

Helping farmers to work more efficiently: apply for funding

We need to produce our food in a more sustainable and efficient way if we are to meet the expected 60% increase in global demand for food by 2050.

Better ways of working the land can lead to reduced emissions and pollution, less waste and improvements to the soil.

UK companies are global leaders in the technologies that will help to achieve this, including in environmental management, earth observation, sensors, big data, artificial intelligence and robotics.

However, there is often a lack of connection between the developers of these technologies and the farmers, agronomists and vets that could take advantage of them.

The UK Government's Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund Transforming Food Production Challenge has up to £90 million to help businesses invest in new data-driven precision-agriculture technologies that could transform food production.

Innovate UK, as part of UK Research and Innovation, has up to £15 million from the fund to invest in feasibility studies and demonstration projects that help to turn these technologies into practical solutions and get them into the hands of those who could benefit.

Research can be in arable, livestock and aquaculture

Projects must all work on precision, data-driven solutions. They can undertake research in 1 or more areas including:

- arable, such as cereals, field-scale vegetables or potatoes
- dairy
- ruminants, such as beef, lamb, goat
- monogastrics, such as pork, poultry and eggs
- horticulture, including berries, apples, lettuce and tomatoes but not ornamentals
- aquaculture

They should also have the potential to improve productivity and sustainability and contribute to the target of net zero emissions from agriculture by 2040.

Feasibility studies must also look at business

models

Up to £5 million is available for feasibility projects. They must evaluate potential solutions that tackle challenges identified by industry to see if they could be commercialised.

They must:

- look at business models alongside technical feasibility and draw in expertise to do this
- work with end users to make sure solutions meet their needs

Competition information for feasibility studies

- the competition is open, and the deadline for applications is at midday on 26 February 2020
- businesses of any size may apply
- projects could range in size between £75,000 and £250,000

Demonstrator projects will develop best practice

Up to £10 million is available for a series of demonstrator projects. The projects will be used to develop best practice and shape future investment in science.

Projects will be expected to take part in the work to share results and reach potential users of the technology.

Projects must:

- demonstrate the viability of combinations of precision solutions to transform food production
- demonstrate solutions across different production environments, to encourage their widespread use
- work with end users
- produce evidence of technical feasibility and economic viability at commercial scale

Competition information for demonstrators

- the competition is open, and the deadline for applications is at midday on 26 February 2020
- businesses of any size may apply
- projects could range in size between £400,000 and £4 million