**Agricultural Industry Research and Development Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2024-2028**

1. **Background** 
   1. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has “sustainability at the heart of a living, working active landscape valued by everyone” as its Strategic Vision. To ensure that the Department’s policy and operational activities are appropriately designed and targeted to achieve this Vision, it needs sound scientific evidence across the full range of its responsibilities.
   2. DAERA recognises the strategic importance of science in addressing the wider economic, environmental and social challenges associated with growing and re-balancing the NI economy. It wants to support a knowledge based bio-economy which will help agriculture and agri-food businesses become economically, environmentally and socially sustainable; support economic growth in rural areas; and assure the protection and enhancement of the environment to safeguard wellbeing and health.
   3. The DAERA Science Strategy Framework[[1]](#footnote-1) outlines a set of high level, long-term principles for DAERA to optimise its use of science to help deliver Departmental and Programme for Government objectives. It also outlines key actions for DAERA to better identify, prioritise, commission and evaluate scientific services required, so that we optimise the value gained from our investment in science.
   4. The DAERA Research and Development Strategy[[2]](#footnote-2) is one of three operational strategies of the DAERA Science Strategy Framework. It focuses on three key goals related to getting the best R&D, at the best value and make the best use of it to support the achievement of the DAERA purpose.
   5. This Strategy outlines a mission for DAERA, defines high level principles to be adopted and describes the desired end-state goals to be achieved in terms of more effective governance, understanding needs, providing assurance of best value in our investments and optimising use of research outputs. It also defines milestones to reach the goals including developing effective stakeholder engagement mechanisms, and implementing new governance processes
2. **Scheme Overview**
   1. The Agricultural Industry Research and Development Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2024-2028 will commission and fund industry led research and development activities in the agricultural sector. This research and development will concern only products listed in Annex I of the EC Treaty[[3]](#footnote-3). The work will be undertaken in compliance with “general block exemption” Regulation (EU) 651/2014, in particular Article 25.

1. **Consortia** 
   1. A key principle of the Operational Strategy is for DAERA to seek opportunities to fund R&D through consortia groups with Northern Ireland based researchers working and/or national and international research partners as well as industry and rural businesses within Northern Ireland to meet its three key goals of getting the best R&D, at the best value and make the best use of it to support the achievement of the DAERA purpose.

* 1. All work relevant to the Scheme will be commissioned from a consortium led by at least one industry partner based within Northern Ireland and delivered in collaboration with at least one research and knowledge-dissemination organisations including but not limited to those based within Northern Ireland eg. Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI) which is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) established by the Agriculture (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 (the Order), The Queen’s University of Belfast and Ulster University both of which are public research universities.

1. **Legal basis**Agriculture Act (Northern Ireland) 1949

Agriculture (Northern Ireland) Order 2004

1. **Scheme Duration**
   1. The Scheme will commence on 1 December 2023 and will end on 31 December 2028.
2. **Scheme Objectives**
   1. The aim of the Scheme is to fund industry led consortia to undertake research and development in relation to agricultural products[[4]](#footnote-4). This may include fundamental research, industrial research and experimental development intended to improve the efficiency and quality of production of Annex I products. The aim of this intervention is to increase profitability and market share by generating niche products or by improving production methods. There will be benefits across all sub-sectors being of benefit to consumers
3. **Scheme Conditions**
   1. All of the activities under this Scheme shall completely fall within one or more of the following categories set out in Article 25 of Commission Regulation (EU) 614/2014 i.e:

* Fundamental research;
* Industrial research;
* Experimental development; and
* Feasibility Studies

1. **Eligible Costs**
   1. In accordance with Article 25(3) of Regulation 614/2014 the eligible costs under this Scheme shall be allocated to a specific category of research and restricted to:

* personnel costs (researchers, technicians and other supporting staff) to the extent employed on the research project;
* costs of instruments and equipment to the extent and for the period used for the research project; if such instruments and equipment are not used for their full life for the research project, only the depreciation costs corresponding to the life of the research project, as calculated on the basis of good accounting practice, shall be considered eligible;
* costs for buildings and land, to the extent and for the duration used for the research project; with regard to buildings, only the depreciation costs corresponding to the life of the research project, as calculated on the basis of good accounting practice shall be considered eligible; for land, costs of commercial transfer or actually incurred capital costs shall be eligible;
* cost of contractual research, knowledge and patents bought or licensed from outside sources at arm’s length conditions, as well as costs of consultancy and equivalent services used exclusively for the project;
* additional overheads incurred directly as a result of the research project; and
* other operating costs, including costs of materials, supplies and similar products incurred directly as a result of the research activity.

1. **State Aid**

10.1 Aid under this Scheme constitutes State Aid within the meaning of Articles 107 to 109 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and has been notified to the Commission as compliant with Regulation ((EU) 614/2014 [OJEU, 193, pages 1 – 75, 1.7.2014].

1. [DAERA Science Strategy Framework document (daera-ni.gov.uk)](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/daera/daera-science-strategy-framework-V2.PDF#:~:text=The%20proposed%20Science%20Strategy%20Framework%20outlines%20a%20Vision,optimising%20investment%20in%20resources%20and%20having%20effective%20governance.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [DAERA Research and Development Strategy 2022-2026 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-research-and-development-strategy-2022-2026) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Consolidated Version of the Treaty Establishing the European Community (OJEU C321, E/37, 29.12.2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)