



UKRI policy fellowships 2026

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

Welsh Government agriculture, land use and food system innovation fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

Host organisation:

[Welsh Government](#)

Host team:

Strategic Evidence Unit - Rural Affairs

Academic discipline/s:

Agricultural science, environmental science, food systems, economics and behavioural science

Summary:

Opportunity to advise how Wales can accelerate the adoption of innovative practices and technologies across its agriculture, land use and food sectors to drive sustainability, productivity and food system resilience.

Policy topic:

Welsh Government agricultural, land use and food system strategic priority to support sustainable production, efficiency, decarbonisation, nature recovery and rural prosperity. This aligns with the Sustainable Farming Scheme (2026), the Sustainable Land Management framework (Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023), Vision for the Food and Drink Industry, the Community Food Strategy, and wider cross-government commitments to a resilient, innovative and fair food system.

Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

The fellowship is estimated to begin in May 2027. The exact date will be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements. The fellowship will have three phases:

- inception: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE
- main placement: duration is 12 months at 0.6-1 FTE

- knowledge exchange: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE

Work arrangements

Location requirements:

Flexible – able to work remotely or from Welsh Government offices.

Hybrid working:

If the successful applicant is living in Wales, we would be content for a minimum two day a week office attendance, at any location Welsh Government office, during the main placement phase. A laptop will be provided enabling work from home or other sites, providing access to host systems. Irrespective of applicant location, the fellow will be expected to attend a Welsh Government Office at least four times a year during the main placement period and at least three times during the inception period.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

[Basic Personnel Security Standard \(BPSS\)](#) is required, which usually takes around six weeks. We would expect the successful applicant to start the security clearance application process, with support from the host team, as soon as their fellowship has been confirmed by UKRI. Inception phase can begin before the security clearance process is completed but will be required for the main placement phase. Please see [National security vetting: clearance levels - GOV.UK](#) for more information.

Fellowship position description

This fellowship will explore how Wales can accelerate the adoption of innovative practices and technologies across its agriculture, land use and food production sectors, identifying practical pathways for innovation, diversification, productivity improvements and economic growth while delivering climate, environmental and community benefits. Wales' farming landscape (dominated by beef, sheep and dairy) has strong cultural identity and deep regional economic importance.

The role will assess interventions that support sustainable land management, strengthen food system security and resilience, and enable farmers, processors and communities to benefit from agri-tech adoption. The fellow will evaluate options based on economic, social, environmental and food security outcomes.

The fellow will sit within the Strategic Evidence Unit with the Rural Affairs Directorate and will report to the head of programme and work closely with the Welsh Government agriculture, land management, food and social research teams who will provide access to useful research tools and guidance.

During the inception phase, the fellow will have the opportunity to work with the team to codesign the research plan for the main placement matching their interests and expertise with the policy questions of the host. The fellow will analyse research on innovation and technology programme delivery, identifying motivations and barriers to engagement, and barriers to translating innovation into productivity gains and economic growth.

The research may also explore levels of understanding and connectivity regarding the application of innovation and technology to further develop the agri-food sector within the rural and wider economy of a geographically dispersed landscape, such as Wales.

During the placement the fellow will engage with a broad range of Welsh Government departments and priorities (including health, environment, agriculture and rural affairs, food, marine and fisheries, energy,

housing, circular economy, education and skills and transport) in order to understand how evidence is currently used to inform the design of climate and environmental policies and programmes. The fellow will add value by:

- bringing cutting edge research insights from agri-food innovation directly into Welsh policy development
- identifying the most promising technologies, practices and system level approaches that could accelerate sustainability, productivity, and rural economic resilience
- analysing barriers to adoption in the Welsh context (skills, finance, cultural norms, supply chain structures, regulatory frameworks)
- providing evidence informed recommendations to support the implementation of the Sustainable Farming Scheme, Sustainable Land Management Objectives, Vision for the Food & Drink Industry, Community Food Strategy and wider food system objectives
- strengthening links between Welsh Government, UKRI, research institutions and industry partners
- producing actionable outputs for policy and decision makers

Outputs:

- a briefing paper setting out the proposed research approach, supported by findings from the scoping review undertaken during the three-month inception phase
- a final report for publication, detailing the research findings, recommended methods and systems for the Welsh Government to ensure the development of evidence-based innovative practices and technologies.

Benefits to the fellow:

- opportunity to codesign, produce and publish original research
- academic knowledge exchange with related UK research programmes
- professional development support from the Welsh Government's Strategic Evidence team and opportunities to network with other analysts, including social and behavioural science practitioners, from across the organisation
- opportunities to publish academic research, ensuring that findings contribute to wider scientific and policy discussions while adhering to necessary security protocols

Person specification

Applications will be assessed by UKRI panel assessment against the following essential opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria.

Essential criteria:

- subject matter expertise in agriculture, land use, food systems or agrifood innovation, including sustainability, productivity, decarbonisation or food system resilience
- strong analytical capability relevant to the fellowship, such as the ability to synthesise complex qualitative and/or quantitative evidence to inform policy decisions
- experience conducting independent, high-quality research or analysis with clear relevance to applied policy challenges

Applicants shortlisted from the panel assessment will be invited to a host led interview. At this stage the host will also take into account the following desirable fellowship-specific requirements.

Desirable criteria:

- an understanding of engaging with policy makers, practitioners or stakeholders in agriculture, rural affairs or food systems
- knowledge of innovation adoption, behavioural change or transfer of technology in primary production, land management or food supply chains
- an understanding of the Welsh policy context, including reserved and devolved policy context

Processing personal data

If applicants are shortlisted by the UKRI assessment panel UKRI will need to share the application and any personal information that it contains with the host for the host led interview selection process.

Your personal data will be handled in line with UK data protection legislation and managed securely. If you would like to know more, including how to exercise your Rights, please see the UKRI [privacy notice](#).

Please see the Hosts' [privacy notice](#) and they will delete your data at the end of the selection process unless you are successful, in which case we will retain your data as an independent data controller.