



Innovate  
UK

Business  
Connect

# Competition Brief

## **Farmed animals and aquaculture SPARK Awards**

**This activity is being delivered by the AgriFood  
Team within Innovate UK Business Connect.**

**Please contact [agrifood@iukbc.org.uk](mailto:agrifood@iukbc.org.uk)  
with any questions.**

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# Farmed animals and aquaculture SPARK Awards

## Summary

In the Farmed animals and aquaculture SPARK Awards UK-registered academic institutions or Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) will receive funding to collaborate with a Small/Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) to accelerate the development of innovative products, processes or services for the UK farmed animal or aquaculture sectors.

In this competition, up to £200,000 of funding (up to £20,000 grant per project) is available for SPARK Awards. The funding is from Innovate UK Business Connect and delivered by the AgriFood team. Projects will **start on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026**. Projects must **finish by 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2026**.

In applying to this competition, you are entering into a competitive process. This competition closes at 11:00am GMT on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2025.

## Project details and eligibility

### Project size

Your project's total grant funding request must be up to £20,000.

### Eligibility

Your project must:

- have a total grant funding request of up to £20,000.
- projects will **start on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026**.
- projects must **finish by 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2026**.
- focus on farmed animals or aquaculture.

You must only include [eligible project costs](#) in your application.

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

Due diligence on the SME Project Partner in each project will be completed based on the information supplied in your application ahead of receiving funding. This will ensure they qualify as an SME, are a registered business and have recorded finances within the scope of normal research organisation operations.

### Lead organisation

To be the project Lead your organisation must:

- be a UK academic institution or research and technology organisation (RTO). [See here for eligible RTOs.](#)

The project Lead must submit the application form.

### **Project team**

Applications must include **2 partners**:

- a UK-registered academic institution or research and technology organisation (RTO) organisation (who is the project Lead and will submit the application).
- a UK-registered SME (project Partner). [See here for definition of an SME.](#)

### **Non-funded partners**

The project will have one non-funded partner, the UK-registered SME.

### **Subcontractors**

Subcontractors are **not** allowed in this competition.

### **Number of applications**

A UK academic institution or research and technology organisation (RTO) can be the project Lead on up to two applications.

A UK-registered SMEs can be a project Partner on up to two applications.

### **Previous applications**

You cannot use a [previously submitted application](#) to apply for this competition.

We will not award you funding if you have:

- [failed to exploit](#) a previously funded project
- an overdue [independent accountant's report](#)
- failed to comply with grant terms and conditions

### **Portfolio approach**

We want to fund a variety of projects across different focus areas, organisations, sectors, locations, and across a range of company sizes. We call this a [portfolio approach](#).

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

This competition provides funding in line with the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Further information about the Subsidy requirements can be found within the Subsidy Control Act 2022 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk))

Innovate UK/Innovate UK Business Connect 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 to check if these rules apply to your organisation.

The SME partner will be required to complete a Minimal Financial Assistance Declaration form to ensure the funding can be lawfully granted under Minimal Financial Assistance in accordance with part 3, chapter 2 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. The funding made available through these Awards will be calculated on a gross cash equivalent basis, as determined by the monetary value of support made available under the grant.

### **Further information**

If you are unsure about your obligations under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 or the State aid rules, you should take independent legal advice. We are unable to advise on individual eligibility or legal obligations.

You must always 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.

### **Funding**

Up to £200,000 has been allocated to fund projects in this competition.

Funding will be in the form of a grant.

UK research organisations undertaking non-economic activity as part of the project can get funding for 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.

Funding will be paid to the project Lead only on completion of the project. To receive funding for your activities you will be required to submit evidence of your costs.

## **Scope**

In this competition, up to £200,000 of funding (£20,000 grant per project) is available for SPARK Awards. The funding is from Innovate UK Business Connect and delivered by the AgriFood team.

In the Farmed animals and aquaculture SPARK Awards UK-registered academic institutions or Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) will receive funding to collaborate with a Small/Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) to accelerate the development of innovative products, processes or services for the UK farmed animal or aquaculture sectors.

### **What is a Farmed animals and aquaculture SPARK Award?**

**Farmed animals and aquaculture SPARK Award projects must have an overarching goal of accelerating the development of innovative products, processes or services, to drive**

### **sustainable production within the UK farmed animal or aquaculture sectors.**

SPARK Awards will fund the project Lead, a UK-registered academic institution or Research and Technology Organisation (RTO), to deliver a project to address a challenge held by the project Partner, a UK-registered Small/Medium-sized Enterprise (SME), in relation to their development of innovative products, processes or services, or to enhance their progress towards developing new innovative products, processes or services.

The UK farmed animal industry encompasses dairy, beef, sheep, pig, and poultry production. Similarly, the aquaculture industry is a dynamic and growing sector, covering salmon farming, shellfish cultivation, and innovative land-based systems. Both sectors are supported by strong research, established best practices, and emerging technologies and innovations, positioning them for sustainable growth and reduced emissions.

Projects should aim to drive sustainable production within the farmed animal or aquaculture sectors. Below are some areas that are covered by these awards, but this does not exclude projects from outside these areas:

- a) Breeding
- b) Health
- c) Nutrition
- d) Precision agriculture applied to farmed animals/aquaculture

### **Farmed animals and aquaculture SPARK Awards aim to build collaborations between the research and business community.**

The Farmed animals and aquaculture SPARK Awards aim to initiate new projects and develop longer-term partnerships. While the collaboration may already exist, the project funded by the SPARK Award is expected to be a new initiative.

Both partners must be instrumental in determining the need for the project and its design.

The project activities will be delivered by the project Lead, the UK-registered academic institution or Research and Technology Organisation (RTO).

The project Partner, the SME, can support in the delivery of the project goals by carrying out related and/or parallel activities, but they are not required to deliver any defined activities under the remit of the project. As such, the SME will not be able to claim funding for any work undertaken to support the project goals.

There must be a defined plan for how the SME will be involved in the exploitation or commercialisation of the project outcomes.

#### **Projects must:**

- **accelerate the development of innovative products, processes or services** for the UK farmed animal or aquaculture sectors.
- either address a challenge held by an SME in relation to their development of innovative products, processes or services, or enhance their progress towards developing new innovative products, processes or services.

- have an overarching goal of **driving sustainable production** within the UK farmed animal or aquaculture sectors.
- **be collaborative**, led by one UK-registered academic institution or Research and Technology Organisation (RTO), working alongside one UK-registered SME.

**We are not funding projects that:**

- are equine specific.
- involve wild caught fisheries.
- focus on insect production for human consumption.
- focus on companion animals.
- focus on plant, insect or algae production without a direct link to the development of innovative products, processes or services for the UK farmed animal or aquaculture sectors.
- comprise predominately of fundamental research, literature reviews or market research, or are without a practical element.
- are conducted to anything less than the highest standards of animal welfare.

**We cannot fund projects that are:**

- dependent on export performance, for example giving a subsidy to a baker on the condition that it exports a certain quantity of bread to another country
- dependent on domestic inputs usage, for example giving a subsidy to a baker on the condition that it uses 50% UK flour in their product.

## Dates

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

Open date	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025
Close date	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2025 11am GMT
Projects start	2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2026
Projects finish	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2026 (no extensions will be granted)

Unsuccessful projects will not receive specific feedback on their application.

## How to apply

Applications are only being received through the Good Grants platform. You will need to set up an account on Good Grants to submit your application.

The UK Administrative Lead should complete and submit the final application.

Before submitting, it is the Administrative Leads responsibility to make sure:

- that all the information provided in the application is correct
- your proposal meets the eligibility and scope criteria

You can edit your application once submitted, up until the competition deadline.

### What we ask you:

#### **(1) Public description (not scored)**

*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 make this description publicly available. This could happen before you start your project.*

#### **(2) Have the partners worked together before?**

*This question is not scored. Your answer will help us to understand the type of consortia submitting applications to the competition.*

#### **(3) What is the business need, technological challenge, or market opportunity behind your innovation?**

*Explain:*

- *the business need, technological challenge or market opportunity for your innovation within the farmed animal or aquaculture sector.*
- *how this project will accelerate the development of innovative products, processes or services by addressing a challenge held by the SME in relation to their development of innovative products, processes or services, or by enhancing their progress towards developing new innovative products, processes or services.*
- *if you have identified any similar innovation and its current limitations*
- *any work you have already done to respond to this need*

#### **(4) What approach will you take and where will the focus of the innovation be?**

*Describe or explain:*

- *what your proposed innovation is.*
- *what activities you will undertake within the project and how you will respond to the need, challenge and opportunity identified.*
- *how your project activities will accelerate the development of innovative products, processes or services for the UK farmed animal or aquaculture sectors.*

#### **(5) Who is in the project team and what are their roles?**

*Describe or 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.*

#### **(6) What is the expected impact of the project/its deliverables?**

*Describe:*

- *the impact/change you hope to achieve through this collaboration on sustainable production within the farmed animal or aquaculture sector.*
- *the expected impacts on each of the organisations involved in the project (e.g. on future business growth, research goals, research and innovation capacity).*



- *how the SME will be involved in the exploitation or commercialisation of the project outcomes.*

**(7) What are the primary risks associated with this project?**

*Explain:*

- *the main risks and uncertainties of the project, including the technical, commercial, managerial, and environmental risks.*
- *any legislative or regulatory barriers which may prevent you from exploiting this project within a commercial market.*
- *how these risks/barriers will be mitigated/addressed.*

**(8) How much will the project cost and how does it represent value for money?**

*In terms of your project goals, explain:*

- *your total project costs.*
- *the grant you are requesting.*
- *how this represents value for money.*

**(9) Does your project involve animals?**

*To assess the conformity of this project with UKRI guidance on the use of animals in research and innovation and relevant UK legislation, projects must demonstrate that they have considered animal welfare requirements. If Yes, please provide details on:*

*The procedures involving animals that will be undertaken in this project. You should set out and justify your planned experimental design and the number of animals and the frequency of intervention. Please indicate:*

- *any procedures that will be carried out which are regulated by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, amended 2012*
- *how the above procedures relate to the objectives of the project and why they are necessary to achieve those objectives*
- *how the project has considered the 'principle of the 3 R's' from the NC3Rs. A UK-based scientific organisation that works with the research community to replace, refine and reduce the use of animals in research and testing.*

## **Accessibility and inclusion**

We welcome and encourage applications from people of all backgrounds and are committed to making our application process accessible to everyone. This includes providing support, in the form of reasonable adjustments, for people who have a disability or a long-term condition and face barriers applying to us.

You must contact us as early as possible in the application process. We recommend contacting us at least 15 working days before the competition closing date to ensure we can provide you with the most suitable support possible.

You can contact us by emailing [agrifood@iukbc.org.uk](mailto:agrifood@iukbc.org.uk)

## **Data Sharing Privacy Notice**

Before starting an application to this competition please read Innovate UK Business Connects Privacy Notice to understand how we will use your data: <https://iuk-business-connect.org.uk/privacy-policy/>

## Next steps

After your application is received via Good Grants it will be assessed. You will be contacted if your application is either successful or unsuccessful. Unsuccessful projects will not receive specific feedback on their application.

Should your application be successful we will complete due diligence checks on the project partners using the information submitted in your application.

To start your project, you will have to sign a Grant Offer Letter via Good Grants. You will also be required to submit a 'New supplier form' to ultimately enable payments to be processed and a redacted copy of your bank details. Your Grant Offer Letter will show the start date for your project, do not start your project before this date. Any costs incurred before your start date cannot be claimed as part of your grant. During project set up the lead and business will be required to complete a short impact-focused baseline questionnaire.

You will be invited to a mid-term online meeting to support you during your project and to discuss your progress.

At the end of your project, you will be invited to an online meeting to support you with your next steps. You will be required to complete a final report and an impact survey.