

Online public dialogue: genome editing in farmed animals
Specification / Invitation to tender

Summary

Dialogue title:	Online public dialogue on genome editing in farmed animals
Commissioning body:	Nuffield Council on Bioethics
Aim:	To engage members of the public in a deliberative dialogue to <i>'identify and explore the priority issues of public interest raised by genome editing in farmed animals'</i> to inform the evolving policy debate, design, and regulatory reform of genetic technologies.
Timescales and key dates:	4 months; May-August 2021 (commissioning, delivery, and reporting) Closing date for applications: 19 April 2021 Interviews: 30 April 2021 Contractor confirmed: 30 April 2021 Initial findings reported: 16 July 2021 Final written report: 10 August 2021
Cost:	Tenders invited in the range of £50,000

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 The Nuffield Council on Bioethics (NCoB) is an independent body that informs policy and public debate about the ethical questions raised by biological and medical research.
- 1.2 NCoB is currently running a two-year inquiry into the ethical and social issues raised by genome editing in farmed animals. As part of this work, NCoB is commissioning a rapid public deliberative dialogue on genome editing in farmed animals (including fish).
- 1.3 Genome editing of farmed animals is one of the most near-term, but least discussed applications of the technology. It has a range of potential applications in farmed animal breeding although some applications have given rise to significant concerns about possible impacts on animal welfare and farming practices.

1.4 Successive British governments since 2016 have indicated that the UK should seek opportunities for the development and innovation of agricultural technologies for genetically engineered food and animal products.

2. Rationale for the dialogue

2.1 The case for a public dialogue activity on genome editing technologies gained strategic and policy relevance with the UK's departure from the EU, with policy shifts and regulatory changes holding out the promise of a more facilitative approach to genomic biotechnologies.

2.2 Following the passage of the Agriculture Bill last year, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched a two-part consultation on the regulation of genetic technologies in agriculture and aquaculture in January 2021. This seeks to gather views on (1) the status of a subset of genome edited organisms (those that could have come about as a result of 'traditional' breeding), specifically whether they should be regulated as genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and (2) the revision of GMO regulation in the longer term, specifically what measures may be needed over and above those for non-genetically modified organisms. The consultation implicitly foregrounds the question of product safety in relation to animals.

2.3 The launch of Defra's consultation has led to several calls for an informed and nuanced public debate for this new generation of biotechnologies. Public attitudes towards GMOs have played a significant role in the reception of agricultural biotechnologies in the past and have significant potential to influence the course of realising the real-world benefits from genome-editing-based research and innovation.

2.4 As part of its ongoing inquiry, NCoB commissioned a literature review on public perceptions and attitudes relating to genetic technologies in animals and food. The review has found that there has been relatively little engagement with the public on the use of genome editing in farmed animals, but there is some evidence that attitudes to GMOs and novel foods may be shifting or becoming more nuanced. Most evidence, however, is from quantitative research; the review indicates that there would be value in a deliberative exercise to explore the complex and interacting factors underlying and shaping public attitudes for the next generation of technologies, and to evaluate the weight and significance of the different factors.

3. Aims of the dialogue

3.1 The dialogue will offer an opportunity for diverse citizens to come together to distinguish, define and evaluate the main considerations for biotechnology policy.

3.2 The dialogue aims to:

- Engage members of the public in a deliberative dialogue to identify and define key issues with genome editing in animals farmed for food and provide insight into the considerations that citizens find relevant to the application of these technologies.

- Enable citizens to contribute to the wider public debate on genome editing by moving it beyond the binary of pro- or anti- opposition framing to consider other dimensions of the debate.

3.3 The findings from the dialogue will be used to:

- Inform NCoB's ongoing inquiry into genome editing in farmed animals, and contribute to the follow-up activities for this project.
- Help focus and shape a major public dialogue on themes arising in the context of genome editing of farmed animals, with scope to expand to broader agricultural applications, to explore points of consensus and dissensus.
- Inform research strategy and regulatory policy development in relation to the broader question of GEO/GMO/biotechnology regulation in a post-Brexit UK.

4. Objectives of the dialogue

4.1 The objectives of the dialogue are to:

- Provide a vital opportunity for citizens to frame their approach to genome editing technologies in animals according to the considerations they think are most significant.
- Explore and understand participants' responses in relation to the adoption of genome editing technologies in farmed animals.
- To identify areas of greatest public interest and concern with the application of new genomic technologies in farmed animals and explore citizens' assumptions about the key issues identified.
- Disentangle and delineate the complex factors influencing public attitudes and interests.
- Understand the values and principles that underlie dialogue participants' views, and map these and the concepts, arguments, and language relevant to public discussion of genome editing and farmed animals.
- Share findings of this dialogue to inform current and future research, regulatory, industry and farming practices, and policy debates.

4.2 The dialogue will be commissioned by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics. NCoB will appoint the preferred applicant ('the Contractor') to undertake the dialogue set out in this specification.

4.3 NCoB supports the guiding principles for public dialogue on science and technology related issues as identified by the UKRI Sciencewise programme. Applicants should be guided by these principles as best practice in public engagement in their tender proposals.

5 Dialogue design

This specification does not provide a detailed design or methodology. Contractors should propose an appropriate programme for development, delivery, and reporting to meet the objectives within the given timeframe. The following should be considered; however, the

guidance is not intended to limit creativity in designing dialogue that delivers a high quality of process and product.

5.1 Dialogue format

5.11 We expect the dialogue to involve a sufficient number of citizens from different backgrounds to offer a diversity of perspectives. Contractors should specify the number of citizens they expect to engage in the dialogue. Specific attention should be given to dimensions of diversity relevant to the theme of the dialogue, for example, rural and urban, and provide an opportunity for meaningful and inclusive deliberation and reflection through reconvening groups (see **section 6** on 'Recruitment of participants' for further considerations).

5.12 We would like participants to have access to evidence and expert testimony from stakeholder groups such that they are able to provide evidence to participants of the public dialogue, which the commissioning body can assist in securing.

5.2 Dialogue themes

The dialogue will be designed to ensure that participants have considerable freedom to identify and explore the themes that they find significant. The dialogue should offer space for participants to share their feelings and responses which may indicate the values or ethical positions that participants hold in relation to the themes discussed. Among the considerations that we anticipate participants may wish to explore are:

- The potential of genome editing to impact on **animal health and welfare** (for example, reducing threats from disease on one hand but potentially encouraging less desirable farming practices on the other)
- Potential impact on **human health** (for example, addressing risk from zoonotic disease, reducing need for antibiotics that can lead to antimicrobial resistance, biopharming)
- Potential impact on **environment and conservation** (for example, impacts on genetic diversity, addressing environmentally damaging farming practices)
- Potential impacts on **farmers** (for example, on farming practices, on rural livelihoods, on intensification, on power relations in commodity chains, implications for Global South)
- Potential impacts on **consumers** (for example, meeting demand for protein owing to population growth/ demographic change, availability of affordable animal products, broader food system questions)
- Other themes may include: views on the nature of animals; perspectives on breeding; ideas of naturalness and views on changing animals.
- Cultural and/or religious perspectives on animals.

We welcome further suggestions from Contractors on potential areas for discussion.

5.3 Dialogue content

5.31 Proposals should set out how the Contractor plans to ensure that the participants are adequately informed on the theme of the dialogue.

5.4 Dialogue process and methodology

- 5.41** We are particularly interested in how citizens define the considerations that they believe to be relevant to the adoption of genome editing biotechnologies.
- 5.42** The dialogue processes should enable members of the public to talk directly with experts (academics, scientists, researchers, and other stakeholders) - both as valuable resources and as partners in the dialogue. Contractors should set out how they plan to involve stakeholders and other specialists in the process.
- 5.43** The process should give people an opportunity to explore the relative importance of different considerations that form their responses. This means engaging with people in a way that builds trust and confidence, and consequently a willingness to discuss their views with others.
- 5.44** The dialogue should be designed and delivered to foster a space and situation that will encourage and empower people to speak with confidence about their responses to GEFA.
- 5.45** Contractors must have expertise in and experience of designing and managing dialogue processes, and the use of supporting materials. They will need to be able to think creatively about different ways to engage members of the public on a complex subject, and about how to involve experts and stakeholders in a way that enhances the process and builds confidence among participants.
- 5.46** NCoB can provide access to an online deliberative platform if Contractors wish to use this resource to complement the dialogue sessions.

5.5 Material preparation

- 5.51** Contractors are invited to specify what supporting materials they propose to use and make available to participants. NCoB can assist with identifying expert input and documentary evidence. Materials will need to be robust and credible.
- 5.52** NCoB will work with the Contractor to agree the broad content of materials to be used in the public dialogue and identify suitable resources. However, NCoB will expect the Contractor to lead on the provision of materials and ensure that they are presented in an accessible and engaging way.

5.6 Dialogue delivery

- 5.61** The Contractor will be responsible for recruiting participants, as well as coordinating, setting up and delivering the dialogues and any outputs (to include, as a minimum, a written report on the process and outcomes).

5.7 Analysis and reporting

- 5.71** The contributions of the participants in the deliberative events should be recorded and reported. Contractors should set out their proposed reporting structure, which should:
- (1) Share observations about the course the deliberations take.

- (2) A thematic analysis of participant deliberations.
- (3) Interpret and draw out the implications of what citizens share.
- (4) Present any conclusions participants arrive at.
- (5) Reflect on the deliberative process, and well it worked, whether it was successful, inclusive, and fulfilled the aims of the dialogue.

5.72 The reporting of the dialogue process should include reflections about the way in which people discuss issues and what knowledge and experience they draw upon as they deliberate.

5.8 Evaluation

5.81 The dialogue process will be evaluated internally by NCoB.

5.82 The purpose of the evaluation will be to provide an assessment of the dialogue project's credibility, effectiveness, and success against its objectives, covering both the dialogue processes and its outcomes.

5.83 It is a prerequisite that the Contractor will work with NCoB throughout the course of the project - and provide them with all reasonable assistance, including access to participants, and collect data on behalf of NCoB for the purposes of the evaluation.

6 Recruitment of participants

6.1 It will be important to ensure diversity in the dialogue participants. The following groups are of particular interest: rural, coastal, and urban communities, particularly farming and fishing communities, as well as people from cities.

6.2 Other forms of diversity which are important to consider include: geographical distribution, socio-economic diversity, and ethnic diversity to be inclusive of different food cultures and experiences of animals.

6.3 Contractors should also think through how the dialogue design will ensure that the diversity of views across different participant groups/types is enabled.

6.4 Participant recruitment strategies and dialogue design should be mindful of the ways in which the pandemic has affected people, so that we are still able to include and hear from people who are underrepresented. Recruitment strategies should also take account of the potential for digital exclusion and the need to redress this.

6.5 We expect the Contractor to identify a plan and strategy for how the dialogue will engage diverse sections of the public.

7 Outputs and deliverables

We would require the following deliverables from the dialogue contractor:

- An oral report to the NCoB supported by a detailed written report on the process and outcomes of the dialogue.

- The report should include relevant information about the participants, methodology, salient views and arguments expressed, the materials and experts used to inform the dialogue, and reflections on the process by the Contractor presented in a publishable format and to a publishable standard.
- PowerPoint slides including visual presentation of the findings in an appropriate form, such as infographics.
- Media related to public dialogue activities, including photos and videos.
- Demographic information about participants to monitor diversity.
- Contact details of all participants who wish to be contacted in the future and be given feedback on the findings of this project.

8 Timeline

Proposals should set out a timeline for each stage of the dialogue planning, delivery, analysis, and reporting, and demonstrate that they can meet the following timescales for the start and end of the project:

- Start date: 3 May 2021
- Final report: 10 August 2021.

9 Budget

Tenders for the dialogue should demonstrate that the dialogue can be delivered with the outputs within the region of £50K.

10 Project governance

- 10.1** The commissioning and reporting process for the dialogues will be overseen by a dialogue management group set up by the commissioning body, coordinated by a public dialogue project lead.
- 10.2** The Contractor will be responsible for running the dialogues.
- 10.3** The public dialogue project lead from NCoB will act as the first point of contact for the Contractor.
- 10.4** Contractors should allow for sufficient meetings with NCoB, including an inception meeting and a presentation of the findings of the dialogue at a final meeting for the project.

11 Consent for the use of project materials

The Contractor will ensure that dialogue events are recorded (in an appropriate and good quality format including audio, video, and transcripts), and that signed consent is sought from participants and other recorded stakeholders to enable material to be used by the NCoB.

12 Data security

- 12.1** The successful Contractor must comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and any information collected, processed, and transferred on behalf of the NCoB, must be held and transferred securely. Contractors must provide assurances of compliance with GDPR.
- 12.2** The successful Contractor will need to ensure that individual views of participants are not reported/published in any way that links them with personal details such as names and addresses of the participants.
- 12.3** The Contractor will, on behalf of NCoB, seek permission from public participants and stakeholders attending dialogue sessions to contact them again in the future, and those tendering should include in their proposal the arrangements for seeking this consent.
- 12.4** Participants should be offered the option of sharing their contact details if they wish to be updated about the project progress. Those tendering should include in their proposal the arrangements to be made for secure transfer of participant details (names, addresses, etc) to the NCoB if participants wish to share their details.

13 Application format and content

- 13.1** Applications should outline how the Contractor proposes to meet the requirements of the NCoB as detailed above. The proposal should provide a detailed account of the approach to all phases of the dialogue, including: design and development, running the dialogue process, reporting and evaluation.
- 13.2** Applications should include:
- Contractor profile and an overview of similar contracts carried out by the company.
 - Resources that the Contractor expects to use, CVs of the main individuals involved in delivering the project, in addition to detailing the level and nature of input required from the NCoB throughout the duration of the project.
 - Project and delivery plan which details:
 - A proposed methodology for the dialogue.
 - The programme of activities.
 - A strategy for participant recruitment.
 - The process for deciding and producing support materials for the dialogue.
 - A Gantt chart detailing timelines, milestones and deliverables.
 - Plan for involving experts.
 - Analysis and reporting format.
 - Arrangements for risk management.
- 13.3** Applications should also provide details for two referees with whom you have undertaken similar work who may be approached by the NCoB.
- 13.4** A breakdown of the budget which includes all costs which will be incurred by the Contractor.

14 Selection criteria

14.1 The evaluation of tenders will be subject to criteria including, but not limited to, the following areas:

- A. **Capability 60%** - quality of the proposed methodology demonstrating an understanding of the project objectives and proposed methods for how these will be achieved, and the *suitability* of the proposal against the specification set out in the invitation to tender.
- B. **Capacity 10%** - sufficient resources for the requirements of the project with appropriate timescales and consistency of a core team.
- C. **Quality 10%** - appropriate quality assurance processes and risk mitigation.
- D. **Price 20%** - demonstration of value for money.

15 Selection process

15.1 A commissioning team including representatives from the NCoB and a dialogue expert will select the Contactor according to the selection criteria listed.

15.2 Shortlisted Contractors will be contacted by Tuesday 27 April and interviews will be held on Friday 30 April 2021.

15.3 It is anticipated that the Contractor will be confirmed on 30 April 2021.

16 How to apply

16.1 The deadline for submission of full applications is **17.00 Monday 19 April 2021**.

16.2 Applications should include all the details and costing as outlined in this specification.

16.3 Electronic copies of the tender should be emailed to Arzoo Ahmed (Public dialogue project lead): aahmed@nuffieldbioethics.org and animals@nuffieldbioethics.org, by the stated deadline.

16.4 Receipt of your application will be confirmed by e-mail. If you do not receive confirmation within 24 hours of the deadline please telephone +44 (0)20 7681 9619.