



Australian Government

Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research

ACIAR

CORPORATE PLAN 2021-22

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About ACIAR

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is the Australian Government's specialist agricultural research-for-development agency. ACIAR operates solely on budget appropriation from Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA).

ACIAR is established by the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982* (ACIAR Act) and is an agency of the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio.

ACIAR has an executive management structure, headed by the Chief Executive Officer, who is accountable directly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

ACIAR is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). Its staff in Australia and overseas are employees of the Australian Public Service under the *Public Service Act 1999*.



Australian Government
**Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research**

Statement of preparation

I, Colin Andrew Campbell, as the accountable authority of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), present the ACIAR Corporate Plan 2021-22, which covers the 2021-22 to 2024-25 reporting periods, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'ACampbell'.

Andrew Campbell
Chief Executive Officer
11 August 2021



The 2021-22 year marks 40 years since the establishment of ACIAR. While there has been improvement in food security and reduced poverty for many, and progress to celebrate for smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters, the purpose of ACIAR to identify or find solutions to agricultural problems of developing countries remains as relevant now as it was in 1982.

The ACIAR portfolio of applied research continues to target long-term challenges. However, for the year ahead, our attention is understandably focused on the partnerships for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The work of ACIAR and its partners will be vital in coming years, to equip smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters in the Indo-Pacific region with the knowledge, skills, technology and frameworks to restore disrupted food production systems and value chains across the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors. The breadth of the ACIAR research portfolio, reflecting the world-leading capabilities of the Australian agricultural innovation system, is a strategic soft power asset – from the sciences that support productivity, biosecurity and sustainability, to the disciplines that support the development of effective policies, value chains and adoption processes.

Over the life of this corporate plan, the ‘how’ of our work may evolve faster than in any previous period, but the ‘why’ and the ‘what’ are enduring.

Andrew Campbell

Chief Executive Officer, ACIAR





Introduction

Australia is a world leader in agricultural innovation. This is a strategic national capability that the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is able to mobilise to build international research partnerships to improve food security, food system resilience and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters in the Indo-Pacific region.

Our mission is to achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems, for the benefit of developing countries and Australia, through international agricultural research partnerships. We broker, facilitate, invest in and manage strategic partnerships in agricultural research-for-development.

Tackling shared challenges through agricultural research collaboration remains a compelling element of Australian soft power in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia is well equipped to play a leading role within our region and globally – disproportionate to the size of our population and our economy. Through our research partnership model, ACIAR supports regional stability, health security and economic recovery, as well as builds scientific and policy capability for more productive and sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors.

The ACIAR Corporate Plan 2021–22 outlines how we will deliver on our 6 objectives, as set out in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, to achieve our purpose and mission. Our objectives also align with and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Over the 4 years covered by this corporate plan (2021–2024), we will continue to build the partnerships, knowledge and capacity required to achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems in the Indo-Pacific region, in the context of a changing climate, and the most recent global challenge, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Building back better after COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health and economic crisis that will disrupt the lives and livelihoods of diverse communities around the world for years to come. The pandemic is amplifying existing vulnerabilities and exposing new risks in food systems at local, national and regional levels. It has exacerbated rural poverty and food security, as well as impacting livelihoods – for women in particular.

Last year, ACIAR initiated a 3-stage assessment of the impacts of the pandemic¹, and the responses to it, on smallholder farmers and food systems in the Indo-Pacific region. The ACIAR response to the pandemic reflects the Australian Government's policy articulated in *Partnerships for Recovery – Australia's COVID-19 Development Response*². An initial rapid assessment (Stage 1) was followed by an indepth report, *COVID-19 and food systems in the Indo-Pacific: an assessment of vulnerabilities, impacts and opportunities for action* (ACIAR Technical Report 96) that included case studies in 5 partner countries/regions (Stage 2). Stage 3 comprises 4 small projects further investigating particular areas of impact that were started in 2020-21 and will be completed in 2021.

The pandemic has transformed our modes of operation. The most notable changes have been in the areas of operation of our Country Network where our locally based staff and in-country partners have taken a leading role in maintaining and implementing field work. Many of our capacity building activities are now delivered online. Pre-COVID, Australian scientists travelled extensively to partner countries undertaking ACIAR-funded research, travelled regionally within partner countries, and scientists from partner countries in training travelled to Australia to participate in our capacity building programs. With international borders likely to remain restricted, we will continue reshaping our traditional operating models.

While a global crisis accelerates this remodelling, it also presents new opportunities to experiment with and identify new technologies and new modalities to achieve our purpose more efficiently and effectively. During 2021-22, we will continue to revise and adapt our programs.

Capacity building is an intrinsic factor of many of the research projects we broker and support. This ensures that the people we work with have the skills, resources and knowledge to sustain new initiatives, systems and approaches, so our investment leads to lasting change. In 2021-22, ACIAR will continue formal and informal capacity building activities. We will continue to deliver our fellowships in ways modified and adapted, some online and some in country, to ensure success within the restrictions placed on Australia and partner countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1 Food systems security, resilience and emerging risks in the Indo-Pacific in the context of COVID-19: a rapid assessment. ACIAR Technical Report No. 95.

2 Partnerships for Recovery – Australia's COVID-19 Development Response

Planning for the next 4 years

Through ACIAR partnerships, we will continue to grow the knowledge base for farming and food systems, and in turn, improve livelihoods of smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters in our partner countries. Along the way, we will introduce new technologies, risk management and capabilities to Australian agriculture and agricultural sciences, generating a very high return on public investment.

This corporate plan outlines our work in 3 key areas.

- 1. Global research collaborations** – We develop and foster partnerships and relationships with other international research and development agencies, an integral partner being CGIAR. We also develop and foster partnerships with development donors and the private sector, to pursue shared goals and to ensure that ACIAR-funded research results get implemented at scale.
- 2. Bilateral and regional research projects** – We generate knowledge from ACIAR projects and programs to empower smallholders, extension agents, scientists and policymakers to take on the intersecting challenges of growing more and healthier food and reducing poverty, using less land, water and energy.
- 3. Scientific and policy capacity-building activities** – We identify and establish opportunities for individuals and institutions in partner countries to boost technical, policy and management skills in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and management of land and water resources.

In 2021–22 and onwards, ACIAR will continue to develop long-term agreements for research collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region. In most countries and regions, these agreements will put into effect a program of research collaboration that is more consolidated geographically and thematically. The agreements will also detail the intent for co-investment by some countries. We will continue to maintain permanent representation in 10 countries.

Continuous review and improvement

ACIAR has a long-standing tradition of assessing the impact of our research investments. Systemic ex-post economic impact assessments have been conducted on research investments commissioned from the late 1980s through to the present day. The impact of our work is monitored at project and portfolio level, to understand the impact of our achievements and guide future investment. As outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018 – 2027, we continue to build the organisational learning culture, broaden the range of impacts ACIAR is able to report on and improve our ability to assess and communicate performance and results at the portfolio level.

To better align with the vision outlined in the ACIAR 10-year strategy, we will establish a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Advisory Panel that will play a critical advisory role of the development and implementation of the new ACIAR performance and results framework and evaluation protocols.

The *ACIAR Gender Equity Policy and Strategy 2017–2022* has proven influential in the design and implementation of our research activities with partners, and our own internal organisation. Many ACIAR projects now work towards improving women's access to resources and decision making, as a direct route to reducing poverty and boosting food security at family, community and societal levels. In 2021–22, we will reconfirm our commitment to gender equity through redrafting our gender equity policy to meet current expectations and introduce innovative practices that foster gender equality.

Opportunities ahead

In the international arena, ACIAR is a highly respected partner in agricultural research-for-development. The year ahead presents several opportunities for ACIAR to contribute and influence global discussions on food security and climate change, including the United Nation (UN) Food Systems Summit. ACIAR plans to share tangible examples of game-changing Australian innovation and investment that, with the right partnerships in place, can be scaled for significant impact globally.

ACIAR represents Australia in the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases and since March 2021 and is the chair of the GRA Council for one year. Through chairing the alliance, ACIAR will share Australian expertise in climate science in agriculture. The alliance of 65 countries acknowledges the significant challenge of meeting a dramatic increase in global food demand, while reducing the contribution of the agriculture sector to greenhouse gas emissions. The focus of the alliance is to foster research collaboration, and we will facilitate leading Australian researchers playing an important role in the alliance through ACIAR-supported projects.

Climate change deeply affects our partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region, through impacts on food systems, livelihoods and environments. Consistent with our 10-year strategy, ACIAR launched a new Climate Change Program in 2020-21, with a sharpened focus on transformational adaptation. Through this new program, ACIAR will participate in the UN Conference of the Parties on Climate Change in November 2021 (COP26).

Australia's support for international agricultural research centres was embedded in our enabling legislation, and funding to these centres is managed by ACIAR. During 2021-22, ACIAR will continue its involvement with CGIAR, the world's largest agricultural innovation network, dedicated to reducing rural poverty, increasing food and nutrition security for human health and improving natural resource systems and ecosystem services.

As with previous years, this coming year will see our very hands-on involvement in the One CGIAR reform process continue. We will continue our 8-year relationship with our sister organisation in Canada, the International Development Research Centre, through co-investments in food security in Africa, in launching a new program on the critical issue of food loss, and in developing a new co-investment focused on zoonotic diseases in South-East Asia.



Purpose

The purpose of ACIAR is to contribute to reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of many in the Indo-Pacific region through more productive and sustainable agriculture emerging from collaborative international research.

Our purpose reflects the commitment of the Australian Government to promote Australia's national interests by contributing to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction in our region, with a focus on economic diplomacy and women's economic empowerment. The work of ACIAR is part of Australia's broader development assistance program, supporting research collaboration while emphasising individual and institutional capacity building and private sector-led development, targeted at the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors.

Our mission and vision are derived from purpose. We work with public and private research institutions to improve the productivity and sustainability of agricultural systems and the resilience of food systems in partner countries. International agricultural partnerships are at the heart of our work. Our partnership model and areas of work have evolved strategically since the establishment of ACIAR in 1982.

Our medium-term planning is guided by the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, which sets out 6 high-level strategic objectives to guide and inform our partnerships and research programs. These objectives are consistent with the Australian Government's development assistance policy and the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development.

Our work provides smallholders, communities, government agencies and private enterprises with the knowledge and skills to improve livelihoods dependent on agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

The collaborative international programs and partnerships underpinning ACIAR-supported research also serve to improve Australian scientific capabilities and the productivity and sustainability of agricultural systems in Australia. Improved technologies and practices identified and developed through ACIAR research programs often address the shared challenges of all farmers in the Indo-Pacific region, Australia included.

Mission

To achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems, for the benefit of developing countries and Australia, through international agricultural partnerships

Vision

ACIAR looks to a world where poverty has been reduced and the livelihoods of many improved through more productive and sustainable agriculture emerging from collaborative international research

The purpose of ACIAR in relation to our enabling legislation and strategic objectives

<p>ENABLING LEGISLATION</p> <p><i>Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982</i></p>	<p>AUSTRALIAN AID POLICY</p> <p>Australian Aid </p>	<p>2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS </p>
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PURPOSE

To contribute to reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of many in the Indo-Pacific region through more productive and sustainable agriculture emerging from collaborative international research

ACIAR 10-YEAR STRATEGY 2018-2027

<p>ACIAR brokers and invests in research partnerships in developing countries in the Indo-Pacific region to build knowledge to support crucial development objectives</p>	<p>ACIAR works to ensure that its research-for-development programs are equitable, inclusive and empowering</p>
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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

<p>1</p> <p>FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY REDUCTION</p>  <p>Improving food security and reducing poverty among smallholder farmers and rural communities</p>	<p>2</p> <p>NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE</p>  <p>Managing natural resources and producing food more sustainably, adapting to climate variability and mitigating climate change</p>	<p>3</p> <p>HUMAN HEALTH AND NUTRITION</p>  <p>Enhancing human nutrition and reducing risks to human health</p>	<p>4</p> <p>GENDER EQUITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT</p>  <p>Improving gender equity and empowerment of women and girls</p>	<p>5</p> <p>INCLUSIVE VALUE CHAINS</p>  <p>Fostering more inclusive agrifood and forestry value chains, engaging the private sector where possible</p>	<p>6</p> <p>CAPACITY BUILDING</p>  <p>Building scientific and policy capability within our partner countries</p>
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Performance framework

Prepared as part of the Enhanced Commonwealth Performance Framework, this corporate plan is the primary planning document for ACIAR for the 2021–22 to 2024–25 period and forms the basis for our annual performance statement.

The Australian Government seeks to achieve benefits for the Australian community (outcomes) primarily through programs delivered by government entities. Our work is framed by one Australian Government outcome and delivered through one Commonwealth program. The ACIAR Corporate Plan 2021–22 sets out how ACIAR intends to achieve its purpose for the 4-year period of this plan.

The relationship between ACIAR Portfolio Budget Statements, Corporate Plan and Annual Performance Statement

Portfolio Budget Statements	Outcome 1	
	To achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems, for the benefit of developing countries and Australia, through international agricultural research and training partnerships	
	Program 1	
	International agricultural research-for-development for more productive and sustainable agriculture	
Corporate Plan	Purpose	
	To contribute to reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of many in the Indo-Pacific region through more productive and sustainable agriculture emerging from collaborative international research	
	Performance criteria	Target
	Delivery of programs in line with the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » global research collaborations » bilateral and regional research projects through 10 research programs » scientific and policy capacity building activities 	Through annual project progress reports, mid- and end-project reviews, long-term adoption studies and impact pathway analyses, case studies (quantitative and qualitative), and financial activity indicators, as appropriate to each performance criteria, ACIAR will measure the extent to which these criteria are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » exceeding expectations » meeting expectations » not meeting expectations
Annual Performance Statement	Report achievement of targets set for performance criteria	

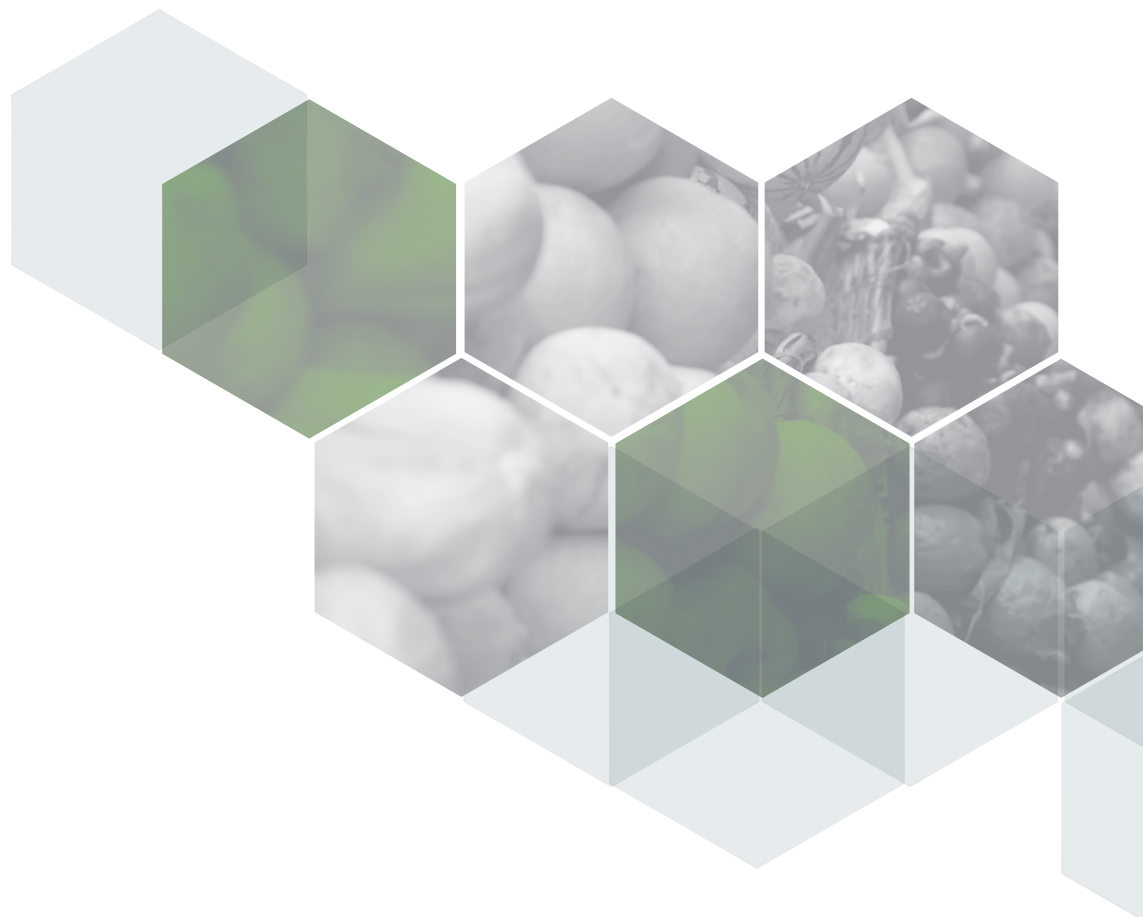
Key activities

To achieve our purpose of contributing to the reduction of poverty and the improvement of livelihoods through more productive and sustainable agriculture emerging from collaborative international research, our work has 3 key activities.

For the period of this corporate plan, 2021-22 to 2024-25, ACIAR plans its functions and work in 3 key areas.

1. Global research collaborations
2. Bilateral and regional research projects
3. Scientific and policy capacity-building activities

Our key activities broadly remain similar to previous years' work; however, our programs and processes do undergo continual review, improvement and development to accommodate the changing environment in which we work. In particular, while ACIAR remains committed to its core business of activity and international partnerships, the way our work is conducted has changed significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



1. Global research collaborations

Recognising that agricultural research is an international enterprise, ACIAR fosters and manages global research collaborations with multilateral partners ranging from international agricultural research centres through to privately funded foundations.

ACIAR manages Australia's investment in the international agricultural research system, as mandated by the ACIAR Act. The major investment is in CGIAR, the world's largest global agricultural innovation network that comprises 15 international agricultural research centres and 11,000 staff, working in approximately 70 countries.

Australia is among the larger investors in CGIAR, with ACIAR staff involved in the highest levels of governance of the CGIAR system, and Australian scientists prominent in the leadership and governance of the 15 CGIAR centres. In addition to the CGIAR system, ACIAR also supports several other international-scale organisations and networks.

Our investment in these multilateral collaborations gives Australia 'a seat at the table'. Through these investments we seek to maintain a strong, innovative voice in international agricultural research and contribute to maintaining a coordinated partnership approach to addressing challenges in global food systems.

Additionally, ACIAR establishes programs with other investors in international agricultural research, from the public and private sector. These partnerships may be built on shared design and management of programs between all contributing donors, such as the *Cultivate Africa's Future Fund* program (*CultiAF*) and the new *Food Loss Research Program* co-funded with Canada's International Development Research Centre. Alternatively, there are partnerships where a donor will co-fund an ACIAR project, and ACIAR is responsible for the management of the project, such as projects managed by ACIAR under a Record of Understanding with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

2. Bilateral and regional research projects

ACIAR works with scientists in Australia and partner countries to improve the livelihoods and opportunities of smallholders in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors. Our core business is to identify research priorities collaboratively with partner countries and broker research partnerships to use science and technology to address those priorities.

Our priorities and portfolio of work are guided by 6 high-level objectives, which are articulated in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027. The work of the ACIAR Research Programs is managed around key agricultural sectors (crops, fisheries, forestry, horticulture and livestock), as well as the science to sustain the resource base (soil and land management, water and climate change) and the science to generate economic and social benefit (agribusiness and social systems).

Our research portfolio evolves in response to new research opportunities enabled by new knowledge and technologies, and in response to new research and development imperatives. We work closely with our collaborators to determine and monitor the achievement of project milestones. The impact of our work is monitored at project and portfolio level, to understand the impact of our achievements and guide future investment.

Relationships with our collaborators and in-country partners change as the economic and social circumstances of smallholders and their communities change; as partner countries undergo rural transformation and urbanisation; and as partner countries develop more capability in agricultural, fisheries and forestry research. Similarly, our approach to research prioritisation and partnership brokering changes with time, to deliver research projects consistent with jointly agreed priorities, needs and capabilities.

COVID-19 has impacted the way that our current project portfolio is delivered and priorities for future research. We continue to work closely with project teams to adapt how they work to deliver project outcomes in the context of travel restrictions and other disruptions from COVID-19.

3. Scientific and policy capacity-building activities

ACIAR facilitates formal and informal activities and opportunities to build the scientific and policy capacity of individuals, organisations and institutions involved in agricultural research-for-development in the Indo-Pacific region.

The capacity building activities comprise a diverse suite of activities focusing on leadership and career development, as well as supporting post-graduate studies, participation in industry events and networking opportunities. The capacity-building activities are devised and implemented according to our Capacity Building Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework.

COVID-19 is significantly impacting the delivery of many of our capacity-building activities, mainly due to travel restrictions to Australia preventing face-to-face participation in our fellowship programs. While some activities are postponed, others are delivered online or in our partner countries.

A number of formal capacity building activities are well-established, highly regarded and ongoing, such as the John Allwright Fellowship for postgraduate training and the John Dillon Fellowship providing intensive career development training.

In 2021-22, the John Dillon Fellowship will be delivered in 2 cohorts: the first in the Philippines and the second in Vietnam. The first 2 cohorts of the Meryl Williams Fellowship, which is a program designed to assist female agricultural researchers to take on greater leadership roles within their organisations, are continuing with online meetings, mentoring and learning activities. When travel restrictions ease, fellows will undertake additional training and networking activities in Australia.

Additionally, ACIAR works with past fellows in their home countries to build strong alumni programs to support continuous capacity building to meet self-identified needs and to create a network of professionals who support excellence in agricultural research-for-development. The ACIAR Alumni Program has been strengthened through the delivery of a strategy that includes a new online engagement platform known as ACIAR 360, which continues to grow in membership and engagement. ACIAR will implement ACIAR Learn, an online learning management system that provides training modules for ACIAR alumni and project staff.

Capacity building is also a key component of our portfolio of bilateral and regional research projects, where bespoke capacity building approaches deliver explicit support to individuals and organisations, which is adapted to individual, organisational and country circumstances. Based on the 2021 review of the ACIAR portfolio of research projects from an organisational capacity building lens, we will assess whether we are deploying capacity development approaches that leave legacies with our partner organisations. Key to the analysis is a recognition that through long-standing partnerships, ACIAR develops trusted relationships throughout the region. It is these relationships that will allow for more effective capacity building approaches into the future.

ACIAR regions and partner countries

South Asia

- 16 Bangladesh
- 17 India
- 18 Nepal
- 19 Pakistan
- 20 Sri Lanka

Eastern and Southern Africa

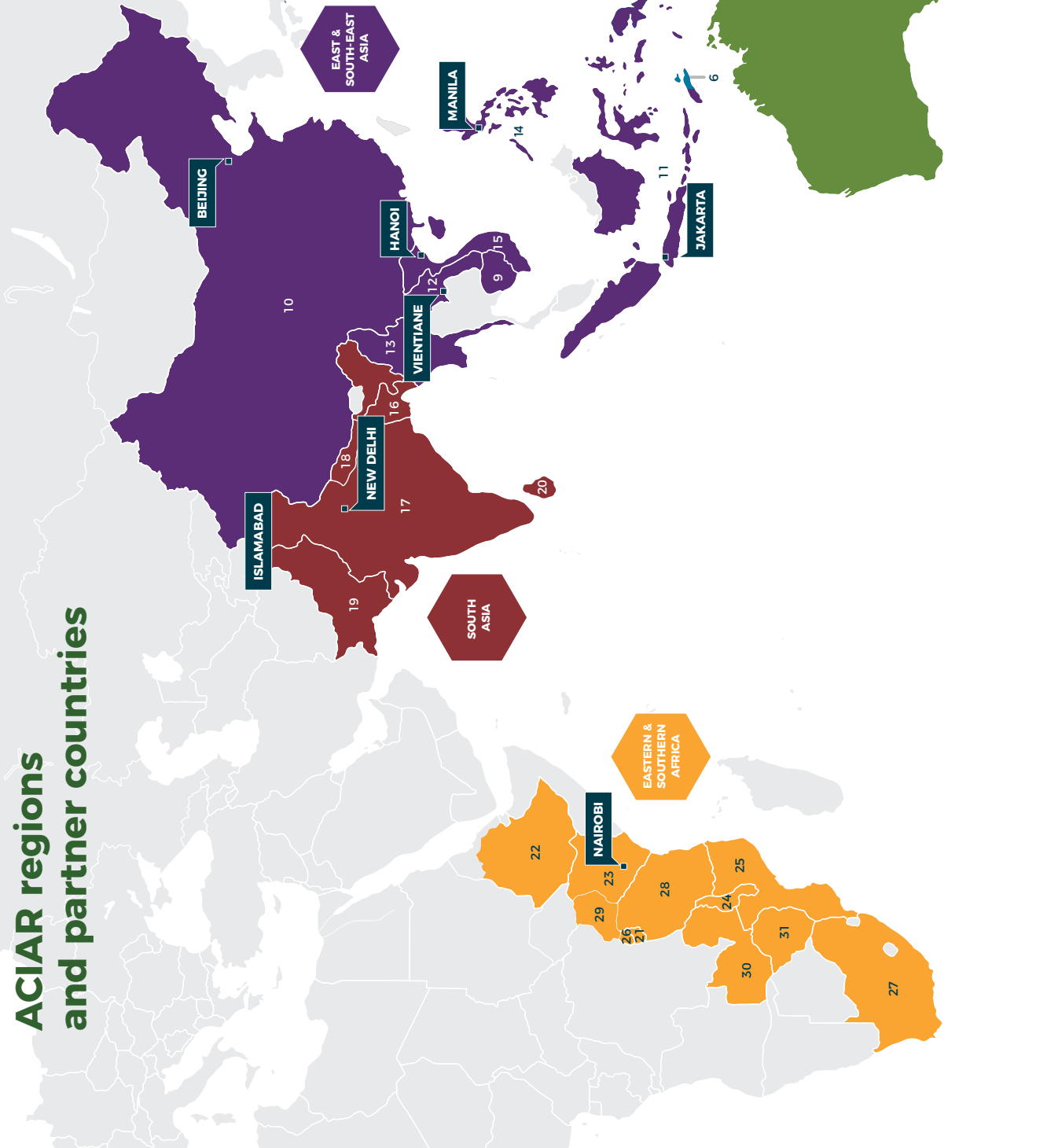
- 21 Burundi
- 22 Ethiopia
- 23 Kenya
- 24 Malawi
- 25 Mozambique
- 26 Rwanda
- 27 South Africa
- 28 Tanzania
- 29 Uganda
- 30 Zambia
- 31 Zimbabwe

Pacific

- 1 Fiji
- 2 Kiribati
- 3 Papua New Guinea
- 4 Samoa
- 5 Solomon Islands
- 6 Timor-Leste
- 7 Tonga
- 8 Vanuatu

East and South-East Asia

- 9 Cambodia
- 10 China
- 11 Indonesia
- 12 Laos
- 13 Myanmar
- 14 Philippines
- 15 Vietnam



■ ACIAR country office

Operating context

Environment

Our partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region continue to undergo rapid social, economic and political change. International trends identified by the Australian Government *Foreign Policy White Paper 2017* have intensified in recent years and are changing the way economies and societies work. Overlaying this are very substantial health and economic challenges that our partner countries continue to face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Global trends affecting our region include competing forces of globalisation versus trade protectionism and a shift in geo-political power that is without precedent in Australia's modern history. Interwoven with social, economic and political change at global and regional levels, our partner countries grapple with the complex and intersecting challenges of growing more food and reducing poverty, while using less land, water and energy. Factors that have a direct influence on these challenges include major technological advances in food production, rising urbanisation, increasing globalisation of agri-food chains, climate change, increasing challenges to food safety and biosecurity, and a natural resource base under great stress.

These challenges are intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which will have impacts for years to come. At the outset of 2020-21, the pandemic was amplifying existing vulnerabilities and exposing new risks in food systems at local, national and regional levels. Also, we bear in mind that international experts and agencies have highlighted the potential risk of a global food crisis.

Understanding that we operate in a challenging and dynamic environment, and acknowledging there are unique research priorities within each country, ACIAR actively maintains strong in-country partnerships to ensure we can respond to the rapidly changing regional and local challenges and opportunities.

Our international relationships are managed by our in-country staff at 10 locations in our working region. Specifically, since the start of the 2020-21 year, these staff have monitored our key partnerships and have plans in place to recalibrate them as key agencies emerge from pandemic restrictions.

When addressing high-level change in our working environment, ACIAR seeks counsel from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is advised on these matters by the Commission for International Agricultural Research and the Policy Advisory Council. ACIAR operates in 31 countries, in 4 regions:

- » Pacific
- » East and South-East Asia
- » South Asia
- » Eastern and Southern Africa.

For the period covered by this corporate plan, 2021-22 to 2024-25, there are specific features and issues that will shape the operating environment within our regions, which are highlighted in the following sections of this plan. However, post COVID-19 across all regions, ACIAR will need to devise and test innovative modalities for collaboration.

Pacific

Australia's commitment to a more ambitious and intensified engagement with the Pacific region, as part of the *Pacific Step-up*, emphasises the importance of our ongoing and diverse program within the region. Key to that will be a renewed partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC) through which ACIAR will support SPC to deliver strategic regional public goods. These include SPC stewarding the biennial Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry as the premier event drawing global attention to agriculture and forestry in the Pacific region. The Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry provides a forum to showcase recent research and development achievements, create opportunities for regional and international collaboration and bring together regional leaders around implications and opportunities for supporting policy.

Through the period of this corporate plan, ACIAR will start implementing new 10-year strategies for working with the Pacific region. Key features of the plan are listed below.

- » Improving food and nutritional security remains a high priority for all countries in the region. Additionally, the triple burden of food insecurity, malnutrition and a high prevalence of nutrition-related diseases is a new priority for ACIAR.
- » Understanding and addressing the impacts of climate change, natural disasters and COVID-19 on food systems resilience and livelihood security is an increasing priority for many countries in the region.
- » Supporting the strengthening of regional biosecurity capabilities to support the growth of import replacement and export markets, food security and biodiversity conservation.
- » Enabling inter-country collaboration through regional projects, capacity building and supporting a stronger forum for exchange of ideas and experiences through Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry.
- » Implementing a long-term capacity-building strategy targeted at building skills in the sciences related to agriculture is a priority.

ACIAR will develop new 10-year strategies for research collaboration with Papua New Guinea and Pacific island countries.

East and South-East Asia

The East and South-East Asia region is transforming rapidly – economically, socially and politically. Many of our partner countries in the region are developing research capability that creates an opportunity for – indeed necessitates – substantially transformed partnerships with ACIAR, with a strong emphasis on significant co-investment and possibilities for trilateral collaboration within the region. This operating environment brings into focus a number of features for ACIAR.

- » Capitalising on market opportunities that can transform smallholder systems as the region undergoes rapid urbanisation and globalisation of agrifood chains.
- » Challenging issues related to acute poverty still affect some countries and some regions within countries. These issues require very specific targeting for research collaboration between those partner countries and ACIAR.
- » Understanding and addressing the impacts of climate change on food systems and livelihood security is a very high priority for all partner countries in the region.
- » Enabling regional research collaboration through specific projects and supporting the Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutes (APAARI).

During the period of this corporate plan, ACIAR will explore trilateral research collaborations with China.

South Asia

South Asia has the highest concentration of poor people in the world, with more than 500 million people living in extreme poverty. Half of the population of the region depends on agriculture for their livelihoods. Agriculture remains the key driver of economic growth in most countries and is under threat from a declining natural resource base, especially soils and water, and climate change. This operating environment brings into focus a number of features for ACIAR.

- » Understanding and addressing the impacts of climate change on food systems and livelihood security is an increasing priority for partner countries in the region.
- » Developing sustainable and equitable water management systems at the farm, community and institutional level is an ongoing priority for partner countries in South Asia.
- » Intensifying cropping systems, climate resilience, and soil and water management issues continue to be a priority of partner countries, and a focus of ACIAR collaborations in the region.

During the period of this corporate plan, ACIAR will start implementing a new 10-year strategy with Bangladesh.

Eastern and Southern Africa

Agriculture typically accounts for 30–40% of the GDP of African countries and more than 70% of the continent's poor live in rural areas. While agriculture remains a key driver of the economic growth required to deliver economic transformation for the rural poor, growth in productivity and production have broadly stagnated in the past decade. Unlocking the potential of Africa's agricultural and food systems requires substantial investment in the agriculture sector and in research to provide the knowledge that underpins growth in agricultural productivity, especially for commercialising smallholder farming:

The ACIAR program with Africa fills a niche not addressed by many donor organisations, that is, agricultural research-for-development. Key features of the region during the period of this plan are listed as follows.

- » Australian dryland and irrigated farming systems and science are highly relevant to much of Africa.
- » Finance to agriculture is flowing but impacts are slowed by a lack of investment in the innovation needed to unlock the potential of smallholder agriculture.
- » Sustainable crop and livestock systems, addressing the impacts of climate change, plant biosecurity and stimulating commercial options for smallholder farmers are a priority in this region.
- » Co-investment with development partners, notably the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC), remains a feature of ACIAR work within the region.

Capability

ACIAR aims to be a valued broker and partner in agricultural research through close working relationships with stakeholders and through the provision of timely and consistent funding support. We promote the development and coordination of regional, national and international agricultural research systems in the Indo-Pacific region.

Since 1982, ACIAR has contributed significantly to improving the productivity and sustainability of agriculture, fisheries and forestry systems in our region. ACIAR maintains and builds on this success through 4 distinct areas of operation.

Each area functions in a unique way but with a common goal of engaging with partners to achieve our purpose. The investment and design of projects, programs and partnerships that make up the ACIAR research portfolio are guided by our high-level strategic objectives and tested against our performance criteria and targets (ACIAR Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22). Activities are conceived, planned and implemented as a result of consultation and input from 4 operational areas, which are:

- A.** Multilateral Collaborations
- B.** Country Partnerships
- C.** Research Programs
- D.** Capacity Building

These are supported by:

- E.** Outreach
- F.** Corporate Services

A. Multilateral Collaborations

Agricultural research is an international enterprise. Australia draws heavily on new knowledge from across the global agricultural innovation system, as well as making our own distinctive contribution to that knowledge base. Our Multilateral Collaborations area builds and manages partnerships with a range of international organisations, institutes and associations engaged in agricultural research and in the delivery of global public goods.

The area implements one of our mandated roles of funding and supporting international agricultural research centres. Multilateral Collaborations manages and develops our partnerships with a range of international and regional organisations – CGIAR being the primary one. ACIAR will continue to work with partners whose objectives and investments align with Australian Government objectives, such as government, private sector and donor organisations, to manage regional programs that enhance knowledge and capacity in partner countries.

B. Country Partnerships

Our Country Partnerships area manages the strategic relationships we have with overseas partner countries and research agencies. This is done largely through 10 country offices across the Indo-Pacific region. These offices (all led by locally engaged staff) support the development and regular recalibration of our bilateral regional relationships. Our in-country office teams play an increasingly important role in enabling research on the ground, providing logistical support for Australian researchers in country, and keeping abreast of emerging local issues that have implications for Australian aid policy and ACIAR research investments at country and regional scales.

The strength of our partnership model is maintained through regular strategy discussions with country partners, consultation with Australian, regional and international research agencies, and continued support of the strategic capabilities of our network of country offices. Post COVID-19, ACIAR will refresh and recalibrate all our key partnerships to ensure that they are responsive to the new dynamics that each agency finds itself in following the pandemic. ACIAR maintains active communication with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and its Heads of Mission, Ambassadors and High Commissioners in partner countries, to ensure alignment with and relevance to Australia's broader aid initiatives and objectives.

C. Research Programs

Our 6 strategic objectives guide the ACIAR Research Programs to ensure we achieve our mission of more productive and sustainable agricultural systems. In order to design and implement a successful research program, our experienced Research Program Managers work with partners to ensure the best possible research is designed to address priority issues. Due to their experience, our Research Program Managers have extensive networks within the industry and are able to bring together the most effective teams to carry out the research.

An important aspect of ACIAR work lies in strategically planning and measuring the impact of our investment in research. Our Portfolio Planning and Impact Evaluation Program is responsible for ongoing development of organisation-wide performance frameworks, and medium and long-term evaluation of our investments. We implement both formal and informal processes to review, assess and learn from the work we do throughout the Indo-Pacific region. This learning builds individual and institutional knowledge from project outputs, as well as enhancing our understanding and our experience to enable continual improvement of the programs that ACIAR develops and supports.

D. Capacity Building

Our Capacity Building area works with individuals and institutions in the Indo-Pacific region to enhance scientific research capability, management, policy and governance. The area facilitates post-graduate and in-service training, and supports project-based capacity building. While most of the activities in the Capacity Building area are well established, feedback and review are continuous to ensure our work meets the changing needs and circumstances of our partners.

While travel restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic continue, focus on and investment in the capacity of in-country partners will be required to continue. New modalities of design and delivery of capacity building programs including a greater focus on online learning will be strengthened.

E. Outreach

Outreach increases the understanding of the impact of Australia's aid investment through ACIAR. Many platforms and channels are used to ensure that audiences in Australia and our partner countries can access, understand and use the outputs of ACIAR-supported projects and programs.

Our outreach strategy maintains its focus on stakeholders, both international and domestic. Tailored communication products and programs extend results of research to targeted groups of decision makers and potential donors in partner countries, the research community and decision makers. Through our website and enhanced social media channels, ACIAR communicates more broadly using video and photography, as well as through improved reports, information sheets and publications. ACIAR connects with key stakeholders through face-to-face and online events.

F. Corporate Services

Corporate Services provides the underpinning business systems and frameworks from 4 departments: Human Resources; Finance, Procurement and Legal; Business Systems; and Overseas Corporate Management.

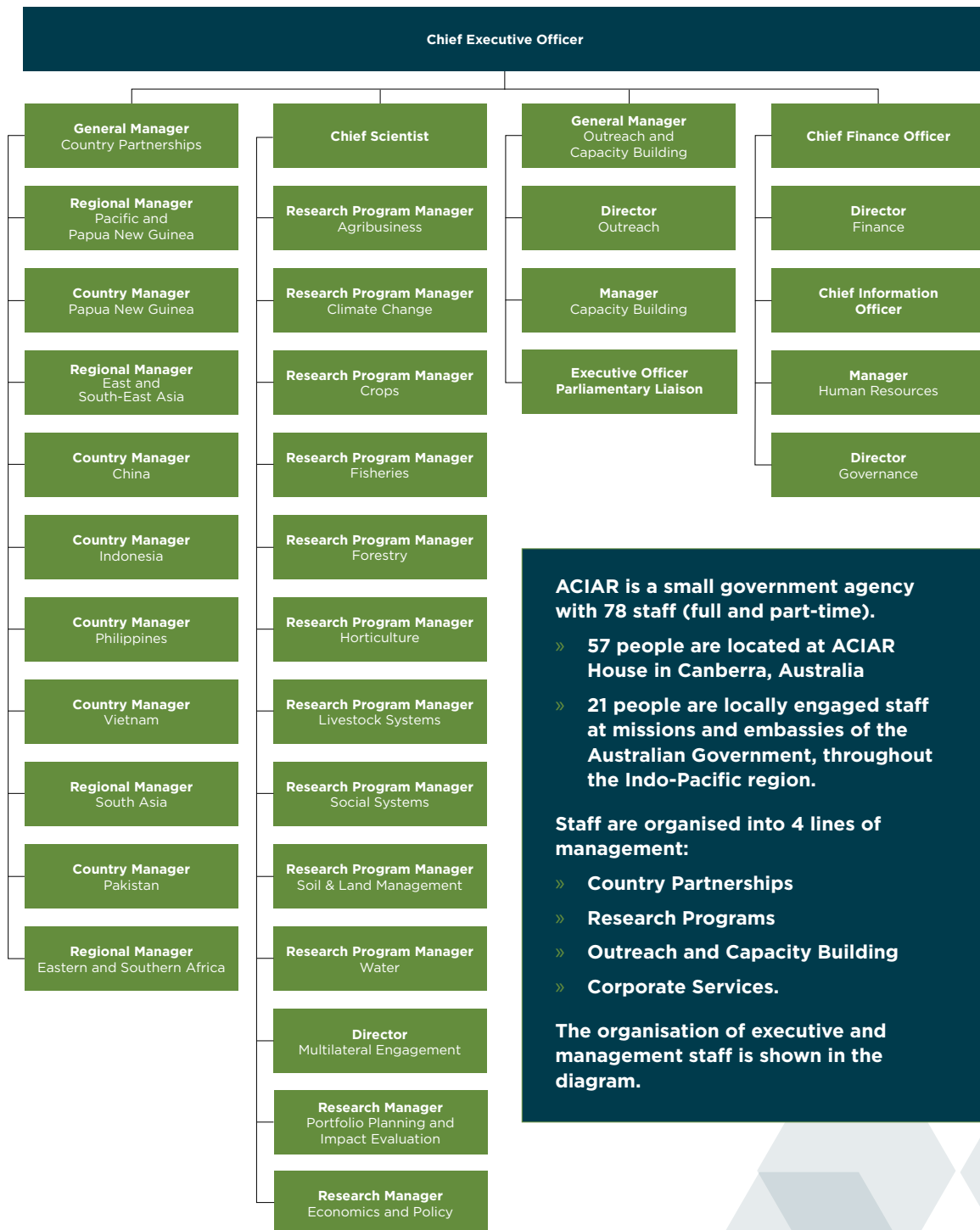
Our capability depends on the values and diversity of individuals within the organisation. Within the workplace, the way staff work, and the development of workplace culture and diversity, are influenced by our values of impartiality, commitment to service, accountability, and respectful and ethical conduct. These values demonstrate our commitment to upholding the APS Values and Code of Conduct.

In 2017, ACIAR introduced its *Gender Equity Policy and Strategy 2017–22*. The internal Gender Committee will review the implementation of the strategy throughout the period of this corporate plan, with a view to redeveloping/refreshing the strategy for a new term based on learning and experience.

We will encompass the ACIAR workplace priorities through the continuing review of the Human Resources Manual and the Work Health and Safety Framework, and consult with all staff to build an inclusive and consultative culture where staff value diversity and have a voice in the process of how systems are governed within ACIAR. ACIAR will continue to encourage development through our individual development, planning and evaluations scheme and engage with young professionals through direct involvement in research projects and early career positions for agricultural graduates in ACIAR.

Continuous enhancements and development of our information and communication technology (ICT) platform (ACIAR Collaborative Environment or ACE) enables global collaboration between staff, research partners and stakeholders. The ACE platform integrates program, project, partnership, finance, procurement, communication and stakeholder management into a single system that enables ACIAR to deliver more effectively and efficient project procurement and management.

Organisational structure 2021-22



ACIAR is a small government agency with 78 staff (full and part-time).

- » 57 people are located at ACIAR House in Canberra, Australia
- » 21 people are locally engaged staff at missions and embassies of the Australian Government, throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

Staff are organised into 4 lines of management:

- » Country Partnerships
- » Research Programs
- » Outreach and Capacity Building
- » Corporate Services.

The organisation of executive and management staff is shown in the diagram.

Risk management

Risk oversight and management systems are essential for ACIAR functions and operations, underpinning the achievement of its purpose. ACIAR ensures that its activities are delivered in scope within schedule, budget and quality requirements, and in a way that reduces the likelihood of preventable risks being realised.

The nature of research and our operating environment mean there are substantial risks that need to be managed. The ACIAR Risk Management Policy and Plan 2021–24 identifies the key strategic risks to ACIAR delivering on its objectives and measures to mitigate these risks. This is a rolling document that is reviewed 6 months prior to its expiry and updated for another 3-year cycle.

The key strategic risks that may prevent ACIAR achieving its objectives are identified as:

1. The safety of our people is compromised due to COVID-19 and threats posed in our operational environments, including conflict and civil disturbance.
2. Project activities severely impacted by global pandemic (or similar global catastrophe), including disruptions to global networks, travel and logistics. Despite the roll-out of vaccine programs in many nations, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to continue in the medium term, with the potential to delay or significantly disrupt research programs.
3. Ineffective management of ACIAR relationships, including those with the Minister's Office, the Secretary and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), research partners, including those with existing and new partners, lead to poor working relationships and impact the ability to effectively deliver the ACIAR mandate.
4. A significant cyber security incident results in the loss and/or exposure of sensitive information or the loss of business-critical systems.
5. Absence of adequate records management systems. Poor information management and recordkeeping practices constrain ability to fulfil organisational priorities and legal obligations.

Risk registers are developed, maintained and owned by key functional groups within the agency. Risk registers are reviewed quarterly by the Executive and the Audit Committee, and updated as necessary.

Noting ongoing investment in systems and processes, and investment in capabilities across the in-country office network, ACIAR has appropriate internal controls in place for the oversight and management of risks, based on sound judgment and the best information available. This supports our capacity to identify, manage and derive maximum benefits from new challenges and opportunities in international agricultural research partnerships.

All ACIAR staff are accountable for good risk management in their workplace and base their approach on an understanding of the likelihood and consequence of risks being realised when considering the impact of uncertainty on delivering ACIAR objectives.

Deteriorating security situations in some countries, generally or in localised regions, present risks for the viability of ACIAR-funded research collaborations. These risks will be actively monitored and managed.

ACIAR will continue to invest in the capability of ACIAR staff to ensure that they are able to manage risk, and that they can engage external expertise when required to assist in effectively managing risks. ACIAR also maintains an active internal audit program to continue to improve its approach to risk management.

Partnerships and engagement

ACIAR is a broker, investor and manager of strategic partnerships that build knowledge and capacity in agricultural research-for-development. To achieve our purpose, we are advised by and work with a diverse range of stakeholders and partners in Australia and in more than 30 countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Area of partnerships and engagement	Partners and stakeholders
<p>We engage with experts and governments to ensure our work is attuned to the needs of our partner countries, embracing new methods and in step with Australian Government policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Australian Government – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade » Commission for International Agricultural Research » Policy Advisory Council
<p>We establish partnerships with Australian and international organisations to jointly address shared priorities in agricultural research-for-development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Australian Government departments, universities » International research-for-development agencies » International agricultural research centres » Private-sector and not-for-profit foundations
<p>We commission technical experts to implement our research portfolio and capacity building programs, according to well-defined priorities and well-developed project scopes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Universities » CSIRO » State and federal government departments » Private-sector specialists and consultants
<p>We facilitate the delivery of new knowledge and technologies via our commissioned research partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Smallholder farmers in partner countries » Small and medium community-based enterprises in partner countries » Australian agricultural industries and farmers
<p>We communicate project news and results to extend the reach of our work, and increase our understanding of the impact of Australia's investment in agricultural research-for-development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Project and program partners » Industry peak bodies » Australian public » International public

Our performance

Our core business is to manage long-term relationships and identify research priorities collaboratively with our partner countries, alongside brokering research partnerships and commissioning research to tackle those priorities.

Throughout the period of this corporate plan, ACIAR will manage projects and establish relationships and programs that contribute to the achievement of our targets in our 3 key areas of work.

1. Global research collaborations
2. Bilateral and regional research projects
3. Scientific and policy capacity-building activities

The impact of ACIAR projects, programs and partnerships is complex to measure, as it involves technological and sociological changes in developing countries in the Indo-Pacific region, which may be realised over many years, even decades, after the original research investment.

ACIAR manages and monitors its investments in research and partnerships to maximise impact and returns. We have a well-established approach for reviewing the performance of research projects, assessing adoption of research results and the subsequent impact at a project level. Together, these enable us to monitor progress and performance across the portfolio, help refine our priorities, learn lessons from current and past projects, and report accurately to our Minister, the Parliament and the Australian public.

The following sections set out the performance indicators and targets for each area of our work that contribute to our annual performance within the Enhanced Commonwealth Performance Framework.

1. Global research collaborations

Our work in global research collaborations enhances Australia's global reputation as a constructive development partner and position Australia to positively influence the international agricultural research agenda.

Work in this area is achieved mainly through:

- » management of Australia's investment in the international agricultural research system, chief among which is CGIAR, as mandated by the ACIAR Act
- » establishment and management of multilateral partnerships with public and private organisations, to facilitate shared objectives or vision.

Our performance is measured by our influence as a donor, through ACIAR representation on governance bodies of our multilateral partners, and the mutual respect and commitment demonstrated in our multilateral partnerships.

Key performance measures for global research collaborations, 2021-22 to 2024-25

Area monitored	Performance indicator	Annual target
Influence as a donor	% of supported multilateral research collaborations in which ACIAR is represented on a governance body	Rated as <i>exceeding expectations</i>
Mutual respect and commitment	% of multilateral financial contributions delivered by the end of the financial year	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
	% of agreed reporting products submitted within agreed time frames	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
	% of multilateral financial contributions delivered within an acceptable range of variation from previous financial year	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>

2. Bilateral and regional research projects

Agricultural research facilitated and implemented by ACIAR and partner countries has benefits at the farm, regional and national levels; and benefits for smallholders, communities and industries. In any one year, there will be approximately 200 ACIAR-supported bilateral and regional research projects underway in the Indo-Pacific region. The research is led by commissioned organisations (universities, CSIRO, state government agencies or private firms) and/or international agricultural research centres, and is a collaboration between project leaders and in-country organisations.

Our performance is measured at the project level through targets for project management and delivery of intended outputs within the project term. We also measure the contribution of our investment to development outcomes, several years after the conclusion of the project.

Key performance measures for bilateral and regional research projects, 2021-22 to 2024-25

Area monitored	Performance indicator	Annual target
Project management	% of annual deliverables submitted on schedule	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
	% of annual and final reports submitted on schedule	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
Delivery of intended project objectives	% of projects concluded during the financial year that rated as good quality or above on the effectiveness criteria in final project reviews	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
	% of projects concluded during the financial year that rated as good quality or above on the gender equity criteria in final project reviews	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
Contribution to development outcomes	% of long-term adoption studies completed during the financial year showing evidence of significant use of identified project outputs by next and/or final users	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
	% of long-term economic impact assessments completed during the financial year showing benefit-cost ratio of 3:1 or above	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>

3. Scientific and policy capacity-building activities

Our work in capacity building facilitates a process of strengthening the abilities of individuals, organisations and systems to undertake agricultural research to advance development outcomes. We work with implementation partners to deliver formal and project-based opportunities for individuals, organisations and institutions to strengthen abilities to undertake agricultural research, influence policy and advance development outcomes.

Our performance is measured at the project level through targets for project management and delivery of intended outputs within the project term. We also measure the contribution of our investment to development outcomes, several years after the conclusion of the project.

Key performance measures for scientific and policy capacity-building activities, 2021-22 to 2024-25

Area monitored	Performance indicator	Annual target
Project management	% of annual deliverables submitted on schedule	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
	% of total participants identifying as women	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
Delivery of intended project objectives	% of total program participants successfully completing	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
	% of participants who self-assess their experience of the program as satisfactory or above at completion	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
Contribution to development outcomes	% of total program alumni profiled in qualitative case-studies annually who are engaged in relevant sectors	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>
	% of total program alumni profiled in qualitative case-studies annually who self-assess the program as a significant contribution to career development	Rated as <i>meeting expectations</i>

List of requirements

This corporate plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of:

- » subsection 35(1) of the PGPA Act
- » the PGPA Rule 2014.

The following table details the requirements met by the *ACIAR Corporate Plan 2021–22* and the page references for each requirement.

Requirement	Page(s)
Introduction	3
» Statement of preparation	2
» Reporting period for which the plan is prepared	2
» Reporting periods covered by the plan	2
Purposes	8
Key activities	11
Operating context	15
» Environment	15
» Capability	18
» Risk management	22
» Partnerships and engagement	23
Performance	24

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