

Research Associate - Cultured Meat & Farmers

Job Description

The Role

Job title:	Research Associate - Cultured Meat & Farmers
Responsible to:	Professor Tom MacMillan, Elizabeth Creak Chair in Rural Policy & Strategy, project Principal Investigator
Location:	Cirencester, Gloucestershire
Salary:	Grade 7, £30,497 to £36,382 DOE
Term:	Full-time, fixed-term until 15 September 2024 (up to two years)
Relationships with:	Project team and stakeholders

We have a number of different ways to work flexibly, so at your interview feel free to talk about what flexibility means to you. There are no guarantees, however, examples of how our employee already work flexibly include part-time, job share, hybrid-working and compressed hours.

Purpose & context

We are looking for a dynamic Research Associate to coordinate an innovative project that will explore the potential impact on UK agriculture of cultured meat, a technology with possibly profound and uncertain implications for the future of food and farming. The project team brings together social and natural scientists from diverse disciplines, with farming organisations, cultured meat businesses, NGOs and other stakeholders. It is funded by UKRI through the Strategic Priorities Fund call on 'Transforming UK Food Systems for healthy people and a healthy environment'.

Also known as 'clean', 'cell-based' and 'cultivated' meat, cultured meat is engineered animal tissue intended for people to eat. It is a type of alternative protein. These are potentially strategically important to UK and global food systems because they are projected to use less land and water than livestock products, lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, cut antibiotic use and the risk of new zoonotic diseases, and help promote animal welfare.

Early data suggest that cultured meats could yield such benefits, but may struggle to compete with other meat alternatives on energy efficiency and cost. They are important because they could substitute more directly for livestock meat than other alternatives, and are at an earlier stage of development, so more open to influence by policy-makers and investors.

While cultured meat is potentially transformative, its benefits therefore remain speculative. It also brings risks in nutrition, food fraud and food safety. Technical, regulatory, market and cultural uncertainties mean that the sector may not develop in the UK commercially, or may develop but fail to deliver public benefits.

This project focuses on how cultured meat could affect farming in the UK. This is relevant to its environmental, economic and animal welfare impact, and to public and political attitudes that will shape how it gets regulated. Cultured meat is commonly assumed to be a threat to farmers, producing food in ways that could put some out of business. However, nobody has actually looked into this in-depth, or explored these issues with farmers in the UK.

In practice, the different ways that cultured meat might develop would bring diverse risks and opportunities for farmers. The technology may create demands for new agricultural products, such as cells (donor herds for cell harvesting), feedstock for growth media (arable, forage, sugar beet), feedstock for edible scaffolds (cellulose, pea, bean, soya) and current waste streams (glucose, cellulose). In some scenarios, cultured meat might even be produced on farms, in facilities owned and operated by farmers, or could complement campaigns for 'less and better' meat. Alternatively, it may not reduce livestock meat consumption at all, or it may compete directly with high-welfare meat production.

This research is designed to influence how this potentially transformative technology affects the UK food system. We will work with farmers and other people who may be affected by the technology to investigate whether they can see responsible ways of developing cultured meat. We will find out what farmers currently think of cultured meat, and explore different ways the technology could develop. We will work with farmers in a wide range of different situations to model how their businesses could get involved in or be affected by cultured meat production, and assess the environmental, social and economic consequences.

We aim to answer the following questions:

1. How do UK farmers currently perceive cultured meat?
2. What threats and opportunities does the development of cultured meat pose farm businesses in different scenarios?
3. Under what conditions, if any, would on-farm production of cultured meat be practical, economically viable and desirable in the UK?

In answering these questions, we will consider not only the direct effects of cultured meat on farm businesses and livelihoods, but also wider ecological, nutritional, cultural and ethical implications, and how cultured meat might complement or conflict with the ways land use and diets in the UK could change to become sustainable.

Main duties & responsibilities

As Research Associate, you will play a central role in coordinating the project, and will be directly involved in delivering social research and stakeholder engagement activities. As the sole role dedicated full-time to the project within a team of 19 academic and subcontracted researchers, working with 20 stakeholder partners, you will play a vital part in its success.

The project has seven connected work packages and will take place over two years. Your role in coordinating and supporting the researchers leading each work package will run throughout. You will help to ensure that the work package teams each deliver what is expected on time, and have what they need from the others in order to do so. You will be responsible for the day-to-day project management, keeping close track of plans, risks and outputs, and arranging weekly meetings between the project's Principal Investigator (PI) and the current work package leads.

You will be most directly involved in work packages to: scope farmer attitudes to cultured meat; and co-develop scenarios for the technology's development with diverse stakeholders. This research work will include recruiting, conducting and analysing farmer focus groups, and organising stakeholder engagement activities including workshops.

There will be opportunities to author or co-author academic journal articles and research summaries for industry, public and policy audiences. Your role in connecting the project's strands of work will give you unparalleled insights into the research and its implications, positioning you well to contribute to outputs relating to all aspects of the project. The work will also build your relationships with a wide diversity of researchers and stakeholders, providing opportunities to develop your career in a range of possible directions.

The role would suit an Early Career Researcher (ECR). There will be three other ECRs involved in the project, at the Universities of Sheffield and Oxford. We will develop a peer group of the ECRs, who will meet regularly with the PI and senior researchers from across the Co-Investigator team, to discuss career development priorities, identify relevant opportunities for leading and designing research within their relevant WPs, and provide space for ECRs to feed back on progress and challenges relating to the project.

The RAU has a bi-monthly programme to deliver training to ECRs, which covers topics such as grant applications and management, paper writing, open access and submission, fieldwork, laboratory work, career development and promotion.

We will also develop a co-authorship framework for the project to ensure ECR contributions are proportionally reflected in published outputs (e.g. through named authorship and where applicable as lead authors). You will already be familiar with the core research methods relevant to your role, but we will provide specific training support for any supplementary methods required.

Summary of key responsibilities:

- Coordinating activities across the team in line with the project plan.
- Day-to-day project management, including managing project plans and deadlines, monitoring progress and arranging team meetings.
- Managing the project budget.
- Coordinating the project team's engagement with stakeholders.
- Research to scope farmer attitudes to cultured meat, including organising, conducting and analysing insights from farmer focus groups.
- Researching scenarios for the development of cultured meat, including organising and analysing insights from stakeholder workshops.
- Contributing to academic and non-academic publications.

Person specification

Requirements The post holder must be able to demonstrate:	Essential or Desirable	Measured By A) Application Form B) Interview C) Presentation
Qualifications:		
First degree / Master's in a relevant subject area	E	A
PhD in relevant subject area	D	A
Knowledge & experience:		
Experience of project management	E	A, B, C
Knowledge of food and farming issues	D	A, B, C
Knowledge of alternative proteins	D	A, B, C
Experience in qualitative research methods and analysis	E	A, B, C
Experience of action-oriented research	D	A, B
Experience of interdisciplinary research projects	D	A, B
Experience of collaboration and co-design with businesses, government bodies or other organisations outside academia	D	A, B
Experience of working with farmers or growers	D	A, B
Experience of organising meetings, workshops and other events	D	A, B
Experience of writing reports for diverse audiences, including the public	D	A, B
Experience of writing academic journal articles	E	A, B
Skills and aptitudes:		
Pro-active and self-motivated	E	A, B
Able and willing to work to tight deadlines and under pressure	E	A, B
Able to work on own initiative and as part of a team	E	A, B
Able and willing to travel and work away when required	E	A, B
IT skills, with focus on Microsoft Office	E	A, B
Excellent verbal and written communication skills (including a very high standard of written and spoken English)	E	A, B, C

General responsibilities

- The University is committed to equality of opportunity. All staff are required to comply with current legislation, University policies and good practice guidance.
- All staff are required to act in a way that safeguards the health and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults at all times. The post holder must be familiar with and adhere to appropriate safeguarding policies and guidance and participate in related mandatory/statutory training. Managers have a responsibility to ensure their team members understand their individual responsibilities with regard to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- All staff are required to participate in the University appraisal process and should ensure they are familiar with the process and plan time to prepare for their appraisal. Following the appraisal, staff are expected to undertake in any necessary learning and development and work towards the objectives that have been set.
- The University expects staff to attend any training designated as mandatory and to undertake learning and development activities to support their role. Managers must facilitate learning and development within their teams.
- It is a condition of employment that staff will not disclose any information obtained in the course of their duties other than to those entitled to receive it. The post holder must ensure that the confidentiality of personal data remains secure and that restricted information or highly restricted information to which they have access remains confidential during and after their employment at Royal Agricultural University. All staff must undergo appropriate data protection training as required.
- All absence from work must be reported in accordance with the University's absence procedures and recorded on iTrent.
- The University acknowledges its responsibility to provide a safe, smoke free environment, to its employees, service users and visitors. It is the policy of the University not to allow smoking on University premises other than in specifically designated areas.

Application Procedure

If you are interested in applying for this role, please send:

- A University [Application Form](#) together with the [Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form](#) available on the University website www.rau.ac.uk) – Please attach your up to date CV to add additional information
- A covering letter explaining your interest and motivation for applying, along with how your experience and qualifications suit you for the role
- Details for two professional or academic referees who must be people who can comment authoritatively on you as a person and as an employee in relation to the level of the post, and must include your current or most recent employer or their representative.

- Please forward to the HR Team, Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6JS or via email to jobs@rau.ac.uk stating where you saw the advert for the role.
- In this first instance, for an informal discussion about the position, please contact Professor Tom MacMillan, Elizabeth Creak Chair in Rural Policy & Strategy – tom.macmillan@rau.ac.uk
- **Closing date:** 5th July 2022 with **Interviews on:** 14th July 2022.
- Should you be selected for interview please be aware that we are unable to reimburse interview expenses.

The RAU is an equal opportunities employer and we particularly welcome applications from black and minority ethnic candidates as they are under-represented within the RAU at this level

