AgriScale - Accelerating Agri-tech manufacturing

Experimental Development and Industrial Research

Showcase and Consortia Building Event
29 April 2026

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Competition Summary & Scope

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Context

- Agri-tech identified as one of frontier industries in the UK Government's Advanced Modern industrial Strategy.
- Automation and Robotic systems seen as key solutions to overcome challenges in Agriculture related to skilled labour shortages and need to improve productivity, profitability and sustainability
- Millions of pounds have been invested by businesses and by Agri-tech R&D funding leading to significant progress with promising technical solutions.
- Challenges persist related to product performance and reliability, or related to manufacturing scale-up that are preventing end user adoption and deployment

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Context

- AgriScale will enable agri-tech businesses to scale within the UK, strengthening the country's advanced manufacturing capabilities and driving growth in the agri-tech sector.
- Focusing on accelerating product manufacturing rather than early-stage research
- AgriScale fills a critical gap in the innovation pipeline and helps promising technologies move from concept to market more quickly and reliably.

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Two Strands: **Industrial Research** — **Mid to Late-stage projects**
Experimental Development — **Late-stage projects**

Total budget

£13 Million

Total project costs

IR: £250k - £750k

ED: £1.0m - £3.0m

Duration

IR: 6 - 12 months

ED: 6 - 18 months

Must be **collaborative** applications

Both strands must be led by a **UK Business**

Project Start Dates

IR: 1st October 2026

ED: 1st January 2027

Competition deadline
3rd June 2026 at 11:00

IR projects written assessment only

ED projects written and interview assessment

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Industrial Research Projects – Mid to late-stage

- Some products still demonstrate operational, performance or reliability technology gaps meaning that their readiness for scale-up, subsequent adoption and for commercial end user acceptance remains low.
- They have been developed and tested to work well most of the time, but not always, and not consistently enough to meet end user requirements

AgriScale is intended to fund short, focused projects to

- address these technology gaps
- accelerate and de-risk the late-stage final developments
- enable testing and validation of solutions to demonstrate performance and reliability acceptable to commercial end users

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Industrial Research Projects

The planned research or critical investigation that is aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for developing new products, processes or services. **It can also be for projects that are aimed at bringing about a significant improvement in existing products, processes or services.**

Industrial research comprises the creation of **component parts of complex systems**. It may include the construction of prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an environment with simulated interfaces to existing systems as well as of pilot lines. Where necessary, this would be for the industrial research and notably for **generic technology validation.**

Intervention rate for SME's **70%**

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Specific Themes – Industrial Research

Your project must focus on one or more of the following:

- technologies that enable automation to reduce labour demands and improve productivity and sustainability in agriculture, forestry, horticulture and aquaculture
- automation and robotic systems and equipment
- automated sensing and observation systems that must include associated data processing and intelligence systems to provide actionable management decisions or direct control actions
- identify specific technology or performance gaps, manufacturing, engineering or regulatory challenges to be addressed through this process
- outline how you will accelerate progress, attract investment, and expedite time to market
- you must be able to demonstrate that the product to be brought to market will drive productivity, sustainability and evidence of farmer or grower demand
- a long-term market for the product or service; solutions that have the opportunity for global export would be considered advantageous
- your project must be seeking to develop and test your products to overcome known technical gaps, increase performance or reliability to levels that are acceptable for commercial end user operation

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Specific Themes – Industrial Research

Technologies and project approaches can include but are not limited to:

- design and test of mechanical, electrical, electronic and software systems for robust and reliable function, operation, reliability and durability
- design for manufacture and assembly
- regulatory and safety compliance testing and approvals including food safety requirements, operational and functional safety, electromagnetic compatibility testing and compliance
- development and testing of software, navigation systems, safety systems, fleet management and deployment systems including cyber security
- software and hardware system optimisation to enable easy integration with existing business management and process hardware, software and systems
- fleet management and fleet deployment hardware and software including; battery, charging, operator interface, support and monitoring systems
- field, workshop and laboratory trials to develop and prove performance, reliability, endurance and machine up-time in end user environments to confirm end user acceptance and benchmark performance
- devices, technologies and systems to enable effective end user product support, diagnostics and repair

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Experimental Development Projects – late stage

- Some products are near fully developed and ready for end user adoption, but there is a need for scaling of both the business and manufacturing processes.
- These products need to be reliably manufactured at scale, have demonstrated long term reliability and performance, and be supported in the marketplace to gain end user confidence

AgriScale is intended to fund short, focused projects to

- accelerate and de-risk the transition to manufacture and distribution at scale
- complete design for manufacture and process optimisation
- develop procurement strategies and develop supply chain strategies
- complete testing and validation of products to demonstrate performance and reliability acceptable to commercial end users

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Experimental Development Projects

Experimental development may **comprise prototyping, demonstrating, piloting, testing and validation of new or improved products, processes or services in environments representative of real-life operating conditions**. This would be where the primary objective is to make further technical improvements on products, processes or services that are not substantially set.

This may include the **development of a commercially usable prototype** or pilot which is **necessary for the final commercial product** and which is too expensive to produce for it to be used only for demonstration and validation purposes.

Experimental development **does not include routine or periodic changes made to existing products**, production lines, manufacturing processes, services and other operations in progress, even if those changes may represent improvements.

Intervention rate for SME's **45%**

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Specific Themes – Experimental Development

Your project must focus on one or more of the following:

- technologies that enable automation to reduce labour demands and improve productivity and sustainability in agriculture, forestry, horticulture and aquaculture
- automation and robotic systems and equipment
- automated sensing and observation systems that must include associated data processing and intelligence systems to provide actionable management decisions or direct control actions
- identify specific manufacturing, engineering, performance or regulatory compliance issues to address through this process
- outlining how you will accelerate progress, attract investment, and expedite time to market
- you must be able to demonstrate that the product to be brought to market will drive productivity and sustainability, and provide evidence of farmer or grower demand
- a long-term market for the product or service; solutions that have the opportunity for global export would be considered advantageous
- demonstrate a robust business plan that supports production and market scale up
- your project must be seeking to accelerate late-stage development toward viable production and commercialisation

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Specific Themes – Experimental Development

Technologies and project approaches can include but are not limited to:

- design and test of mechanical, electrical, electronic and software systems for robust and reliable function, operation, reliability and durability at scale
- design for manufacture and assembly, and development of manufacturing systems, including tooling and manufacturing development and process optimisation
- supply chain strategy and procurement development
- regulatory and safety compliance testing and approvals including food safety requirements, operational and functional safety, electromagnetic compatibility testing and compliance
- validation and verification for production readiness of software, navigation systems, safety systems, fleet management and deployment systems, including cyber security
- software and hardware system optimisation to enable easy integration with existing business management and process hardware, software and systems
- fleet management and fleet deployment hardware and software including; battery, charging, operator interface, support and monitoring systems
- field, workshop and laboratory trials to prove reliability, endurance and machine up-time in end user environments and to evidence and benchmark performance in real conditions
- devices, technologies and systems to enable effective end user product support, diagnostics and repair

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Guidance 1

Its not all about robots ! And not all about fruit picking robots !

It includes:

- technologies that enable automation to reduce labour demands and improve productivity and sustainability in agriculture, forestry, horticulture and aquaculture
- intelligent automation and robotics systems and equipment
- automated sensing and observation systems that must include associated data processing and intelligence systems to provide actionable management decisions or direct control actions
- software systems as well as hardware systems
- working in all sectors – crops, livestock, horticulture

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Guidance 2

It is all about short, focused, late-stage projects to complete and scale-up products that have already been well developed.

- If you have one of these then please apply

It is not for the research and development projects for early or mid-stage technologies or concepts.

- If you have one of these then please do not apply.

We hope to announce further funding for early and mid-stage projects in this sector later in the year.

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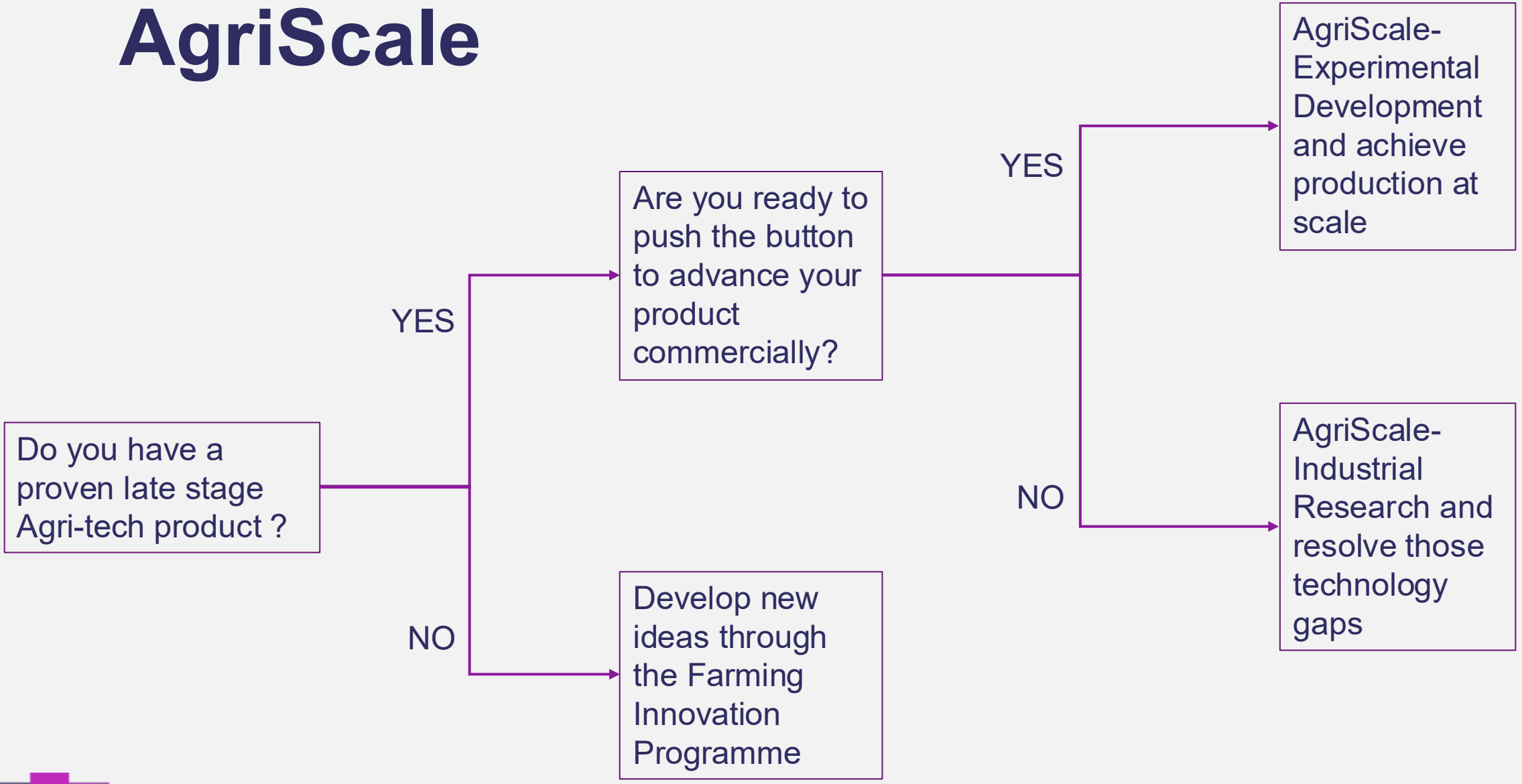

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Guidance 3

A business can lead only one application in each strand, however:

- your application and your project can include multiple work packages and activities to resolve multiple challenges that your product may have and that you want to resolve to become commercial
- you can select different partners with specific technical capabilities and resources to resolve the specific challenges
- You should aim to remove all challenges, technical and manufacturing gaps, that are holding back your product and business
- It is likely that your business, product and therefore project will only be at the right development stage to be suitable for one strand, so choose wisely

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Guidance 4

It's about business growth both for the product and UK manufacturing

We need to understand how your project and this funding will enable your product to become commercial and your business to scale-up and grow

Both strands require some explanation of your business model, route to manufacture, scale up and distribution and product support to end users

There is additional flexibility consortium structure to enable the use of suitable manufacturing partners if required, but you must have at least one partner

This is not FIP and you do not need a Farmer in the consortium.

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Meeting the brief: What are we looking for ?

- Products at the right stage of development
- Building on previous innovation funding
- Clear expectation of scale up need and its subsequent impact on adoption
- A robust business plan to underpin the scale-up opportunity
- Ambitious scale-up plans, volumes and timescales
- A well-structured consortium to bring scale-up to reality
- A triple win for UK economy
- UK and global opportunities

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Contact

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