



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Secretary of State Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T: +44 (0) 3459 335577

E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk

W: gov.uk/defra

To all MPs in England

30 November 2023

Dear Colleagues,

Environment Secretary announces further £45 million for farming innovation to champion British agriculture

I am writing to let you know that I today announced a further £45 million in competitions and grants to open to farmers in the coming weeks, as part of the government's pledge to champion British agriculture. When I started as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs earlier this month, I was clear that a key priority was backing British farmers, and this early action is the first step of many to delivering on that pledge.

New Green Finance funding

From 11th December farmers in England will be able to apply for individual grants up to £100k to prepare nature projects that will attract investment from the private sector. Part of the £5 million Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund, the money can be used alongside food production for activities such as measuring the tradable effects of woodland creation or peatland restoration, so farmers can attract private sector investors interested in carbon capture and flood management.

Boosting innovation and productivity

Then, from 18th December farmers, growers and foresters in England will be able to apply for a share of our £850,000 Research Starter funding to get innovative new projects off the ground which have the potential to move the agricultural sector to net zero. Previous rounds of this funding have helped researchers test the best way to turn nitrogen upcycled from plastics into a useable pellet that acts as a fertiliser.

From January 2024, businesses in England can apply for a share of an initial £30 million for robotics and roof-top solar equipment as part of the second round of the Improving Farming Productivity grant with further funding potentially available depending on levels of interest. Under the scheme, the government will make a 40% contribution to innovative technologies that can help farmers invest in robotics and automation to make processes like harvesting and milking more efficient, alongside the latest health checks for livestock and storage to help keep slurry out of our water courses and bring down emissions. For the first time, roof-top solar equipment will also be included in the scheme – boosting energy resilience and maximising land use.

From 15th January businesses in England can apply for a share of the £7.8million Large Research and Development fund, which supports industrial research or experimental development projects that fast-track solutions to agricultural challenges. For example, precision spray machines have been developed with from the first round to improve soft fruit yields. These new machines can assess an individual fruit tree and tailor the amount of crop management product being used to treat it, which also reduces wastage.

In 2024, we will also extend the range of Farming Innovation Programme grants to include the Accelerating Development of Practices and Technologies grant, so businesses in England will be able to apply for a share of £2.7million to test and trial new technology and techniques on farms.

These grants will help businesses in your area to boost farm productivity, reduce waste and cut input costs, as well as increase environmental sustainability. Innovation and automation are key to meeting our commitment to produce 60% of food that we eat here in the UK. In the long term, they will also reduce reliance on seasonal migrant workers in agriculture.

The funds announced today form part of the government's manifesto commitment to invest £2.4 billion per year in farming for the rest of this Parliament. Uptake of our other Environmental Land Management schemes remains strong and we remain firmly committed to spending every penny to support farmers.

Yours sincerely,



RT HON STEVE BARCLAY MP