

# Why 2026 Is the Year to Invest in Agricultural Drones

Agriculture in the UK is undergoing a structural shift that is reshaping how land is managed, how inputs are applied, and how efficiencies are captured.

**Drone technology** — once viewed as an experimental extra — is now maturing into a critical tool within **modern farm management**.

The coming two years will define which operators and service providers **establish themselves early**, and which find themselves trying to catch up once demand accelerates.



*This paper outlines why we believe **2026** is the right moment for growers, agronomists, contractors, and rural businesses to invest in agricultural drone capability.*



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A DJI Agras drone is shown in flight, spraying a dense forest. The drone is white and black, with four rotors. It is positioned in the lower left of the frame, with two large plumes of white spray trailing behind it. The background consists of rolling green hills and mountains under a clear sky.

## 1. Regulatory Momentum: The Tide Is Turning

For years, plant protection product (PPP) spraying by drone has been limited by regulatory frameworks.

**That landscape is changing.**

We are in the final stages of securing our SORA (Specific Operations Risk Assessment) for operating DJI Agras drones, transitioning away from the legacy OSC.

The process has been thorough, but it reflects a clear shift: authorities now recognise **agricultural drones** as legitimate, scalable, manageable tools for safe field application.

Even more encouraging, the HSE has expressed confidence that within the next two years, several plant protection products will be **authorised for drone application**. This shift alone will unlock one of the largest new agricultural service markets in recent memory.

**Importantly:**

- **Operators who prepare early will be positioned to capture this market immediately.**
- **Those entering later may face bottlenecks in training, approvals, and customer onboarding – just as demand surges.**

We can introduce interested parties to the consultant supporting **our own SORA process**; he already has a strong track record achieving authorisations for others in the sector.

Furthermore, the expected SAIL2 certification for both **DJI Agras T50 and T100** will radically simplify the SORA process for new entrants, lowering barriers and speeding up approvals.



Once those certificates are in circulation, the **competitive advantage** will favour those who've already built expertise and workflows.



## 2. Agronomic Value Already Exists — Don't Wait for PPP Approval

Waiting for PPP spraying approval may seem logical, but it risks missing the real early stage opportunity:

Building capability now in high-demand, non-PPP drone applications that are already commercially viable and rapidly expanding.

### Current growth areas include:

- *Cover cropping, particularly grass into maize*
- *Oversowing and seed distribution*
- *Foliar nutrition and biologicals*
- *Granular fertiliser and pellet spreading*
- *Greenhouse and polytunnel shading and cleaning*

### These services offer:

- *Strong, consistent revenue streams*
- *Opportunities to work with large grower groups and cooperatives*
- *A chance to build robust operational processes*
- *The ability to gain trust from agronomists before the PPP "rush" begins*

### By the time PPP spraying becomes widely authorised, the operators who invested early will already have:

- *Established farm relationships*
- *Built repeat seasonal work*
- *Developed skills and flight hours*
- *Learned field workflows*
- *Built charging, transport, and equipment infrastructure*
- *Positioned themselves as trusted experts*



Late adopters will be trying to learn the basics during a period of  
overwhelming demand.





### 3. The Commercial Opportunity: A Market on the Edge of Scale

**Across the UK we are already speaking to:**

- *Major farming cooperatives*
- *Seed growers*
- *Agronomists*
- *Regeneration and rewilding projects*
- *Environmental and government-linked initiatives*

They all share one message: drones will become one of the major tools for targeted agricultural applications.

**This is not speculative — it is becoming operational reality.**

Those who already have a drone, a workflow, and a service will be positioned to win the first rounds of serious commercial contracts when the industry “breaks open.”



#### 4. Collaboration Is Emerging as a Competitive Edge: Introducing BADO

One of the most significant developments this year is the launch of **BADO.uk**, a free-to-join initiative focused solely on obtaining work for drone operators.

By pooling operators nationally, BADO aims to win **large-scale contracts** that would otherwise be inaccessible to individual businesses. Those contracts are then shared across the network—effectively creating a cooperative workforce.

**For new operators, this means:**

- *Reduced risk when starting out*
- *Early access to paid work*
- *National-level opportunities, not just local jobs*
- *A ready-made network of experienced professionals*



Joining BADO gives new adopters the ability to integrate into the market faster, while maintaining independence.





## 5. What You Need to Start – And Why Planning Ahead Matters

Beyond selecting a drone, serious operators will need to think about infrastructure. Building this now means smoother operations and faster scale-up later.

Key considerations include:

### **Insurance**

Moonrock remains a strong option for agricultural drone cover, with flexible policies that reflect field realities.

### **SORA**

We can support the process through our consultant, or operators working under BADO can fly under their SORA until they pursue their own.

### **Power & Charging Infrastructure**

For T100 operations, expect to budget £3,000–£4,000 + VAT for a 15 kW 3-phase generator to ensure fast, efficient charging during long field days.

### **Transport & Storage**

The Ifor Williams 12×7 box trailer is an ideal solution – rugged, secure, and capable of housing drones, batteries, mixing systems, and safety equipment.

### **Spray Mixing & Systems**

We can supply bespoke spray-mixing setups designed specifically for agricultural drone workflows, helping operators build a safe, compliant, and efficient field environment from day one.



## Conclusion: The Window of Early Adoption Is Now

2026 marks the point where agricultural drone operations in the UK move from “emerging” to “accelerating.” The regulatory environment is shifting in our favour, **new agronomic use cases are gaining real traction**, and collaborative commercial structures like BADO are opening the door to nationwide contract work.

Those who invest now will:

- **Build practical experience before demand peaks**
- **Establish trusted grower relationships**
- **Develop operational excellence**
- **Be first in line when PPP spraying becomes viable**
- **Position themselves as the early leaders in a sector on the cusp of significant expansion**



*The operators who wait may find the real opportunity has already moved past them.  
If you're exploring your next steps – whether that's selecting a drone, preparing for SORA,  
planning trials, or building your agricultural service offering – we'd be happy to guide you.*

