

Seafood fund seeks ideas for innovation projects up to £250k

Applications are now open for a second round of the £10 million UK Seafood Innovation Fund to transform the future landscape of the seafood industry.

Media contact:

Rebecca Kaye: rebecca@mindfullywired.org / 07 429 979 016

11 February 2020:

The second round of applications to the UK Seafood Innovation Fund is now open, boosting innovation for the UK seafood sector. Open from 7 February 2020 until 20 April 2020, the fund is seeking a new tranche of applicants with plans to transform the future landscape for seafood supply. Robotics, AI, fishing gear innovations and biomedical advances are some of the innovations awarded funding in the first round.

Professor Fiona Lettice, Chair of the UK Seafood Innovation Fund Steering Group and Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation at the University of East Anglia said ‘We are looking for projects that can genuinely transform or disrupt the seafood industry. These should be innovative ideas that aim to make a significant improvement to the future sustainability, profitability and efficiency of any part of the seafood sector.’

With UK fishing vessels landing nearly 700,000 tonnes of fish and shellfish a year – worth £989 million, the UK government is committed to rewarding innovative ideas that can make a significant improvement to the sustainability, profitability and efficiency of any part of the seafood sector.

Projects funded in 2019 span the seafood sector, from fishing boats to product sales. By researching and developing improved ways to sink longlines below the surface, one project aims to tackle the issue of seabird bycatch – improving fishing profitability for skippers in parallel. Another project will investigate how data can be better used in the industry, aiming to create efficiencies and resilience across the seafood supply chain, and facilitate compliance with fisheries management.

In the aquaculture sphere, R&D funding will support the development of ‘Inocubot 2’; an artificially intelligent robot designed to improve fish welfare and deliver economic efficiencies for fish farms. A project to create two new, high-value products for human consumption hopes to show off seaweed as a nutritious treat, and explore fertile opportunities to expand the UK’s kelp farming industry.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The diverse array of SIF-funded projects will become part of the UK's network of exciting innovative research and development initiatives, focused on transforming the future of UK seafood.

Launching its second open call for applications, the fund encourages bids from experts in the fishing, aquaculture, and seafood processing sectors. And Professor Lettice emphasises that SIF is also searching beyond the seafood sector: 'We are keen to hear from innovative thinkers in tech, engineering, data science and app development, whose expertise could bring new insights to benefit the future of UK seafood.' Collaborative consortia, that bring together established and new players for the first time, are also welcomed.

Fisheries Minister, George Eustice said: 'We want a profitable and sustainable fisheries industry that can take every advantage of the opportunities as we become an independent coastal state. Adopting new technologies and innovating will be key to ensuring a renaissance for an industry at the heart of so many coastal communities around the UK.'

Applicants can bid for a portion of the £10 million fund, applying for up to £50,000 for a three-month feasibility study, or up to £250,000 to fund a research and development (R&D) project running for up to 18 months. Match funding is not essential, and all applications are subject to a highly competitive external review process.

For further information on how to apply please visit our website www.seafoodinnovation.fund.

[TEXT ENDS]

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.
- EU and UK based public and private organisations, including academic institutions, are 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/>.
- Details of all projects funded in 2019 are available on our website: <https://www.seafoodinnovation.fund/projects/>
- 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/>