

ARABLE & AGRONOMY

James Hutton Institute for three-year project to identify new oat varieties



By **MATTHEW TILT** — May 1, 2025 ⌚ 2 Mins Read



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The James Hutton Institute has been awarded £100,000 from the Novo Nordisk Foundation to take part in a three-year project to identify nutritionally superior and yield-stable oat varieties through a combination of experimental and on-farm field trials.

The project will be led by Innovation Centre for Organic Agriculture in Denmark and working in collaboration with Nordic Genebank (NordGen) and Aarhus University in Denmark.

Dr Joanne Russell, Hutton's lead on this study, explains: "The project brings together experts in plant genetics, agronomy, and mathematics to harness the unique properties of oat, with its low

carbon footprint and significant nutritional and health benefits.

“The key issue for oat producers is the lack of stability in year-to-year supply and quality, largely due to seasonal fluctuations in environmental factors. We will focus on the need to develop robust organic-ready oat cultivars specifically tailored to sustainable organic production and address some of the emerging challenges in food and health security to help secure food production.”

Researchers will study the genes of 200 oat varieties and landraces that have been collected from across the Nordic region, which have been grown for a century and survived changes in climate and agricultural practices.

Oat production increased in the UK by 19% in 2024, driven by increases in area and yield. It's estimated that the oat market will grow by 3.7% annually until 2032, as consumers become more health conscious and seek out foods that are highly nutritious.



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Machinery editor for Farm Contractor & Large Scale Farmer. Matt has worked as an agricultural machinery journalist for five years, following time spent in his family's Worcestershire contracting business. When he's not driving or writing about the latest farm equipment, he can be found in his local cinema, or with his headphones in, reading a good book.

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