 9. Competitors and barriers (worth 8** **points)**

Who else is operating in this space and what barriers limit your ability to exploit your project output?

Explain:

* the process you have completed to evaluate the work of competitors including those near market, or in development
* how does your proposal build on, or differentiate from competitor offerings
* where applicable, what regulatory, cultural or other barriers exist, both in the UK and internationally that prevent you from fully exploiting this opportunity

**Question 10. Wider impacts (worth 4 points)**

What impact might this project have outside the project team?

Describe and, where possible, measure:

* the environmental, sustainability and resilience benefits from the project to external parties for example, contributing to net-zero targets for emissions and reduction of waste
* the economic benefits from the project to external parties, such as productivity increases and import substitution at a regional or national scale
* the long-term social and welfare impacts from the project
* how you have determined that the project outputs will not widen any farming inequalities, including any negative impacts that you have identified, and how will you mitigate against these

**Question 11. Project management** **(worth 4 points)**

How will you manage your project effectively?

Explain:

* the main work packages of your project, indicating the lead partner assigned to each and the total cost of each one
* your approach to project management, identifying any major tools and mechanisms you will use to get a successful and innovative project outcome
* the management reporting lines
* your project plan in enough detail to identify any links or dependencies between work packages or milestones, taking into account the possible impact of further COVID-19 restrictions

You must submit a project plan or Gantt chart as an appendix to support your answer. It must be a PDF, up to 2 A4 pages long and no larger than 10MB in size. The font must be legible at 100% zoom.

**Question 12. Risks (worth 4 points)**

What are the main risks for this project?

Explain:

* the main risks and uncertainties of the project, including the technical, commercial, managerial and environmental risks
* how you will mitigate these risks
* any project inputs that are critical to completion, such as resources, expertise, and data sets
* any output likely to be subject to regulatory requirements, certification, ethical issues and so on, and how you will manage this

You must submit a risk register as an appendix to support your answer. It must be a PDF, up to 2 A4 pages long and no larger than 10MB in size. The font must be legible at 100% zoom.

**Question 13. Added value** **(worth 8 points)**

How will this public funding help you to accelerate or enhance your approach to developing your project towards commercialisation? What impact would this award have on the organisations involved?

Explain:

* what advantages would public funding offer your project, for example, appeal to investors, more partners, reduced risk or a faster route to market (this list is not exhaustive)
* the likely impact of the project outcomes on the organisations involved
* what other routes of investment have you already approached
* what your project would look like without public funding
* how this project would change the R&D activities of all the organisations involved

**Question 14. Costs and value for money** **(worth 4 points)**

How much will the project cost and how does it represent value for money for the team and the taxpayer?

In terms of your project goals, explain:

* your total project costs
* the grant you are requesting
* how each partner will finance their contributions to your project
* how this project represents value for money for you and the taxpayer
* how it compares to what you would spend your money on otherwise
* the balance of costs and grant across the project partners
* any subcontractor costs and why they are critical to your project

**3. Finances**

Each organisation in your project must complete their own project costs, organisation details and funding details in the application. Academic institutions must complete and upload a [Je-S form](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/costs-we-fund/costs-guidance-for-academics/).

For full details on what costs you can claim see our [project costs guidance.](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/costs-we-fund/costs-guidance-for-non-academic-organisations/)

**Background and further information**

This funding is from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Farming Innovation Programme, and is being delivered in partnership with UKRI’s [Transforming Food Production (TFP) Challenge](https://www.ukri.org/our-work/our-main-funds/industrial-strategy-challenge-fund/clean-growth/transforming-food-production-challenge/).

The Farming Innovation Programme will fund ambitious research and development projects to overcome barriers and create a more productive and sustainable sector.

Projects will benefit England’s farmers, growers, foresters and other businesses to conduct R&D to help boost productivity, enhance sustainable practices, improve environmental outcomes and reduce carbon emissions in England’s agricultural and horticultural sectors.

The programme provides a key means to deliver against the government’s goals. The goals are set out in the [Agricultural Transition Plan](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024), [25 Year Environment Plan](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf), [Government’s Food Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-food-strategy) and [Net Zero targets](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033990/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf). It aims to develop a renewed agricultural sector, producing healthy food for consumption at home and abroad, where farms can be profitable and economically sustainable without subsidy. This gives farming the opportunity to contribute significantly to environmental goals, including addressing climate change.

The Farming Innovation Programme is made up of three funds. Two of these, the Industry-led R&D Partnerships Fund, and Farming Futures R&D Fund, are being delivered in partnership with UKRI.

This competition is part of the Industry-led R&D Partnerships Fund.

**Defra’s partnership with UKRI**

Defra and UKRI have developed a strong partnership for agriculture innovation, built upon the success of UKRI’s Transforming Food Production (TFP) Challenge, and our shared ambition for a more productive, sustainable, and low carbon agrifood sector. We will take this partnership to the next level with Defra’s Farming Innovation Programme.

Defra and UKRI are looking to fund bold ideas and encourage collaboration between businesses, researchers, farmers, growers or foresters, to deliver solutions for a more productive, environmentally sustainable and resilient sector.

**Successful applicants**

If you are successful in this competition, at least one member of your project team must attend a 1 hour briefing webinar within 10 days of receiving your successful notification.

At the webinar we will provide you with detailed information relating to setting up and starting your project. We will tell you about the briefing in your notification letter.

In this competition all projects awarded funding must upload evidence for each expenditure with every claim made. These can include invoices, timesheets, receipts or spreadsheets for capital usage. This is part of Innovate UK’s obligations under the [Managing Public Money](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-public-money) government handbook in relation to assurance, financial management and control.

**Data sharing**

This competition is jointly operated by Innovate UK, and Defra (each an ‘agency’).

Your submitted application and any other information you provide at the application stage can be submitted to each agency on an individual basis for its storage, processing and use. Any relevant information produced during the application process concerning your application can be shared by one agency with the other, for its individual storage, processing and use.

This means that any information given to or generated by Innovate UK in respect of your application may be passed on to Defra and vice versa.

Innovate UK and Defra are directly accountable to you for their holding and processing of your information, including any personal data and confidential information. Data is held in accordance with their own policies. Accordingly, Innovate UK, and Defra will be data controllers for personal data submitted during the application.

Innovate UK complies with the [requirements of GDPR](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/innovate-uk/about/personal-information-charter#privacy-notice), and is committed to upholding the data protection principles, and protecting your information. The Information Commissioner’s Office also has a [useful guide](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/) for organisations, which outlines the data protection principles.

**Find a project partner**

If you want help to find a project partner, contact the [Innovate UK KTN](https://ktn-uk.org/).

**Support for SMEs from Innovate UK EDGE**

If you receive an award, you will be contacted about working with an innovation and growth specialist at [Innovate UK EDGE](https://www.innovateukedge.ukri.org/?utm_source=innovateuk&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=competitionsifs). This service forms part of our funded offer to you.

These specialists focus on growing innovative businesses and ensuring that projects contribute to their growth. Working one-to-one, they can help you to identify your best strategy and harness world-class resources to grow and achieve scale.

We encourage you to engage with Innovate UK EDGE, delivered by a knowledgeable and objective specialist near you.