

Boost for farming innovation

Artificial Intelligence technology to optimise welfare in pigs, agri-robots to help speed up vegetable harvests and automation to increase fruit crop yields are just some of research and development projects to receive funding through the Farming Innovation Programme, it was announced today (Monday 22 August).

Details of these new innovative projects comes as further support was announced for farmers and growers with novel ideas to help grow food production, encourage sustainable practices and increase productivity, with the next rounds of the [Feasibility Projects](#) and the [Small R&D Partnership Project competitions](#) due to open shortly.

The £16.5 million of funding will help drive innovation in agriculture and horticulture and is part of the Government's £270 million [Farming Innovation Programme](#).

It is run in partnership with UK Research and Innovation, building upon their successful [Transforming Food Production challenge](#).

Farming Innovation Minister Steve Double said:

We want to help unlock greater potential in our already brilliant farming and horticulture sector. Today's first round of projects demonstrate how – with the right funding and support – there are great productivity and environmental sustainability gains to be made.

Our £270 million investment in farming innovation is designed to help take the UK's world-leading research ideas and turn them into practical solutions to support healthy soils, abundant pollinators and clean water alongside profitable food production.

Katrina Hayter, challenge director for the Transforming Food Production challenge, said:

You only need look at the sheer breadth of projects that have received funding to see there are so many opportunities for innovation across the food sector. From animal health to crop productivity, the introduction of strategic support technology and the precise application of chemicals, it's exciting to see so many concepts beginning to come to life.

When brought together, it shows how the whole food system can benefit from new ideas, with knowledge-sharing and collaboration at its core. We are keen to ensure farmers and growers remain at the

heart of projects, bringing their valuable real-life experiences to the project consortia to ensure that each innovation stays focused on helping improve the day-to-day challenges faced by those in the food sector. We now look forward to supporting these projects further as they develop.

The Farming Innovation Programme aims to spark new ideas and collaboration across the sector to address long-term challenges such as producing nutritious food more efficiently whilst helping the sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to achieve net zero goals. Farmers, growers, foresters, businesses and researchers are being invited to collaborate and submit applications for these two new competitions:

- A £5.5 million competition for 'Feasibility projects' will offer grants for projects worth between £200,000 and £500,000 to support research and development through the difficult testing phase of an idea to see if it is worth investing in further
- Winners of the 'Small R&D Partnership' competition will receive a share of the £11 million grant funding for industrial research projects worth between £1 million and £3 million to further develop new solutions that will ultimately address major on-farm or immediate post farmgate challenges or opportunities such as enhancing productivity and sustainability.

Details of the successful applications from the first round of Small R&D Partnership Projects, Feasibility Projects and Research Starter Projects, that were launched in October 2021 [were shared by UKRI today](#). These include:

- Farmsense's use of innovative sensor technology and AI to optimise welfare in pigs;
- Blue Planet II, a new project which aims to build upon its highly successful autonomous technology to further increase fruit crop yield and quality;
- A new project from 'Muddy Machines', whose agri-robot concepts aim to speed up vegetable harvesting with sustainability and reliability at their core.

Altogether Defra expects to spend around £600 million on grants and other support for farmers to invest in productivity, animal health and welfare, innovation, research and development over the next three years.

[jHub Fellowship Scheme: "We define innovation as doing something](#)

different that adds value."

News story

Innovation is often described as doing something new or different, but at jHub it's essential that these new approaches add value.



Major Jonathan, Innovation Scout at the jHub, is responsible for scoping out areas for development and then bringing them together with industry experts.

Once an opportunity has been established, jHub will work with industry partners to establish a pilot scheme aimed at making an immediate impact. Only once it is deemed as viable, is the product taken to the next stage:

If it's successful and we see it being a viable solution going forward we'll take it to the UK Strategic Command Innovation Sub-Committee where we'll seek funding to bring it in as a core capability.

Even if a project is deemed viable, and approved by the committee, it's only considered a success when it actually delivers the intended capability in the hands of the user.

Although set up to focus on areas of capability within defence, the jHub doesn't shy away from casting a larger net in their hunt to provide innovative solutions:

Of course, we primarily look across defence for areas of capability but in some cases, we also look at the wider security architecture across government.

As well as producing innovative products and solutions to users Major Jonathan shares that the role has offered him the chance to work closely with colleagues from the civil service, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force:

It has been incredibly refreshing and being able to see first-hand the way in which everyone contributes has been fantastic.

He goes on to explain perhaps the most attractive feature of working at the jHub, is:

The opportunity to represent defence, as an ambassador with industry and to work on some really impactful projects that can deliver real benefits going forward has been really rewarding.

And who can say better than that?

You can find more information about working for the jHub and their new Innovation Fellowship by reading the [Innovation Fellowship Launches](#) article.

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[Walking, wheeling and cycling to be offered on prescription in nationwide trial](#)

- trials in 11 areas across the country to help people's mental and physical health
- GPs will issue social prescriptions such as walking, wheeling and cycling, backed by £12.7 million
- schemes will include cycling and walking groups, cycle training and free bike loans

Social prescriptions, including walking, wheeling and cycling, will be offered by GPs as part of a new trial to improve mental and physical health and reduce disparities across the country, the government has announced today (22 August 2022).

The government has awarded £12.7 million in multi-year funding to 11 local authority areas in England. The funding will go towards several pilot projects in each location, including:

- adult cycle training
- free bike loans
- walking groups

Other schemes include all-ability cycling taster days where people who may

not have cycled before can try to in a friendly environment, or walking and cycling mental health groups where people can connect with their communities as they get active.

The pilots must be delivered alongside improved infrastructure so people feel safe to cycle and walk.

The 11 local authority areas that will trial social prescriptions are:

- Bath and North East Somerset
- Bradford
- Cornwall
- Cumbria
- Doncaster
- Gateshead
- Leeds
- Nottingham
- Plymouth
- Suffolk
- Staffordshire

The pilots, a commitment in the government's [Gear Change plan](#) published in 2020, aim to evaluate the impact of cycling and walking on an individual's health, such as reduced GP appointments and reliance on medication due to more physical activity. For the first time, transport, active travel and health officials will work together towards a whole systems approach to health improvement and tackling health disparities.

Walking and Cycling Minister, Trudy Harrison, said:

Walking and cycling has so many benefits – from improving air quality in our communities to reducing congestion on our busiest streets.

It also has an enormous positive impact on physical and mental health, which is why we have funded these projects which will get people across the country moving and ease the burden on our NHS.

National Active Travel Commissioner, Chris Boardman, said:

As a nation we need healthier, cheaper and more pleasant ways to get around for everyday trips. Active Travel England's mission is to ensure millions of people nationwide can do just that – so it's easier to leave the car at home and to enjoy the benefits that come with it.

Moving more will lead to a healthier nation, a reduced burden on the NHS, less cancer, heart disease and diabetes, as well as huge cost savings. This trial aims to build on existing evidence to show how bringing transport, active travel and health together can make

a positive impact on communities across England.

The pilots will be delivered between 2022 and 2025 with on-going monitoring and evaluation to support continued learning.

The project is bringing together a range of government departments and agencies including:

- NHS England
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
- Sport England
- National Academy for Social Prescribing
- Defra
- Department for Health and Social Care

Home Secretary praises ‘true’ football fans and urges respect at games

The Home Secretary Priti Patel has visited Brentford’s Gtech Community Stadium to see the valuable work that football clubs, the police and sport bodies are doing to prevent antisocial behaviour and increase fans’ enjoyment of the game after disorder at matches last season.

The Home Office is working closely with the police and football bodies to ensure the matchday enjoyment of the majority of fans and families is not ruined by the selfishness of a few who invaded football pitches, threw flares, and abused players and fans at matches in England and Wales last season.

The Home Secretary met officials from the Premier League and Brentford Football Club, which came top of a recent Premier League survey for matchday fan experience, and saw the new safe standing areas within the Gtech Community Stadium for fans, toured the control room and spoke with the security team about the valuable work they do to ensure match days are positive experiences for spectators.

She also spoke with staff members who work on programmes such as Premier League Kicks, which has been working in local communities to inspire thousands of young people. Premier League Kicks started in 2006 – with Brentford one of 4 pilot clubs – and has a long history of using the power of football and the value of sports participation to help youngsters in some of the country’s most high-need areas.

The Home Secretary urged football fans across England and Wales to respect others’ enjoyment of the game, and the law, or risk receiving a football

banning order (FBO) preventing them from attending home and away matches, including potentially the World Cup in Qatar, if they attack or abuse other fans, staff, players or managers.

Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

There is no place for the ugly scenes we saw at some matches in England and Wales last season and it is good to see the positive work being done by clubs like Brentford to ensure our stadia are safe places for families and children to enjoy the beautiful game.

I am determined not to let a small minority ruin matches for true fans as the football season gets under way and we are working closely with the police and the football authorities to tackle antisocial and criminal behaviour.

I wholeheartedly support the extra measures all football bodies and clubs are bringing to keep fans safe and would encourage police and the courts to make full use of Football Banning Order legislation which we have recently extended to online abuse and will be shortly bringing in to root out class A drugs at matches.

FBOs are a preventative behavioural order designed to prevent violence, disorder and harm and are imposed by a court, following an application or on conviction for a football-related offence.

Nearly 1,400 troublemakers have already been targeted by FBOs and banned by the courts.

In the last 12 months the government has significantly expanded the scope of FBOs in order to crack down on disorder by:

- adding football-related online hate crime to the list of offences for which a FBO can be imposed on conviction so that those who are convicted of online racism and other hate crimes connected to football can be banned from stadia, in the same way that violent offenders are barred from grounds
- committing to add football-related class A drugs crimes to the list of offences for which a FBO can be imposed on conviction, sending a strong signal to those who use class A drugs in and around football matches that their behaviour will not be tolerated and that they will no longer be able to attend games

In addition, FBOs have recently been extended to the women's domestic game, showing that regardless of which games fans are attending, violence and hate will not be tolerated.

Recently the Football Association (FA), Premier League and English Football League (EFL) announced they were introducing new measures and stronger sanctions across the game to tackle the increased antisocial and criminal behaviours seen at football grounds last season and to underline the

importance of a safe matchday environment. The football bodies are making it clear such acts are dangerous, illegal and have severe consequences.

From the start of season 2022 to 2023, all offenders will be reported by clubs to the police and prosecution could result in a permanent criminal record, which may affect their employment and education, and could result in a prison sentence. The FA will also be enforcing a tougher charging and sanctioning policy for clubs, which will reinforce these measures.

Furthermore, anyone who enters the pitch, and those carrying or using pyrotechnics or smoke bombs, will now receive an automatic club ban. These bans could also be extended to accompanying parents or guardians of children who take part in these activities.

Premier League Chief Executive, Richard Masters, said:

Everyone should feel safe and able to enjoy a football match. In coming together with clubs and partners across football, we are making clear the type of incidents we saw last season must stop. If we don't take collective and sustained action, it may only be a matter of time before someone is seriously injured, or worse.

The new measures introduced at the start of this season are a strong response to a significant increase in fan behaviour issues, but we know it is the minority who have behaved unacceptably and unlawfully.

Premier League football should be a fantastic experience for everyone and we don't want matches to be marred by these sorts of events.

Culture Secretary, Nadine Dorries, said:

We are on the side of football fans and understand the passion and emotion that comes with supporting a team.

As the new season gets into full swing we want to remind people we will not tolerate antisocial behaviour and have strengthened the powers under our football banning order legislation to tackle drug use and hate crimes.

Together with the work being done by the football authorities, we are helping root out those who seek to disrupt match days so proper fans can enjoy a fantastic football experience.

OSHR Training Programme for Mexican Journalists 2022

World news story

Development programme in Mexico contributes to improved safety for journalists and human rights defenders.



UNESCO estimates that an average of 12 journalists have been killed each year over the past 5 years in Mexico. Reporters Without Borders and the Committee for the Protection of Journalists have classified Mexico as one of the most dangerous countries to practice investigative journalism, and according to the 2021 report from the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, Mexico is the fourth most crime affected country in the world – the economic impact of violent crime is estimated at 24% of GDP.

To tackle this important issue, the British Embassy in Mexico, through its Open Societies and Human Rights programme, collaborated with UNESCO and Mexico's National Institute for Public Information in the implementation of a project to develop protection plans that identify and reduce the threats received by journalists and human rights defenders by providing trainings for journalists and promoting free speech in Mexico.

The programme consisted of five virtual courses delivered by UNESCO in April 2022. These courses lasted 25 hours and were designed to strengthen the capacity of journalists in important areas such as: media and information literacy, investigative journalism, data journalism, human rights, and security and risk management.

202 journalists completed the courses successfully – including 9 journalists from countries such as Peru, Argentina, El Salvador, Ecuador and Honduras – who are now equipped with important tools to practice journalism by taking a progressive and inclusive approach, and understand how to access protection mechanisms that will allow them to exercise their profession more safely.

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