

Industry Report



Government funding for analytical equipment

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The GAMBICA economic forecast, prepared by Oxford Economics to cover members' interests, and those of their customers, provided some warnings for companies this month; predicting a ten per cent fall in house prices, with all that that implies for spending. Fortunately, the bad tidings were offset by a well-timed reminder from the Government about the funding available to re-equip UK science and research facilities. The announcement provided more detail of where the money – accessed via the Horizon Europe replacement fund and the World Class Labs programme - will be spent.

Funding recipients are based in Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Leicester, Bristol, Hull, Nottingham, Glasgow, London, Manchester, Belfast, Warwick and Southampton and include:

- the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology (LMB) for new equipment to enable a greater understanding of human diseases and the design of drugs;
- the National Oceanography Centre's state-of-the-art deep-sea research facility for a new sediment core scanner;
- UK Digital Heritage Centre at the University of Liverpool to fund facilities that will pioneer a new approach to preserving, promoting and progressing cultural heritage through technologies such as AI, Blockchain and the Metaverse.



£61.7 million will be spent on lab facilities and equipment supporting key items of biomedical equipment in tranches of up to £6 million destined for 28 UK institutions including electron microscopy capabilities at the University of Glasgow. A further £16.7 million investment has been allocated for equipment across 50 institutions, including a funding stream to allow access to HPC resources, software and training including £225,000 towards a Liquid Chromatography Mass Spectrometry system and XRD detector upgrades for the University of Warwick. There will also be £1.6 million for support services and facilities across 5 environmental science institutions and £24.3 million to equip UK laboratories with high energy lasers, AI and quantum computing, particle physics and particle accelerator development.

Life sciences are also to receive a boost with a '£650 million war-chest' announced by Jeremy Hunt, 'to fire up the UK's life sciences sector and drive forward the government's priority to grow the economy'.

The 'Life Sci for Growth' package brings together 10 different policies including £121 million (made up of new and existing funding) to improve commercial clinical trials

to bring new medicines to patients faster and up to £48 million of new money for scientific innovation to prepare for any future health emergencies, it will also provide £154 million to increase the capacity of the UK's biological data bank (the money will go towards a new facility at Manchester Science Park).

The manufacturing arm of the UK's life sciences sector can compete for grants from a Biomanufacturing Fund worth up to £38 million in total to incentivise investment and improve the UK's resilience to any future pandemics. £10 million new cash has also been announced to fund projects to drive innovation in cutting edge medicine manufacturing that can bolster the UK's health resilience, such as those which use nucleic acid technology and intracellular drug delivery to help improve vaccines, as part of Innovate UK's 'Transforming Medicines Manufacturing Programme'.

Jeremy Hunt also committed to increasing lab space through pledging to reform planning rules to help scientists. Proposals including local authorities taking greater account of R&D needs in their planning decisions.

Details of the announcements can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

<https://www.ukri.org/news/280m-to-support-uk-research-and-innovation-during-horizon-europe-delay/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plan-to-forge-a-better-britain-through-science-and-technology-unveiled>

Lab suppliers to be hit by 'unintentional high-tech ban'

Those who attended the GAMBICA Environmental Regulatory Group in May were dismayed to hear about current EU proposals which would enact a blanket ban on per- and polyfluorinated alkyl compounds (PFAS) which would make the use of indispensable high-performance materials impossible in many cases.

The ban is being considered at EU level on over 12,000 PFAS 'forever' chemicals which are used in most valves, filters, refrigerators and millions of other products. An EU consultation is currently open where manufacturers can argue for a derogation (timed exemption) by sharing product uses and applications where no suitable alternative exists for PFAS.

GAMBICA Chief Executive, Steve Brambley, has written to all members strongly urging immediate action in response to this significant risk to UK firms' ability to continue to supply products in the EU (and possibly the UK in the future).

The consultation opened on 22nd March and closes on 25th September 2023 and significant work is likely to be required in compiling responses, including obtaining data from suppliers.

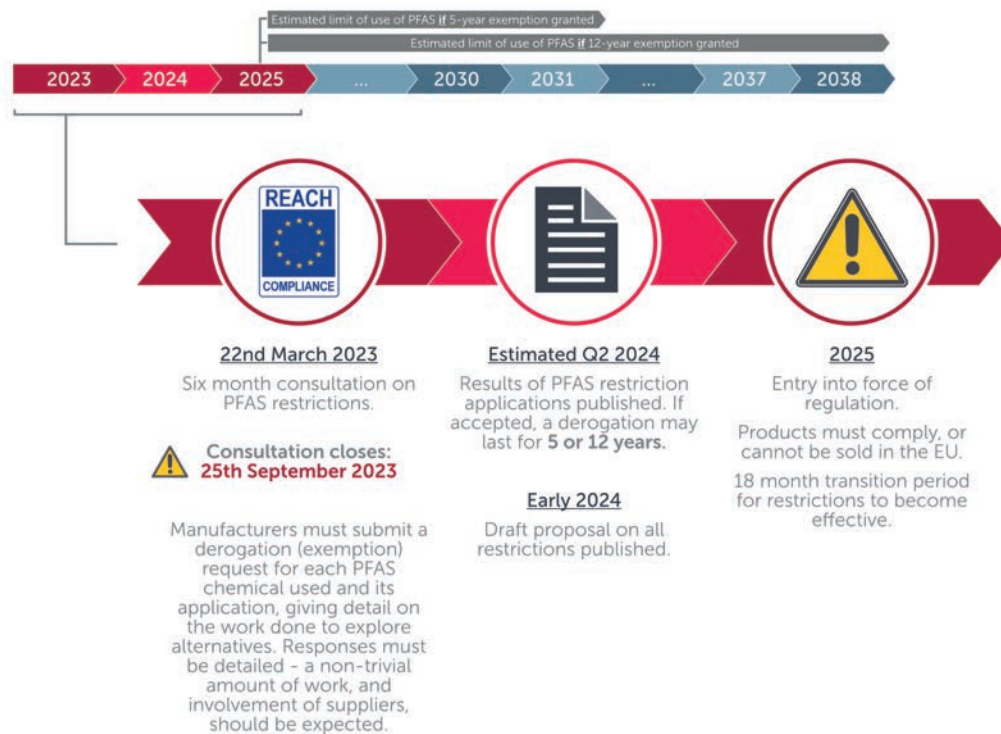
Steve's advice is that all lab suppliers should:

1. Understand if their products are impacted.
2. Reach out to suppliers to understand where PFAS exist.

3. Study annex XV to see if their application is already covered in the derogations. If it is, companies will still need submit a consultation response to support the derogation – derogations which are not supported may be removed from the final legislation.
4. If your PFAS application is not covered by a derogation and you need to continue using PFAS, then respond to the consultation to describe why the PFAS is necessary for your application, why the material cannot be substituted and what the consequences are in socio-economic terms if your product cannot function in the same way.

An indicative list of some product areas that will likely be affected is:

- PTFE in filters (lab)*
- PTFE tape
- PTFE tubing
- FEP tubing
- PTFE O-rings
- PTFE seals
- In general, substances from the PFAS group are contained in materials such as PTFE, FEP & FKM. These materials are used, for example, for seals in glands and connectors, but also for cable sheaths and for components in the cable (tapes) that are used in particularly challenging environments.
- Liners for products in challenging chemical environments.
- Refrigerants in laboratory refrigerators



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