

UK Seafood Innovation Fund Continues to Push the Boundaries with a New Call for Innovative Ideas

Applications are now open for a third round of funding from the UK Seafood Innovation Fund. Continuing to support a sustainable future for the UK seafood sector, the programme seeks ideas from innovators looking to introduce novel and practical solutions into the industry. Alongside this, the programme recently announced £1.5m of follow-on funding awarded to projects with promising outcomes from the previous round.

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6 October 2021:

The UK Seafood Innovation Fund (SIF) continues to promote development and productivity at the cutting edge of the sustainable UK seafood sector. A third call for applications for funding is now open, offering a renewed opportunity for innovators to disrupt the status quo by providing positive solutions to challenges in the realms of aquaculture, fisheries and the seafood supply chain.

Call 3 is looking to fund feasibility studies for up to five months - to a maximum value of £50,000 - that test new ideas or approaches that will provide long-term, practical benefits to the seafood industry. Unlike in previous rounds, full Research and Development projects will not be considered, allowing the programme to direct a larger proportion of available funds to encourage new, unique ideas.

Since the Fund's inception in 2019, it has supported 65 projects across the UK, spanning aquaculture, capture fisheries, and the seafood supply chain. Previous projects have pushed the boundaries of new technologies, and have investigated consumer habits, market gaps, animal welfare issues, and the circular economy. Although already expansive, SIF is looking to further diversify its range, and is welcoming applicants (and collaborations) that draw together knowledge from across the sector and beyond, and apply solutions using a novel approach.

For applications that are successful in gaining funding from Call 3, which then go on to demonstrate a successful project outcome, there will be an opportunity to apply for follow-on funding through a closed

call. In particular, SIF will be looking for strong ideas that can be converted into widespread realities for UK seafood.

Separate to the opening of Call 3, the fund has also recently announced an additional £1.5 million of follow-on funding that has been awarded to SIF-funded feasibility studies that showed demonstrable promise and applicability in their project results from previous rounds. This follow-on funding has been allocated to nine projects, each now progressing with Research and Development, and testing their ideas in real-world scenarios.

One such project is investigating the potential use of sea cucumbers as bioremediators in Scottish salmon pens. As the “marine equivalents of terrestrial earthworms”, sea cucumbers feed off waste and rework the seabed. Initial work demonstrated that 70% of the organic matter can be removed using just 10 sea cucumbers per square metre. The project team (led by [Blue Remediation](#)) is now running in-situ trials, to measure the effectiveness of the technique and the process’ direct impact on the seabed.

Heather Jones, CEO of the Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre (SAIC), sits on the Seafood Innovation Fund steering group, and provides input and guidance on aquaculture innovation. Speaking at the launch of Call 3, Heather said:

“Aquaculture is a significant contributor to the UK economy, yet there is still huge potential for growth and untapped opportunities for companies and researchers across the country to boost the sector’s capacity through innovation. Salmon farming is playing a crucial role in meeting rising global demand for sustainable protein. Here in the UK, we have the resources and expertise to foster applied innovation that can enhance the health and welfare of fish, support sustainable production, deliver best practice husbandry, and reduce the environmental impact of farms. Working closely with SIF, SAIC looks forward to seeing more exciting collaborations through this latest funding call, drawing on academic and commercial innovation from all corners of the UK, to deliver valuable results for the entire farmed fish and farmed shellfish sector.”

Another aquaculture-based project due to commence at-sea trials is seeking to engineer the first commercial fish pen suitable for use in open sea conditions. The pioneering project, led by [IMPACT-9](#), aims to provide offshore space for sustainable seafood production, enabling fish farms to operate in open water and reduce the incidence of sea lice, disease, and contamination. Using inflatable structures and flexible materials able to withstand high-energy environments, the team have created prototypes to test at sea.

The SIF Programme also supports innovative projects in capture fisheries and the seafood supply chain. One project, working to increase sustainability of inshore fishing, is trialling climate-friendly electric outboard motors on small vessels. Modernised elements of the technology include early heat detection safety features, alongside solar-powered recharging. A separate project, delivering supply chain innovation, is creating a sustainable alternative to single-use polystyrene food delivery boxes using

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compostable biofoam - a project spurred on by the uptick in home delivery during the pandemic. Successful in attaining follow-on funding, these projects, along with others, are working hard to test their innovations in the real world.

Call 3 opened on 6th October 2021, and the fund will accept applications until midday on 7th January 2022. In the first instance, project teams can submit their innovative idea for feedback (in advance of a full application) via an Expression of Interest (EOI) form. For more information on how to apply, visit the fund's website: <https://www.seafoodinnovation.fund/apply/>

For more information on previously funded projects, and those that have received follow-on funding, visit the fund's website: <https://www.seafoodinnovation.fund/projects/>

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Notes to Editors:

- The UK Seafood Innovation Fund is administered by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for the UK Government.
- Details of all previously funded projects are available on our website: <https://www.seafoodinnovation.fund/projects/>
- Any organisation with an innovative idea demonstrating potential benefits to any area of the UK seafood sector is eligible to apply to the fund. The call is a competitive procurement process. The fund accepts bids from groups of organisations working together. One organisation must apply as the lead supplier but can subcontract with numerous organisations to deliver the project. Collaborative bids, especially those forging new relationships between sectors – are encouraged.
- Visit the FAQs section of our website for more information about how to apply to the UK Seafood Innovation Fund: <https://www.seafoodinnovation.fund/apply/>.
- If you require additional images, please contact us.
- Communications for the UK Seafood Innovation Fund are provided by Mindfully Wired Communications, a small but mighty communications consultancy focused on blending art with science to share a story of sustainability and inspire change. <https://www.mindfullywired.org/>

About SAIC:

- SAIC's mission is to transform aquaculture by unlocking sustainable growth through innovation excellence.
- SAIC invests in collaborative research projects in the areas of fish health and welfare, shellfish production, capacity and sustainable industry growth. They also help grow the industry's talent pool by supporting MSc and PhD places, internships and training programmes.
- SAIC is pleased to support innovative ideas from across the UK.
- To find out more, visit: www.sustainableaquaculture.com