Collaborating for healthy, resilient and sustainable agricultural soils

Opportunity status: Open

Funders: Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)

Co-funders: European and international funders through the European Joint Programme on Soil (EJP SOIL)

Funding type: Grant

Total fund: £2,000,000

Award range: £62,500 - £625,000

Publication date: 7 May 2021

Opening date: 29 April 2021

Closing date: 7 September 2021 15:00 UK time

Apply to research agricultural soils.

You can apply if you are a researcher based at an eligible organisation.

You must work with at least two other researchers. They must be from one of the eligible countries.

Your project can focus on one of the following:

- soil biodiversity: status and role in ecosystem services
- soil improvements: site-specific or landscape-scale ways to improve sustainability, resilience, health and productivity of soils.

The full economic cost (fEC) of your project can be between £62,500 and £625,000. We will fund 80% of this.

You should aim to start your project in December 2021 or January 2022. It can last for two to three years.
Who can apply

Standard UKRI eligibility and council fEC rules apply. To understand the rules:

- check if you are eligible for research and innovation funding
- read the guidance on meeting UKRI terms and conditions for funding.

Additional national rules and regulations of funders apply. You must read the national annexes of the opportunity announcement on the EJP SOIL opportunity page.

Applications must include a minimum of three eligible partners asking for funding from three different countries who are contributing funds to the opportunity.

Please note: people applying from separate legal entities within a country are considered separate partners.

Project partners who are not eligible for funding from this opportunity may be involved in projects if they bring their own funding. This includes, for example, people from non-funding countries or not fundable according to national or regional regulations of the participating funding organisations.

Project partners not eligible for funding from this opportunity (counted in addition to the three minimum eligible partners) cannot be consortium coordinators. As with funded members, they must accept all opportunity rules and guidelines.

What we're looking for

You must read the full opportunity announcement on the EJP SOIL website.

The objective of this opportunity is to foster holistic agricultural soil management practices which will assist in making a shift to diversify farming practices to include a variety of sustainable and environmental practices.

Thus, the opportunity addresses three major topics:

- A. soil organic carbon sequestration – no UK funding available
- B. biodiversity and sustainable production
- C. a healthy environment.

UK funding is available for UK participants addressing topics B and C of this opportunity. No UK funding is available for UK partners addressing topic A, soil organic carbon sequestration.

**Topic B: soil biodiversity: status and role in ecosystem services**

This includes:
development of holistic indicators and target values to define healthy soils for agricultural productivity, for example soil fertility, biodiversity, resilience, nutrient levels and soil-microbe-plant interactions
understanding the functional role of soils in the provision of ecosystem services, for example the provision of food and non-food crops, nutrient cycling, water storage and filtration
understanding the role of fauna, microbiome, plants and their interactions on maintaining, enhancing and restoring healthy and resilient soils for agricultural productivity
impact of novel soil amendment materials (for example fibre sludges from the paper and pulp industry) to soil biota.

**Topic C: site-specific or landscape-scale approaches to improve sustainability, resilience, health and productivity of soils**

This includes:

- innovative practices or technologies that maximise the storage of organic carbon in soils (protecting existing stocks or sequestration)
- management strategies and agronomic management, including precision farming, that help reduce net emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) from soils
- integrated management of farming systems, farm-networks, and agroecosystems, including for example diversification of production, agroecological approaches, smart fertility or fertiliser management
- technologies, practices and management approaches to increase farming systems’ sustainability and resilience to climate change
- technologies, practices and management approaches that contribute to the restoration of landscapes and the maintenance of natural capital
- evaluation of the applicability of site-specific technologies or practices for different pedo-climatic zones and farming systems and taking into account socio-economic issues.

Technologies include but are not limited to:

- digital tools
- drones and sensors
- autonomous robots
- tillage and traffic management
- precision fertilisation
- weed and pest control
- irrigation.

**Start date and duration**

Projects should aim to start in December 2021 or January 2022 and last for two to three years.
How to apply

This opportunity will be implemented using an online submission tool. It consists of a platform where applicants can find all information necessary for the preparation and submission of proposals.

Visit the online submission tool (EJP SOIL).

Webinar

A webinar will be organised on 25 May 2021 for all interested applicants. Content of the webinar will be an overview about all relevant aspects for the opportunity and will give a short introduction for the submission tool.

Step one: read the full opportunity details

Before you prepare an application, please read the full opportunity details on the EJP SOIL website.

Step two: set up your consortium

You must apply as part of a transnational consortium of three or more eligible partners.

Find full consortium criteria in the full opportunity details on the EJP SOIL website.

A partnering tool will be attached to the submission platform, where project partnerships can be offered or searched for.

Step three: pre-register your proposal

This step is mandatory to apply for this opportunity.

You must pre-register your proposal through the EJP SOIL submission platform by 25 June 2021 13:00 central European time (CET). This pre-registration comprises the upload of a project summary and a registration of all partners of the potential consortium.

Step four: submit your proposal

Deadline for proposals to be uploaded on the submission tool is 7 September 2021 16:00 CET.

UK partners seeking funding must include a UK budget proforma (Word, 44KB).

This must be part of the full PDF that you submit to the submission tool.

Funding decisions will be made in September or October 2021.
Step five: record your successful application

If your application is chosen for funding, you’ll be asked to submit your application in the Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S).

This is so UKRI can administer your funding through Je-S. Your application will not be reassessed. This must be done in November 2021.

How we will assess your application

An international evaluation panel (IEP) will be established with a mandate to provide the peer review of all proposals.

The IEP will be independent of all research funders involved and shall recommend proposals for funding based on their evaluation of how successfully a proposal meets the following criteria:

- scientific excellence
- relevance and potential impact
- quality and efficiency of the implementation.

A minimum of three experts will evaluate each grant, and full details of the process are included within the opportunity announcement on the EJP SOIL website (PDF, 1.2MB).

Contact details

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Additional info

Supporting documents

- UK budget proforma (Word, 44KB)

Timeline