

# Opportunities for UK Agri-Tech businesses to explore international markets in 2026

Joanna Scales & Caroline Griffin

9 April 2026



Innovate  
UK

# Housekeeping

- Please remain on mute
- Add your questions for speakers into the Q&A box
- Feel free to introduce yourself in the chat

# Agenda

**10.00 - 10.05** **Welcome and housekeeping**

**10.05 - 10.15** **Upcoming opportunities**

Chris Danks, Head of Agri-Food, Innovate UK

**10.15 - 10.25** **What are GBIPs and GIPs**

Jon Hazell, Partnership Manager – North America and Global Incubator, Innovate UK

**10.25 - 10.50** **Experience of businesses**

Apostolos Papadopoulos, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Crop Intellect Ltd

Caroline Wellon, Co-founder and Managing Director, O2 Agri Ltd

**10.50 - 11:00** **How to apply and what help is available**

Lorraine Smith, International & Global Programmes Manager, Innovate UK Business Growth

**11.00 - 11.30** **Q&A / Close**



# Our system

**Innovate UK** is at the heart of the UK's innovation ecosystem, inspiring, involving and investing in the innovators of today and tomorrow.

**Innovate UK Business Connect** creates diverse connections for positive change.

**Innovate UK Business Growth** empowers innovative businesses to grow, transforming UK industry and society.

# Upcoming Opportunities in 2026

Chris Danks, Innovate UK



# Context

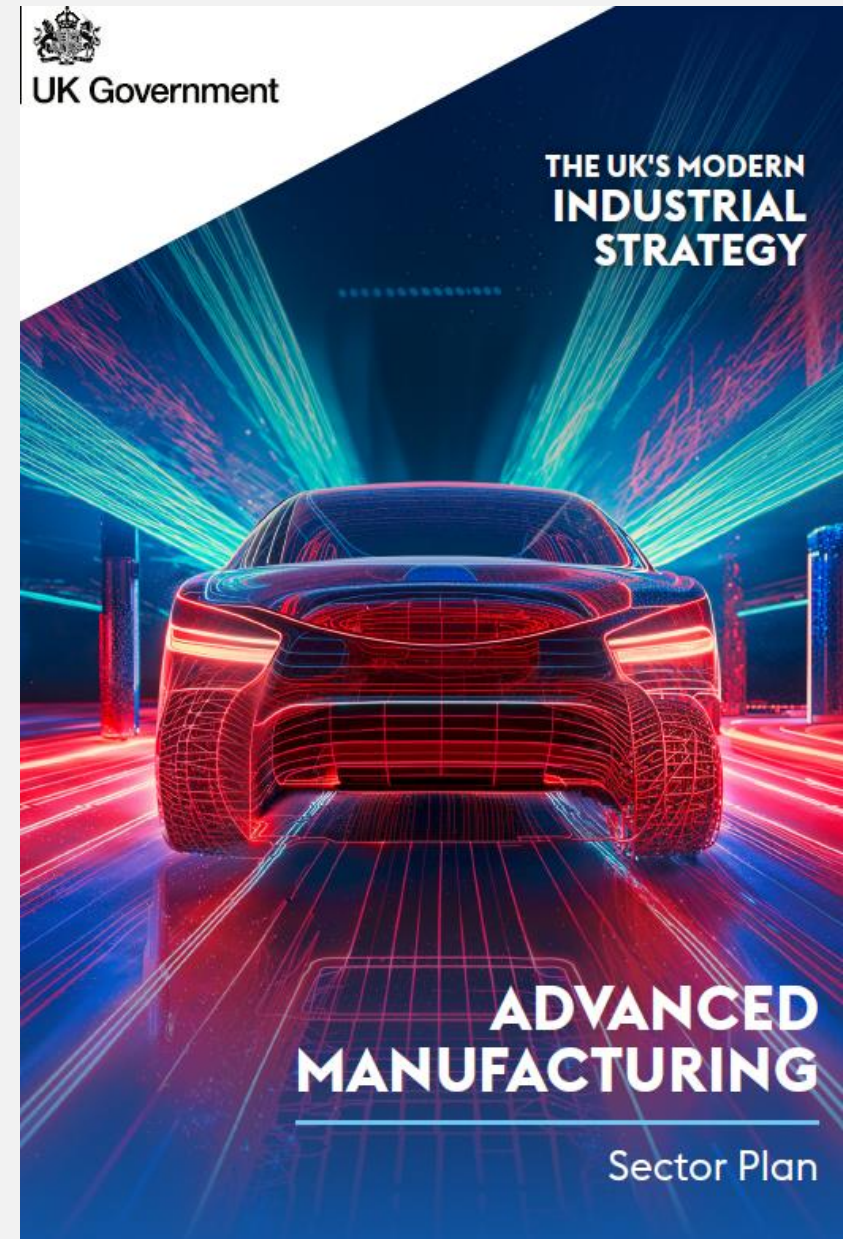
- Innovate UK has launched their new prospectus.
- This refreshed direction sets out how Innovate UK will better support the UK's most ambitious businesses to scale, commercialise and compete globally.
- This marks a significant moment for Innovate UK.
- The Prospectus brings together Innovate UK's ambition, role and offer in one place.
- It sets out their strategic focus, the sectors and technologies where they will concentrate their efforts.
- It also explains how they will work differently to support the UK's most promising innovators.
- **High potential UK Agri-tech businesses can only capture market share and become industry giants through international growth and scale.**



# Context

## The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy

- Agri-tech one of six priority frontier industries within the [Advance Manufacturing Sector Plan](#)
- *Adoption of new technology can often be slow within the sector, hindering the scale and growth potential needed to achieve a more resilient and productive food system. To address this, we will support UK agri-tech to target precision technologies that champion the application of controlled environments, robotics and automation, advanced sensors, AI and data systems in both the domestic and global markets.*
- The UK's agricultural market is too small to deliver scale, revenue and valuations that attract serious growth investment. They need to access global R&D and innovation with demonstration and adoption to be globally competitive and relevant, and the UK needs strategic partnerships to remain a global innovation leader.



# 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.
- Automation and Robotic systems seen as key global solutions to overcome challenges in Agriculture related to skilled labour shortages and need to improve productivity, profitability and sustainability



# Investor Partnerships

## The impact of agrifood Investor Partnerships

**38**  
Projects

**£24m**  
Grant awarded\*

**£65m**  
Aligned investment\*\*

**2.7**  
Multiplier

These figures reflect only investor partnership projects within the agrifood sector and do not represent the full Innovate UK portfolio.

\* Grant and aligned investment are based on data submitted at application, which includes £4m grant support from Defra.

\*\* Post project investment and overall multiplier based on investment according to Beahurst published data accessed 26/08/2025

**£112m**  
Follow on investment

**7.5**  
Overall multiplier

**35**  
Companies supported



Scan QR code for full brochure



# International Opportunities 26/27

Agri-Tech Going Global to build on the global opportunities for UK Agri-Tech, helping businesses to develop and configure new technologies for global markets. These will build on existing international partnerships we have developed through the Global Team and IUK BG.

- Six Global Missions based on current key countries/delivery partners in 2026/27
  - Australia GIP – Farmers2Founders
  - New Zealand GIP - Sprout
  - Canada GIP – Cultivator
  - US GIP - SVG Thrive Accelerator
  - KSA GIP – KAUST in discussion
  - European GBIP –targeting Netherlands or Spain
- First recruitment calls opening 01 April 2026 for New Zealand and US
- Selection decisions made by Agri-Tech team to align with IUK Strategy

# What are GBIPs and GIPs

Jon Hazell, Innovate UK



The UK's innovation agency



# Creation of Industry Giants

Accelerating Innovation  
for our Nation.

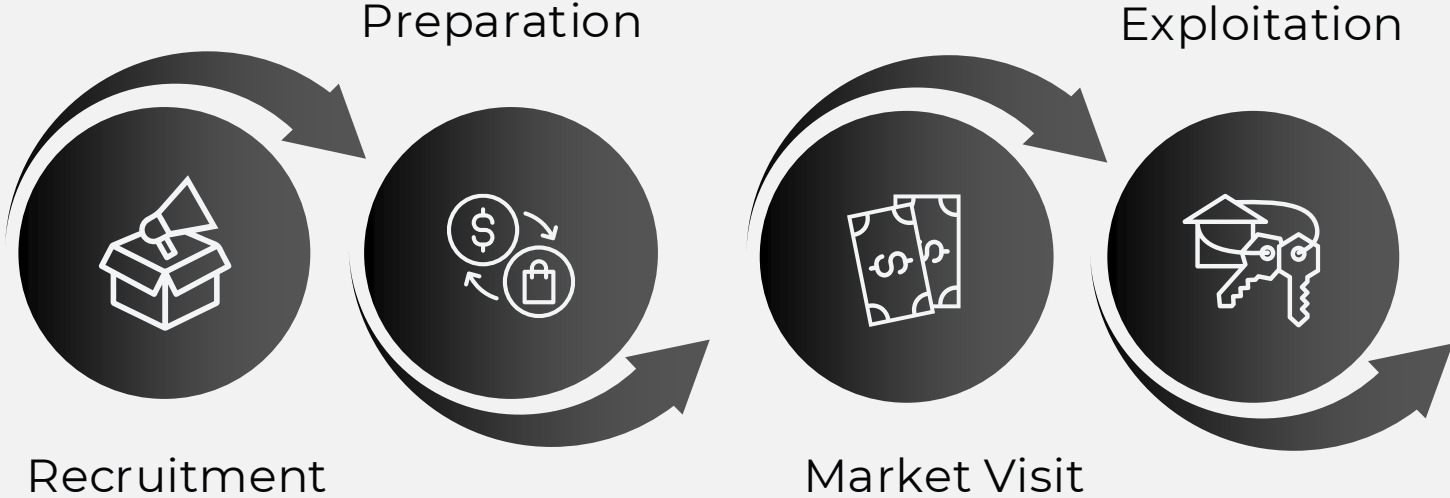
# Global Business Innovation Programme

A programme for up to 15 innovative SMEs to collaborate and explore global markets, accelerating business growth, providing detailed market knowledge, cultural insight, and introductions and connections, opening doors that SMEs might find difficult to do themselves.



# GBIP Process

9-12 Month Programme



# GBIP Programme Overview

## 9-12 Month Programme



### Raising Awareness

Expanding global visibility and understanding of new markets



### Innovation

Discovering new ideas to meet customer needs and development of new collaborations



### Market Strategy

Defining pathways to reach target customers and attract investment



### Regulatory Landscape

Navigating legal frameworks for market entry.

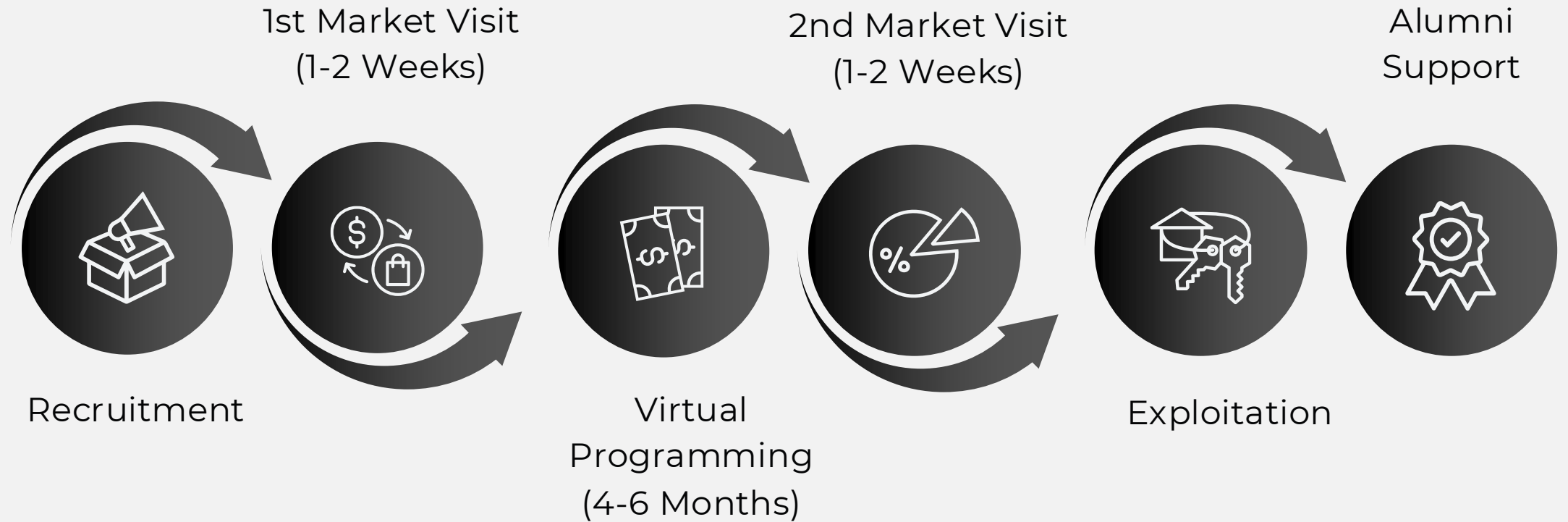
# Global Incubator Programme

An acceleration programme for up to 8 innovative SMEs to grow and scale in specific sectors building long-term relationships and foundations to accelerate future market growth through the exploration Of Global Markets.



# GIP Process

## 12-18 Month Programme



# GIP Programme Overview

## 12-18 Month Programme



### Raising Awareness

Expanding global visibility and understanding of new markets



Achieving Market Validation

### Market Validation

Ensuring product-market fit through customer discovery research and feedback.



### Workshops

Facilitating skill development through expert-led sessions and Mentorship.



### Innovation

Discovering new ideas to meet customer needs and development of new collaborations



### Market Strategy

Defining pathways to reach target customers and attract investment

Regulatory Landscape



### Regulatory Landscape

Navigating legal frameworks for market entry.



# UK in a global world

## The Opportunity:

- 99% of population live elsewhere
- 97% of WW GDP is elsewhere

# Panel discussion: What impacts did participating have on your business

Apostolos Papadopoulos, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Crop Intellect Ltd

Caroline Wellon, Co-founder and Managing Director, O2 Agri Ltd



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# How to apply and what help is available

Lorraine Smith, Innovate UK Business Growth



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# New Zealand & USA Global Incubator Programmes

## Benefits

- **Funded Market Access** Group flights, group accommodation, group in-market travel, group subsistence and conference fees are all covered, removing a significant financial barrier to international market entry.
- **Two In-Market Visits** Direct access to the world's leading Agri-Tech ecosystems.
- **Dedicated Expert Support** Each business is paired with an Innovate UK Business Growth Innovation & Growth Specialist who provides bespoke, one-to-one strategic support throughout the full 9–12 month programme.
- **Access to Incubator Paterners' Ecosystem** Direct connection to leading startup accelerator and investor in the Agri-Tech value chain, including in-market programming, virtual programmes, 1:1 mentor engagements and incubator team check-ins.
- **Market Validation and Customer Discovery** Structured opportunities to test technology and market fit, conduct preliminary customer validation and gain a deep understanding of what it takes to succeed in these markets.
- **Investor and Partner Connectivity** Introductions to ecosystem players, mentors and potential investors.
- **Demo Day Profile** A dedicated showcase opportunity to present achievements to key stakeholders, raising the company's profile within the Agri-Tech communities.

# New Zealand & USA Global Incubator Programmes

## Our Partners



- Sprout is New Zealand's leading startup accelerator and investor in the agrifood value chain. Sprout turns breakthrough science and ideas into globally scalable startups through funding, hands-on venture support, and powerful industry partnerships.



- SVG Ventures | THRIVE is a leading global agri-food innovation and investment firm headquartered in Silicon Valley. Their corporate innovation programs work with Fortune 1000 companies to accelerate innovation, support strategic transformation and connect them with breakthrough technologies shaping the future of food and agriculture.



## Key focus areas include but are not limited to:

### Targeted agricultural sectors:

Horticulture: fruit production, vegetable crops and protected cropping

Pastoral: dairy systems, livestock monitoring and management

Arable: precision crop management and soil health technologies

### Controlled environment farming:

Indoor and vertical farming

Protected horticulture

Climate-resilient growing

### Robotics & Automation:

Harvesting and planting automation

Seasonal labour substitutions

Automated irrigation and nutrient delivery

### Advanced Sensors & AI Systems:

Crop growth and monitoring sensors

Yield prediction and soil health

Livestock monitoring technologies

Supply chain & traceability solutions

### Engineering Biology for agriculture:

Bio-based crop protection & crop nutrition

Microbial soil health protection

Enhanced plant resilience and productivity

## Applications

### All applications are made online

- **Company information:** Is your company currently engaged with global markets? Has your company previously participated in an Innovate UK funded global programme?
- **Scope:** How does your application fit with the scope of the GIP?
- **Product Innovation:** What is the innovation? Why is it innovative? What is the stage of development? Who is the target market?
- **Experience & aims:** What does the company hope to gain from participation in the programme? How will this support your growth strategy in terms of building partnerships & collaborations?
- **Market:** Why specifically this market? What is your understanding of the competitive landscape? How will working with this market help you to further develop or exploit your innovation?
- **Capacity:** Do you have the capacity within your team to exploit the programme? What is the scalability of your business model?



## Costs

### **Innovate UK will fund for both visits:**

- International flights – Group return economy travel from London Heathrow
- Group hotel accommodation
- Group hotel transfers
- Group travel within the international market
- Group subsistence
- Event or conference fees

### **Companies will fund:**

- Programme commitment fee of £2000, returned in full after programme completion
- Travel within the UK
- Border entry and visa documentation
- Travel and medical insurance



## Support

- Wraparound Innovate UK support, Innovation Growth Specialist/Scale Up Director support and Alumni event
- Incubator partner programming, check-ins, 1:1s and virtual workshops.

## Expectations

- **Be part of the cohort** – attend the virtual sessions, travel and join in-market activities as a group. Support and challenge each other.
- **Be committed** – be involved in all parts of the programme and play an active role.
- **Maximise your chances** – work closely with the advisors on the programme.
- **Demonstrate sufficient investment** – guarantee that you have the resources to participate effectively in the programme.
- **Develop and implement an impact focused strategic plan** –working closely with your advisor on the programme.
- **Engage an appropriate representative** - C-suite representative or decision-maker.
- **Represent UKRI & Innovate UK at the highest standards at all times.**



# FAQ

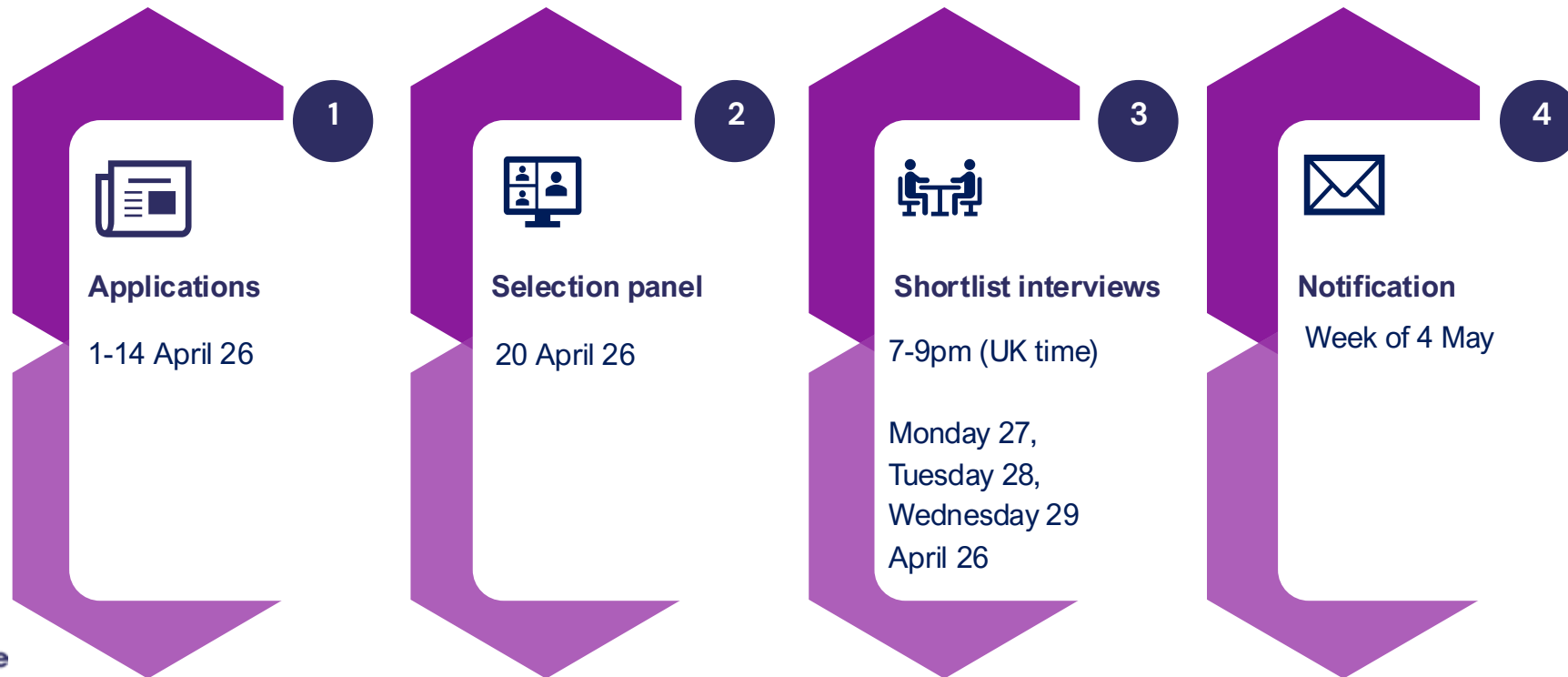
## **Q. Can an additional company representative travel or be part of the virtual sessions?**

Yes, in principle — though this is at the discretion of the GIP lead. Any additional representative must be funded by the company, follow the same itinerary as the primary delegate, and participate consistently across all activities.

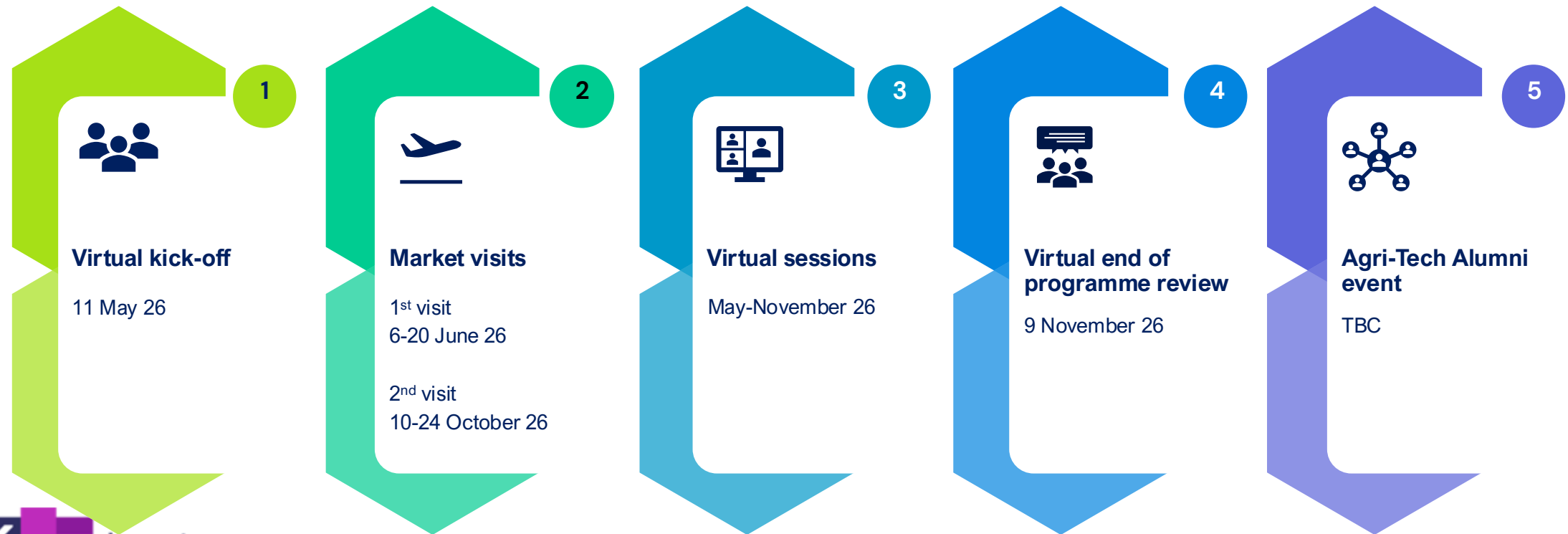
## **Q. Can the return to the UK be extended?**

**A.** Yes – delegates can extend their market visit and arrange their own additional business meetings. If successful, you should inform the GIP lead when you accept your place. If additional costs incur, the company would be expected to cover these.

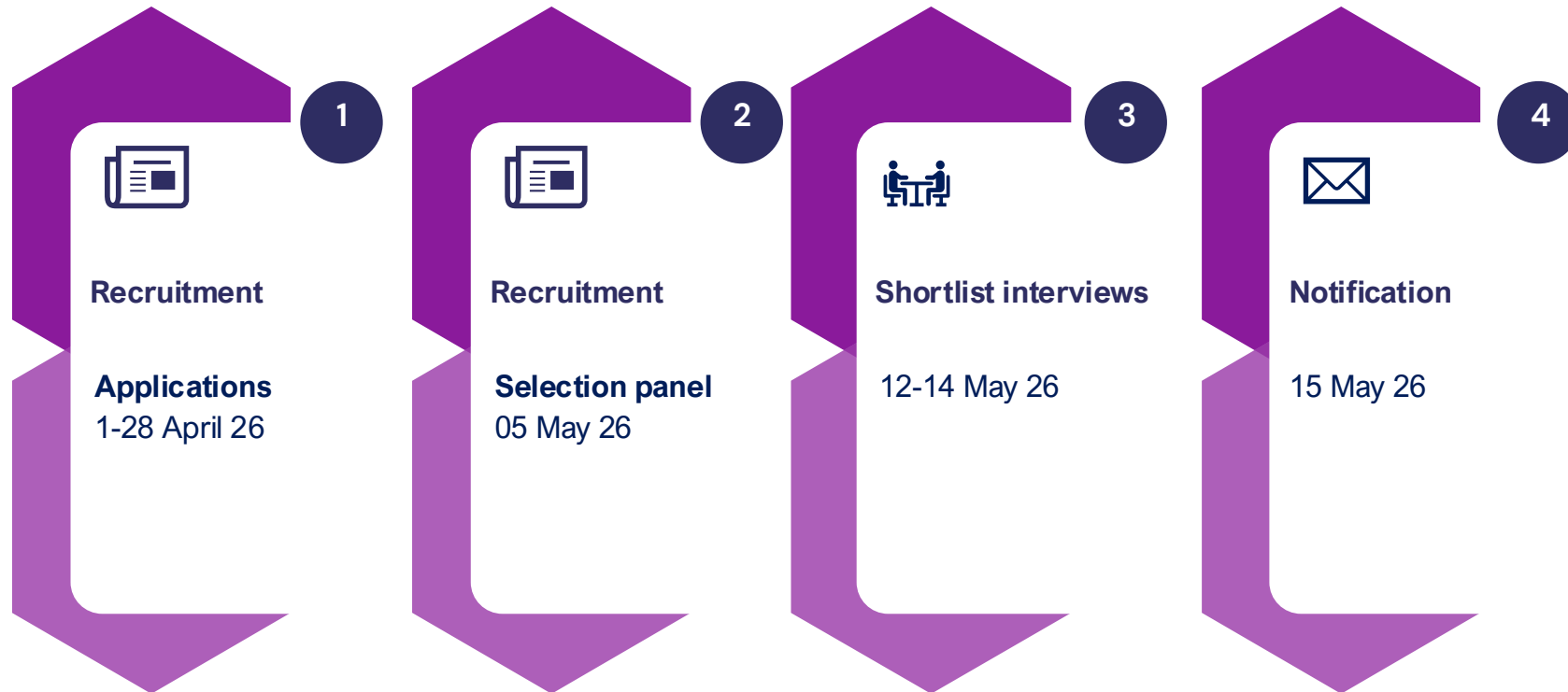
## GIP Agri-Tech New Zealand – Recruitment Timeline



## GIP Agri-Tech New Zealand – Programme Timeline



## GIP Agri-Tech USA – Recruitment Timeline



## GIP Agri-Tech USA – Programme Activity Timeline



# Q&A



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Thank you

