

**DAERA Directed Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Research Work Programme 2016/17 (Supplementary B)**



# Background

The Evidence and Innovation Strategy updated for 2015-17 (EIS)1 sets out the overarching framework for research and development to underpin evidence-based policy and delivery, and to promote innovation in agri-food, fishing, forestry and other rural businesses. It provides the framework for funding DARD policy-relevant and industry-relevant research and innovation during the period prior to the establishment of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), and for a period of 1 year following the establishment and bedding-in of the new Department. A new strategy will be developed to succeed the 2015-17 EIS, and will meet the Evidence and Innovation needs of the new Department and is likely to see longer-term programmes of research in selected areas with linkages to evidence based projects as appropriate.

Whilst the 2015-17 EIS sets out a framework for research, the detailed evidence and innovation activities are co-ordinated through four Programme Management Boards (PMBs), which align broadly to the EIS Strategic Goals.

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| **EIS Goal** |  | **PMB** |
| **Goal 1:** To help the Agri-Food Industry Prepare for Future Market Opportunities and Economic Challenges | **PMB1:** Performance in the Marketplace |
| **Goal 2:** To Improve the Lives of Farmers and Other Rural Dwellers, Targeting Resources where they are most needed | **PMB2:** Informing Policy and Improving the Lives of Farmers and Other Rural Dwellers |
| **Goal 3:** To enhance Animal Fish and Plant Health and Animal Welfare on an all Ireland basis | **PMB3**: Animal and Plant Health and Animal Welfare |
| **Goal 4:** To Help Deliver Improved Sustainable Environmental Outcomes | **PMB4:** Sustainable Environment |

1 See<https://www.dardni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dard/evidence-and-innovation-strategy-2015-17final.pdf>

# Programme development

One of the major roles and responsibilities of each PMB is to review, identify and prioritise investment in evidence gathering or innovation support activity in light of policy needs and/or evidence gaps. Evidence and innovation needs are identified by DAERA on an ongoing basis, informed by both informal and formal engagement with stakeholders.

This process ensures the development of an evidence and innovation programme that is appropriately aligned to policy needs, provides a robust evidence base for future policy development, implementation and review and/or supports industry innovation within the scope of DAERA’s policy interests.

An overarching Evidence and Innovation Priorities Group (**EIPG**), to which the PMBs report, is responsible for making the final decisions on the overall priority assigned to evidence and innovation requirements and, ultimately, the activities that will be funded in any particular year. EIPG is seeking to achieve a balanced research programme.

This supplementary DAERA Directed Agri-Food Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Research Work Programme has been developed as a result of this process and proposals approved through it form part of the annual work programme[[1]](#footnote-1) delivered by AFBI for DAERA.

**Liaison with DAERA Policy**

* Further information on each priority need can be obtained from the nominated DAERA Policy Lead. AFBI Project Leaders with an interest in responding to an Evidence and Innovation Need are encouraged to contact the nominated DAERA Policy Lead at an early stage. Contact details are listed at **Annex B**;
* To facilitate early discussion, outline proposal(s) may be submitted by the AFBI Project Leader to the DAERA Policy Lead using the Concept Note (CN) pro-forma which is available on the DAERA website. This step is not mandatory;
* A FFP should be completed for each proposed submission.The template form can be obtained from the DAERA website. There are some minor changes to the FFP from previous years and Project Leads should ensure that the latest version is completed. The AFBI Project Leader should work closely with the DAERA Policy Lead to ensure that the proposal is the correct fit for the Evidence and Innovation Need identified. It should be noted that the FFP forms the Economic Appraisal for the proposal.

**Co-Funding Opportunities**

* DAERA will seek to identify and liaise with potential co-funders. If AFBI project leader(s) wish to pursue potential co-funding, they should inform SEIPD (contact details below) who will co-ordinate co-funding arrangements with DAERA.

**Closing Date**

* The proposal window closes on **20th December 2016** and all FFP(s) received up to this date will be scrutinised by PMB 1;
* RCNs will not be accepted as a substitute for FFPs; and
* All completed forms should be submitted to:-

[Gillian.Doherty@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Gillian.Doherty@daera-ni.gov.uk)

or

Gillian Doherty

Science, Evidence and Innovation Policy Division, DAERA

Room 356, Dundonald House

Ballymiscaw

Upper Newtownards Road

Belfast BT4 3SB

**Assessment and Approval Process**

* All FFPs will be scrutinised and, where appropriate, challenged by DAERA Policy Leads, and DAERA Science Advisory Branch. AFBI should answer any queries promptly;
* FFPs will be selected at random for assessment by DAERA Research Economics Branch. AFBI should answer any queries promptly;
* All FFPs will be assessed, scored and ranked by PMBs;
* EIPG will provide final approval for proposals. Approval will be subject to a satisfactory economic appraisal (mostly within the FFP) and proposals must have a sound scientific basis;
* EIPG will seek to achieve a balance across all PMBs and preference will be given to proposals that demonstrate a holistic, inter-disciplinary approach to addressing the priority need(s) and/or attract co-funding from another source;
* **Work cannot start until EIPG signs off the proposal; and**
* **The outcome of this process is referred to as the DAERA directed AFBI research work programme 2016/17. Publicity or marketing of any of the proposals must acknowledge DAERA as the core funder.**

# Priority Needs

**PMB 1 – PERFORMANCE IN THE MARKET PLACE**

The overall objective of PMB 1 is to identify and prioritise evidence gathering and innovation support activity to promote the sustainable economic development of the local agri-food, fisheries and forestry industries. In order to inform policy development and delivery, it is paramount that there is a sound understanding of the complex social, political and economic interactions which affect the operating environment in which these industries function.

PMB 1 aims to achieve this objective through the delivery of evidence and innovation projects in 9 themed areas as outlined in the Evidence and Innovation Strategy updated for 2015-2017 (EIS 2015-2017):

Evidence and Innovation Research Needs Areas:

1. Evaluate impact of policy changes on the sector;
2. Sustainable and competitive production evidence;
3. Sustainable and competitive production innovation;
4. Efficient use of resources;
5. Novel and innovative products and processes;
6. Production sustainability in energy resource technologies;
7. Improving forest productivity and exploiting opportunities;
8. Competitiveness and sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture; and
9. Responding to climate change – adaptation and mitigation.

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| **PMB 1 Evidence and Innovation Needs** | **Guideline annual project Cost** | **Guideline duration** | **DAERA Policy Lead** |
| **Design and implementation of an evaluation framework for the Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS) Capital Scheme & scoping work for a longitudinal study of NI farm efficiency and performance.**  The FBIS-Capital is a key aspect of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS), which is a package of support measures within the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020. The FBIS package is aimed at knowledge  transfer, cooperation, innovation and capital investment in the agriculture and horticulture sectors. It aims to improve competitiveness and productivity in primary production in NI.  Evaluation of FBIS-Capital will form part of a broader longitudinal monitoring and evaluation programme that will assess the impacts of the overall RDP and its individual strands, including the FBIS schemes (both capital and non-capital such as BDGs and Farm Family Key Skills), and inform any modifications to the current RDP and the development of any future DAERA policy interventions.  FBIS-Capital offers tiered support to help transform NI farms into more sustainable, efficient and safer businesses.  Tier 1 provides grant support for capital investment across four key  themes - (1) Environment, Weather  Resistance and Climate Change, (2) Animal and Plant Health, (3) Occupational  Health and Safety and (4) Production and Resource Efficiency.  Tier 2 provides grant support for capital investment across five key themes - (1) Contribution to sustainable growth (2) Environment, Weather  Resistance and Climate Change, (3) Animal and Plant Health, (4) Occupational  Health and Safety and (5) Production and Resource Efficiency. Tier 2 has a target of assisted farms showing a whole farm Gross Value Added (GVA) increase of 20% per year by year 3, when compared with the baseline.  There is a need to develop an evaluation framework for the FBIS Capital Scheme which considers impact; economic performance; the SMART target for GVA; assessment of investments which should have environmental, health and safety, and animal health benefits; analysis of behaviour change etc.); an analysis of cost-effectiveness of scheme delivery lessons learned; and overall value for money. This will include:   * The establishment of a comprehensive set of baseline parameters for all assisted farms (reflecting farm size, sector and land type), and accompanying data collecting systems, required to measure farm performance; * The impact of FBIS-Capital grant supported capital investment on the performance (both physical and financial) of scheme participants and to compare with the performance of a control group(s) (and taking account of farms participating in other FBIS schemes including BDGs); * Additionality assessment amongst assisted farms; * Deadweight evaluation; The views of participants on the benefits of on farm capital investment under both Tiers (sub-schemes) of the FBIS-Capital; * Opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of capital investment in agriculture; * Consideration will be given to how to disaggregate the effects of different variables (outside the investment activity) which may impact on farm performance; * Consideration must be given to how the approach could also be used for the evaluation needs of other FBIS schemes (including Business Development Groups). This is to avoid the need for duplication and repeated farmer engagement; and * Scoping for a longitudinal study of NI farm efficiency and performance. | N/A | 1 Year | Brenda Cunning |

**Annex A**

1. **Timetable**

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| **Date** | **Activity** |
| **29November 2016** | Supplementary proposal window opens |
| **20December 2016** | Latest date for FFP(s) submission |
| **13 January 2017** | FFP(s) assessed & scored by DAERA Policy Lead and Science Advisory Branch |
| **20 January 2017** | EIPG makes final decision on approval of project(s) |
| **From 30 January 2017** | Approved projects commence |

1. **Evaluation criteria**

# PMB 1 will provide a final scoring for each proposal received, based on the following criteria (not in order of importance).

* Ability of objectives to meet policy needs;
* Scientific quality;
* Evidence of collaboration with other scientific groups / industry;
* Provision of additional information to that already known in this area;
* Appropriate project management including risk management;
* Appropriate milestones and deliverables;
* Clear strategy for knowledge exchange;
* Potential for co-funding from other sources and
* Value for Money.
  1. **Additional information**
* FFP forms should be completed in **Arial font size 12.**
  1. **Feedback**
     + Feedback on unsuccessful proposals will be coordinated by DAERA Science, Evidence and Innovation Policy Division and passed to a central contact in AFBI. DAERA Policy leads will not provide feedback to AFBI Project Leaders directly.

**Annex B DAERA Contact Details**

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| **DAERA Contact** | **Division/Branch** | **Tel. No** | **E mail** |
| Gillian Doherty | Research Policy Branch (SEIPD) | 02890524250 | gillian.doherty@daera-ni.gov.uk |
| Brenda Cunning | Food and Farming Division Farm Policy Branch | 02890524009 | brenda.cunning@daera-ni.gov.uk |
| Davy Millar | Food and Farming Division Farm Policy Branch | 02890524477 | david.millar@daera-ni.gov.uk |
| Kris Todd | Food and Farming Division Farm Policy Branch | 02890524012 | kristopher.todd@daera-ni.gov.uk |
| Patrick Murphy | Science Advisory Branch (SEIPD) | 02890524178 | patrick.murphy2@daera-ni.gov.uk |

1. See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2004/3327/article/6/made> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)