



Candidate Information Booklet

Industrial 2 – Dairy Unit Hillsborough

IRC330871

Completed Application Forms must be submitted no later than 12 noon on 30th October 2026.

Contents

.....	2
Recruitment overview	3
Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division.....	5
About Researched Farmed Estates Branch.....	6
Job Information and Employee Benefits	8
Job Background	10
Eligibility Criteria	11
Interview Criteria	13

Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue competition communications electronically. Please ensure you check your email account regularly, to make sure that you don't miss any important communications.

Please update us with any changes to your email address and home address to ensure you are fully informed at all times.

Equal opportunities

Agri-Food and BioSciences Institute (AFBI) is an equal opportunities employer and has been awarded the Bronze Charter Mark in recognition for our commitment towards Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace. All appointments will be made strictly on the basis of merit. If you have any queries with regard to this recruitment process or require any documentation in an alternative format, please contact HRConnect via email Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net or call 0800 1 300 330.

Feedback - AFBI is committed to providing feedback to assist the development of current and future applications.

Recruitment overview

Thank you for your interest in our organisation. At AFBI you will find a fantastic team spirit and a commitment to the development of both you and your skills so that you can choose to have a long-term career with us.

This Candidate Information Booklet offers specific information to applicants. **Please note (AFBI specific) - read across will not be undertaken by the panel. The candidate must demonstrate how they meet each criterion in the relevant response to each criterion.**

Please read this document carefully in advance of submitting your application and retain it for reference throughout the recruitment process.

At AFBI, we take great pride in the work we undertake. All AFBI employees are appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.

We wish you every success in your application!

Important dates - It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI HQ, Newforge Lane, Belfast during week commencing 30th November 2026.

Compulsory documentation - It is compulsory that all candidates invited to attend an assessment and/or interview, bring sufficient identification. Your attendance may not be permitted in instances where identification cannot be shown.

You want to change the world. So do we.

[Agri-Food and BioSciences Institute \(AFBI\)](#) is a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial organisations. We are sponsored by our key stakeholder, the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

Our customers include a range of local, national and international commercial companies, Northern Ireland and UK Departments, Agencies and associated bodies in the European Union.

As a leading institute of research, we tackle the complex challenges of our industry through purpose-driven science. We are a community with a common goal: to leave the world better than we found it. Are we ambitious? Definitely. Are our ambitions achievable? Absolutely. AFBI has been defying scientific boundaries to create measurable, scalable and enduring solutions to agri-food and marine science complexities in Northern Ireland - and beyond - since 2006.

We are delighted that you are considering joining us.

Of all the many factors that come together to make AFBI what it is, nothing is more important than our employees. Every area of our service delivery is underpinned by a number of dedicated teams working in synchrony to ensure the provision of scientific excellence. Across our four divisions, every team member, from those on the scientific front to those working behind the scenes in one of our offices, plays an essential role in delivering our long tradition of excellence, whilst helping to propel future discoveries.
Together we are better.

Our People Vision is to:

Attract, empower and grow purpose-driven staff with the passion and capability to pursue excellence, embrace technology and cultivate innovation and change.

This is how we do great science.

Great people. Great science.

Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division

The Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD) employs scientific, technical and support staff across its six scientific based branches and is a highly multidisciplinary team with a central focus on sustainable farming. In doing so it's overarching goal is to drive innovations and science which deliver positive outcomes for livestock and plants, the environment they are grown in as well as the wider economy. This multi-disciplinary team explores all aspects of the food supply chain taking research and scientific exploration from the soil through to the plant, the animal, and the resultant food quality and nutritional value. It also works with colleagues at VSD to ensure animal health and food safety is optimised. A key element of the work also examines quantitative and qualitative socioeconomic impacts.

SAFSD utilises a highly instrumented platform across livestock and land management to service its main deliverables of research and innovation and monitoring and surveillance. SAFSD also collaborates extensively with other research organisations, industry and government departments locally, nationally and internationally. A key drive within SAFSD is to produce high quality peer reviewed publications whilst also ensuring the practical translation of science through an active dissemination programme. SAFSD Branches are-

Agronomy & Plant Science Branch is concerned with optimising grass and crop production through the breeding and testing of new varieties, understanding the interaction of plants with the soil and wider environment, and the development of new plant-based agricultural and horticultural products.

Economic Research Branch undertakes quantitative and qualitative socioeconomic research to inform agri-food and rural policy development and industry decision making, regionally and nationally. Environmental economics, linked with the local, national and international economy is of increasing prominence in this branch.

Plant Health & Integrated Pest Management Branch underpins DAERA's policy development on plant health and delivers scientific advances in the detection, management and control of invasive and native pests and pathogens affecting plants, agriculture and the environment.

Sustainable Livestock Systems Branch links fundamental livestock science to systems level research to deliver innovations which drive sustainability within the agri-food sector and advance scientific knowledge.

Statistical & Data Sciences Branch provides statistical analyses, consultation services and data analytics to bring forward data driven solutions for a sustainable agri-food industry and our environment. It also supports a wide range of scientific research projects and statutory work carried out by AFBI.

Researched Farmed Estate provides the essential Support Services to ensure the Science and Research objectives and requirements are met and delivered on the Farmed Platform.

This job role sits within the **Researched Farmed Estates Branch**.

About Researched Farmed Estates Branch

As part of Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD), the Research Farmed Estate Branch provides a support service to the Science and research to a range of local, national and international companies and governmental bodies within the agrifood and Bioscience sector. To ensure AFBI maintains its market leading position within these sectors for research, it is essential to have the necessary Farmed Platform and infrastructure in place to carry out the relevant research required.

AFBI enjoys the use of a wide and varied estate to complete its science functions and the AFBI Farmed estate is strategically important to deliver AFBI's extensive research programme.

AFBI's farm research platform is mainly concentrated at AFBI Hillsborough with other farm platforms being at Crossnacreevy and Loughgall. A smaller farm platform is present at Stormont. The platforms across Hillsborough, Crossnacreevy and Loughgall fall within the management of the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division. The site at Stormont falls within the management of AFBI's Veterinary Sciences Division.

Across the platforms at Hillsborough and Loughgall a total of 300 dairy cows, 140 sows (with progeny to finish), 250 ewes (with progeny to finish) and 30 suckler cows (with progeny to finish) are managed. The land across all sites is mainly used for grass production but other cropping enterprises, especially at Crossnacreevy are present. Within the SAFSD Farmed Platform there is a Farm Mechanisation unit and Scientific units managing Ruminant Nutrition, & Nutrient Recycling Units.

Hillsborough Farmed estate comprises 198 hectares of DAERA land and buildings rented to AFBI and c.120 hectares of rented land.

Loughgall Farmed Estate comprises 142 hectares of DAERA land and buildings rented to AFBI.

The farm platform has a major focus on supporting the livestock research programmes but also supports AFBI's grass breeding programme, seed and variety testing work, arable and manure research, agroforestry research and agri-environmental research programmes investigating technologies, soil nutrients, agronomy and soil carbon sequestration.

The farm platform at Stormont mainly undertakes farm activities to support veterinary related research on the main farmed animal species with animals largely being bought in as required.

Overall, the farm platform has a foundational role in delivering AFBI's strategic intentions of:

- Leading improvements in the agri-food industry to drive sustainability.
- Enhancing the natural and marine environments
- Protecting animal, plant and human health.

Specifically, the Researched Farmed Estate plays an important role in the research programmes to decarbonise livestock systems and reduce their environmental impact, explore new food production systems and bring forward solutions to enable farming systems adapt to climate change.

Job Information and Employee Benefits

There is currently 1 full-time Industrial 2 position to be filled at Hillsborough. A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any similar vacancies which may arise.

Salary

Currently the salary for the post will be within the range £26,449 - £28,094 (under review) within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale.

Working Hours

The successful candidates will normally be required to work 5 days each week, totalling 37 hours. Candidates should be aware that cows in a dairy herd must be milked/fed and managed 365 days per year, while experiments are also undertaken throughout the year. This means that working during weekends, holiday periods, early mornings and into the evenings is essential to meet business needs. The successful candidate will be required to help cover these work requirements on a rota basis which includes working every other weekend. Overtime is paid for time worked outside of the standard 37-hour week.

Location

The successful candidates be based at AFBI Hillsborough, Co. Down, BT26 6DR but may also be expected to work at other sites, as required.

Travel

The post will entail travel on public roads using AFBI vehicles and for this reason the successful applicant will require a full driving licence which will permit them to meet the legal requirements of the post in full.

Pre-employment checks

Pre-employment checks consist of a qualification check and an AccessNI check. The security check required for this post is basic level. HRConnect will provide your details to Experian who will undertake this check. This is a two-part process during which all communications will be issued to you electronically.

Annual Leave

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing to 30 after five year's satisfactory service.

Medical

The successful postholder may be required to undertake a medical in advance of securing appointment.

This role will involve physical based activities (for example: lifting, bending, carrying and stretching), working both indoors and outdoors in varying weather and ground conditions. The successful candidate will be asked to complete the following medical check Working Alone In Remote Rural Settings and may be invited to attend a medical examination to confirm that they are fit to carry out the physical duties of the post.

In addition, the post may involve feeding concentrates to livestock and bedding livestock with straw/sawdust, power washing enclosed animal housing, an increased risk of respiratory disorders may impact on individuals with pre-existing chest and lung conditions, including asthma. The pre-employment health screen questionnaire must be completed and include details of present or past asthma or chest illness.

Probationary Period

The post holder will serve 12 months' probation in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment. At the end of the probation period a formal review will be conducted.

Professional Development

We believe in our employees and understand the importance of investing in ongoing development. Support for professional development will always be considered.

Employee Benefits

AFBI offers employees an unrivalled benefits package. For further information please click [here](#).

Right to Work

Candidates must be able to demonstrate their Right to Work. Where a candidate has a Right to Work status which has a time limitation, ongoing checks will be in place to ensure the Right to Work is maintained.

Further Information

Further Information about the post may be obtained from AFBI People & Culture via email at SAFSDpeopleandculture@afbini.gov.uk

For information on how the recruitment process will be managed and for further recruitment and selection resources, please click [here](#).

For information on our equal opportunities, please click [here](#).

Job Background

The successful applicant will report to the Assistant Dairy Herd Manager and Dairy Herd Manager and liaise closely with scientific staff at Hillsborough, Loughgall, Crossnacreevy, Stormont and Newforge Lane Belfast, the successful applicant's duties will include the following: -

1. Milking duties, including bringing cows to and from fields and houses for milking, preparing cows for milking, milking cows, maintaining hygiene throughout the milking process, maintaining parlour cleanliness.
2. Feeding cows, including preparing experimental rations to specific experimental requirements, normally using a telescopic handler, tractor and mixer wagon, but also by hand or using a mini mixer.
3. Pasture/grazing management, including sowing fertiliser, mowing paddocks using a mower, harvesting grass using a zero-grazer, weed control, allocating pasture, setting up fence lines, checking water troughs.
4. Maintaining high animal health and welfare standards, including identifying and treating sick animals, routine health management, vaccination, hoof care, assisting veterinary practitioners.
5. Fertility management, including heat detection, artificial insemination, assisting at calving, and ensuring the health and welfare of calves and cows at birth.
6. General livestock management duties, including bedding cow houses/cubicles and calving pens (for example, with straw, sawdust and lime), clipping cows.
7. Recording detailed herd health and management details, both electronically and hard copy, as appropriate. Assisting scientific staff to take measurements.
8. Maintaining overall cleanliness and tidiness of the dairy unit, including cleaning and disinfecting animal accommodation, brushing, power hosing, grass cutting, weed control/management, silo management.
9. All types of general farm duties, and any other duties that may arise, including young-stock management which includes feeding and rearing large numbers of calves and youngstock until they move into the main dairy herd.
10. Conducting an evening check of animals within the herds, which may include checking youngstock and calves.

This list is not exclusive, and the successful candidate will be required to carry out other duties as allocated by management

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications provide evidence in their application form that they meet **all** the following eligibility criteria.

1. Two GCSE's including English Language and Maths, grade C or above, or a recognised level 2 or higher in Agriculture or equivalent* in a relevant area.
2. Demonstrate, by way of examples, at least 12 months experience of working in a Dairy Unit of over 200 dairy stocks, including milking, feeding, maintaining cow hygiene throughout all milking processes and working with young stock.
3. Demonstrate, by way of examples, experience in all of the following:
 - Pasture/grazing management in whole,
 - Heat detection/Fertility,
 - General livestock husbandry skills including animal Health and Welfare and have good working knowledge of farming practices and principles relevant to livestock management.
4. Possess a full, UK current or exchangeable** driving licence from the list for manual vehicles, (to aid the successful candidate in driving AFBI vehicles) enabling the licence holder to fulfil the duties of this role.

***Relevant or equivalent qualifications:** Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated. If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied, information proving equivalency, etc. so that a well-informed decision can be made

**** Exchange of driving licences:**

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/exchanging-your-foreign-driving-licence>
and
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/advice-foreign-driving-licences-northern-ireland>.

Person Specification

This position is analogous to Level 1 in the NICS.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Essential Criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate competency in Professional Knowledge & Skills pertaining to this post together with the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 1 for the purpose of personal and professional development.

Selection panels will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the above areas and award marks accordingly.

You should refer to the behaviours listed under level 1 of the relevant competence areas.

To view the NICS Competency Framework, please click [here](#).

Interview Criteria

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria applicants will also be expected to display the following qualities and skills at interview-

1. Professional Knowledge, Skills & Experience

Marks Available: 40

Pass mark: 24

2. Delivering at Pace

Marks Available: 30

Pass mark:18

3. Collaborating and Partnering

Marks Available: 15

4. Making Effective Decision

Marks Available: 15

Total marks available: 100

Overall pass mark: 60

COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS

Selection panels will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the above areas and award marks accordingly. Please note that no interpreters will be permitted in the interview room, and that all candidates must attend for interview in person.