



National Audit Office

The UK's independent public spending watchdog

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DEFRA SPENDING AND UKRI GRANTS

Thank you for your email on 19 November 2024 where you have asked for information to understand how taxpayers' money is being invested across Defra and various departments. In addition to this, you asked us to disclose the funding made available to R&D grants used by UKRI, and research outfits like Rothamsted Research, NAIB. Your request has been handled under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Firstly, I should explain that the following information belongs to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the other bodies mentioned. The NAO's role as an independent public body is to support Parliament in holding government to account, and help improve public services, through exercising our statutory powers to:

- audit and report on the financial accounts of all government departments and other public bodies
- examine and report on the value for money of how public money has been spent.

The most recent audited financial statements of each of the bodies you mention are available on gov.uk – the links below may be helpful. Each set of accounts includes a Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure which helps break down the organisations' costs, as well as cross-referenced notes providing further detail on key aspects of expenditure (e.g. Note 5 for the RPA accounts gives scheme by scheme detail, Note 2 for the Forestry Commission including additional detail on grant activity in note 2.1). The nature and level of detail for how expenditure is broken down in these accounts is driven by the financial reporting framework but should assist in answering the question you have framed.

	2022-23 accounts	2023-24 accounts
Defra	Defra Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23	Not yet published
Forestry Commission	Forestry Commission annual report and accounts 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK	Forestry Commission annual report and accounts 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK
Natural England	natural-england-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-2023.pdf	Not yet published

Environment Agency	Environment Agency annual report and accounts 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK	Environment Agency Annual report and accounts for the financial year 2023 to 2024
Rural Payments Agency	Rural Payments Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23	Rural Payments Agency annual report and accounts 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK

In respect of the set-up and operating costs for the specific environmental initiatives and codes you mention, the accounts are not required to provide an expenditure analysis on the basis you describe. Exceptionally, we did perform a study on [Implementing statutory biodiversity net gain](#) which published in May 2024. You may find Figure 3 (page 20) helpful in respect of the question you asked as well as the surrounding paragraphs in terms of the information which Defra provided us on set-up costs. Beyond this, we are not the primary information holder, and you may wish to enquire of the bodies you mention directly.

We also hope to publish a high-level overview of Defra's 2023-24 spend in early December 2024, which will be published on our website at nao.org.uk

We have understood your request for “funding made available”, with the additional information you provided, to mean funding allocated by UKRI from January 2023 onwards for R&D grants in the agricultural sector. We have carefully reviewed our documents and provided any relevant information below – along with some additional publicly available information that you may find helpful.

It is important to note that the list below is not extensive, we have only included information on the project data that we hold. For more information, UKRI has a few public databases on the projects they've funded which can be accessed at this site: [What we've funded – UKRI](#), [Opportunities – UKRI](#).

Where the funds are allocated from	Programme / Project name	Funding allocated (£mn)	Publicly available information
UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund	Transforming the UK Food System for Healthy People and a Healthy Environment	47.5	About the Programme - Transforming UK Food Systems Strategic Priorities Fund – UKRI
Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)	Towards Sustainable, Climate-Neutral Farming Systems (AgZero+)	12.8 (7.8 from NERC and 5 from BBSRC)	AgZero+ UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Further information could also be found at [UK Net Zero Research and Innovation Framework: Delivery plan 2022-2025](#).

Our policy is to respond to requests as helpfully and promptly as possible. I hope this information is helpful and you are happy with the way we have handled your request. If you are not happy with this response, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days by writing to the NAO FOI Team at FOI@nao.org.uk.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The primary way of escalating your concerns to the Information Commissioner is at: <https://ico.org.uk/foicomplaints>.

Yours sincerely

**NAO FOI
Team**