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Solar on farms demonstration fund – information for applicants

EECA

TE TARI TIAKI PŪNGAO
ENERGY EFFICIENCY & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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Thank you for your interest in applying for the solar on farms demonstration fund. This document outlines the supporting information that you need to know before completing your application, including background information on EECA (Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority), what the fund is for, specific eligibility criteria, and how applications will be assessed.

About EECA

EECA (Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority), is a Crown Entity dedicated to mobilising New Zealanders to be world leaders in clean and clever energy use.

EECA works across emerging and innovative technology, smart systems and future fuels to support households, industry and Aotearoa New Zealand. Strategic focus areas include promoting energy efficiency, accelerating the uptake of renewables such as solar, and empowering New Zealanders to make confident energy choices.

As part of its wider mission, EECA plays a role in driving solar uptake, providing guidance, research, and targeted support to help households, businesses, and communities harness renewable energy.

Background on the fund

EECA has developed a solar on farms demonstration fund as one part of a broader solar on farms programme to gather data on the use of solar and battery energy storage systems for a limited number of different farm types, across different regions in New Zealand.

The purpose of providing co-investment for demonstration systems on farms is to:

1. Collect data that will inform the creation of EECA resources and insights about the use of solar and battery systems on farms (e.g. solar power calculator, best practice guidance).
2. Create a group of champions for solar and battery use on farms, to provide confidence and shared learnings for farmers (i.e. farmers learning from farmers).
3. Provide on the ground examples of how solar and battery systems perform day to day across different scenarios.

The funding will cover the **installation of solar and battery energy storage systems, or the installation of battery energy storage systems only** (if the farm has an existing solar installation without a battery). This is an open competitive process, which means it is an opportunity open to all eligible applicants and not everyone who applies for funding will receive it.

What co-funding is available?

EECA will commit up to approximately \$4 million in total co-funding for the demonstration of solar and battery systems on farms. We anticipate that up to 40 farms will receive co-funding support.

The maximum amount of EECA co-funding per demonstration farm will be capped at \$200,000 excl. GST, to be applied as follows:

- Funding of up to 40% of the cost of the inverter and battery system, capped at \$450 per kWh of nominal battery capacity installed, up to a maximum of \$100,000.
- Funding of up to 20% for all other solar array items (e.g. photovoltaic (PV) modules, installation), capped at \$410 per kWpeak (kWp) of direct current capacity, up to a maximum of \$100,000.

Key dates

The demonstration fund will open for applications on 18 September 2025 and remain open until 30 October 2025 (or until fund is fully allocated). Applicants will be notified of the outcome as soon as practicable.

EECA reserves the right to pause applications, extend the funding period, or close the fund early should the need arise, or circumstances change.

What kind of farms we are looking for

We are looking for a wide variety of farms across New Zealand to lead the way with solar and battery storage, and share their experience with others in the sector.

Across the mix of recipients we are looking for applications that demonstrate different size and types of solar PV and battery energy storage systems, including:

- small to medium (approximately 30-50 kWp)
- medium (50-100 kWp)
- large (100-500 kWp)
- non-standard.

Each demonstration farm will tell the story of their energy journey - sharing information on their energy use and their experiences of the installation and operation of the system, for example by being featured in a case study and/or holding an open day (as appropriate). EECA will support and manage these activities with you. Information will be shared with the primary industry, utilising industry sector organisations and rural communication channels.

For the purposes of information sharing, it will be important for farmers and growers to have strong industry and community networks. Previous experience with industry or community-good activities is desirable.

The application form includes an opportunity for farmers to provide a brief description about their proposed use of a solar and battery system, why their farm would be a good demonstration project, any recognition that their farm has received and their community involvement.

Farm types that are eligible

We are seeking applications from New Zealand's predominant farming types which have been categorised as follows:

- dairy farming
- sheep and beef (this includes dairy support/grazing farms)
- arable (grains and crops)
- horticulture (fruit and vegetables)
- pig farming
- poultry farming
- plant nursery/floriculture
- wine
- other livestock (deer, horses etc)
- mixed type (a mix of the above).

The number of demonstration farms selected for each farm type will be located across regions that reflect the national spread of that farm type.

Farm types that are not eligible

- Lifestyle farms.
- Applications for utility-scale solar (>500kW) or solar farms.
- Multiple farm applications under the same business legal entity or holding company.
- Government organisations – view full list here
<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/system/central-government-organisations>

EECA reserves the right to limit the number of successful applications using the same installer.

Applicant requirements

To qualify for funding the applicant needs to meet the following criteria:

- New Zealand based and have a New Zealand Business Number (note that only one application will be considered per business – including those operating under the same holding company).
- A farm type identified by EECA and currently pay a levy to an industry organisation (for example DairyNZ or Beef + Lamb NZ). For non-levy paying farms such as

poultry meat growers the applicant must show they are a commercial/contract grower.

- Include a quote from a qualified installer in their application.
- Agree to share with EECA and other farmers their experience of installing and operating the system. You may be asked to host an open day on your farm for interested parties.
- Agree to provide system performance and energy use data to EECA for a maximum period of 3 years. EECA will ensure any commercially sensitive data is managed in accordance with the confidentiality provisions of the Solar on Farms Demonstration Fund Project Funding Agreement.
- Able to install solar and a battery (or a battery only where solar is existing) by 30 June 2026.
- Has not been the subject of successful prosecutions relating to health and safety, animal welfare, or noncompliance with Regional or Unitary Council requirements for the past 5 years.

System requirements

If your application is successful, your system must meet the following requirements:

- The minimum photovoltaic (PV) system size (where PV is being installed as part of the application) is 30 kWp and the maximum is 500 kWp.
- Capable of exporting real time data to EECA.
- Grid connected and include a battery and inverter that is able to be connected to a demand flexibility (DF) platform.*
- Able to operate off-grid in event of a power outage.
- Installed by a qualified installer.

** Demand flexibility (DF) is the ability of consumers to change electricity consumption to reduce peak demand on the national grid and/or make use of cheaper off-peak power. To be able to do this, all data and system performance related information must be able to be communicated using open communication, data exchange and cyber security standards such as OpenADR or IEEE 2030.5. This capability ensures that consumers can sign up to DF platforms if they wish. Being connected to a DF platform is not required for this fund but we want participants to be future ready.*

How projects will be evaluated

Applications that meet all EECA's eligibility criteria will be assessed on their merits. An evaluation panel will assess applications by farm type, region, and system size, along with system fit and ability to deliver. Each farm type category will have a maximum number of projects EECA is looking to fund (which may differ between farm types).

EECA may also undertake due diligence checks in relation to the applicants which may include:

- checking the applicant's eligibility credentials (e.g. commodity levy payment, NZBN/legal entity check, etc).

- reference check of the applicant, any other organisation and named personnel in the response (with reasonable notice provided should we decide to undertake this).
- checking that the applicant has not been subject of a successful prosecution in the past five years
- general internet search
- engaging with other relevant government agencies on aspects of the project
- conducting internal or external due diligence checks.

The evaluation panel will make funding recommendations to the EECA Delegated Authority (DA), who has the sole discretion to determine which applications will receive solar on farms demonstration funding, and the value of any funding.

The DA will consider the recommendations from the evaluation panel, and the panel's advice on any risks, issues or concerns. The DA may also impose any additional conditions they see fit before approving funding.

Later changes to the process

EECA reserves the right to review and amend the fund pre-conditions and other requirements in order to make improvements once the fund is open. We will publish a notice on the fund overview webpage here - <https://www.eeca.govt.nz/co-funding-and-support/products/solar-on-farms-demonstration-fund/> if we wish to provide additional information or notify applicants of changes to the application process after the fund opens. Applicants are responsible for checking for any updates before submitting their applications.

Your responsibilities when submitting an application

EECA intends to rely on the information provided in the online application. In submitting an application, each applicant will be asked to make a declaration (part of the online application form) to confirm that:

- the information provided is accurate
- they have read and understood the Solar on Farms Demonstration Fund Terms Conditions.

We may invite applicants to correct any minor errors or omissions in their application during our administrative review and eligibility check process. Following this step, any application that does not meet all the minimum eligibility conditions will be disqualified from the remainder of the process.

At any time during the assessment process, EECA may request clarification or additional information from any applicant about their application. EECA is not required to request the same clarification or information from each applicant.

The applicant must provide the clarification or additional information in the format requested, and in a timely manner. If an applicant does not respond adequately or within a reasonable timeframe, processing of the application may cease.

What happens if you are successful?

We will write to the applicant confirming that they have been successful, and a funding agreement will be supplied. Before submitting an application, applicants should review and understand the terms and conditions set out in the Solar on Farms Project Funding Agreement (the “Funding Agreement”), available in the application page.

Funding agreements

EECA and the successful applicant will enter into a Funding Agreement that commits the recipient to implement the project. The Funding Agreement will detail both parties’ obligations for the duration of the project.

A recipient cannot change the project scope once we have approved it for funding. Once the project begins, recipients can propose minor changes to milestone dates with EECA’s agreement, to be managed through a Funding Agreement variation.

EECA expects all successful applicants to sign their Funding Agreements within 30 days of being offered the funding. The funding offer will lapse after that period.

Once contracted, you will be instructed to proceed with the system installation, with a requirement for installation to be completed before 30 June 2026. You will need to pay the installer, and EECA will pay you (the recipient) the agreed funding amount once proof of satisfactory installation and operation of the system is provided. We will need to receive a copy of the Record of Inspection from a qualified electrical inspector. EECA will provide guidance to funding recipients to explain further details on what is required and how payments are made.

EECA progress updates

EECA will monitor each recipient’s project progress and their use of solar on farms demonstration funds. We may do so with the assistance of any other person we choose, at our discretion and expense.

Recipients will be required to provide regular progress reports to EECA which will be stated in the Funding Agreement along with any specify additional reporting requirements that may be required.

In accordance with the Funding Agreement, Recipients should also be aware that EECA may audit their records relevant to the Funding Agreement at any time.

EECA intends to publish all solar on farms demonstration fund decisions, including:

- who the recipients are

- the amounts of funding provided
- a brief description of each successful project.

EECA will do this after the parties sign a Funding Agreement. We'll agree the content and method of publication with each recipient.

How to raise an issue or complaint

An applicant may, in good faith, raise any issue or complaint about the application process with EECA at any time, by writing to solar@eeeca.govt.nz. EECA will consider the complaint or issue and respond promptly and impartially.

Both EECA and the applicant agree to act in good faith and use their best endeavours to resolve any issue or complaint that may arise in relation to the application.

An applicant raising an issue or complaint will not unfairly prejudice their ongoing participation in the application process or any future funding rounds.

What happens if you are not successful?

EECA will inform all unsuccessful applicants by email, within 30 business days of application receipt.

EECA will endeavour to publish regular updates on the number of applications remaining eligible as practicable – for example if the dairy farm type category is fully subscribed we will update the application webpage to advise this.

Contact us for more information

For more information about the solar on farms programme, the team can be contacted at solar@eeeca.govt.nz or **0800 300 643**.