

Measuring research impacts

Expenditure in 2002–03	\$228 685
Expenditure in 2001–02	\$333 000
Expenditure in 2000–01	\$448 552
Proportion of total ACIAR expenditure 2002–03	0.5%

The Impact Assessment Unit (IAU) provides information and commissions impact assessments on past and expected project impacts to support the activities of the research areas of the Centre. This complements the documentation and reporting of 'qualitative' project impacts coordinated by the Communications and Information Services program. While the main focus of the commissioned economic impact assessments continues to be on measuring the dollar returns to agricultural research, during 2002–03 much greater emphasis was given to analysing impacts of projects on poverty reduction.

The unit also seeks to advance methods associated with assessing research impact as well as building the capacity of ACIAR staff and project leaders to identify how agricultural research contributes to improved economic, social and environmental conditions in Australia and in our partner countries. During 2002–03, impact assessments which develop and/or implement 'cutting-edge' methods used for impact assessment were commissioned. This included investment in the DREAM (Dynamic Research Evaluation for Managers) impact assessment tool, and through workshop activities on achieving and measuring impact.

Achievements

Framework for analysis of poverty impacts of ACIAR research

The Centre for International Economics prepared a document that describes an economic analytical framework for analysing the impact of ACIAR projects on poverty. This document clarified the important economic mechanisms that need to be captured in a poverty analysis. It also showed how the underlying framework could be applied to different projects with different levels of data, and indicated where ACIAR's definition of poverty reduction fits into a broader economic framework. References and an overview of where and how poverty impact analysis is taking place in other agencies and research institutions were also included. This study was published in the Impact Assessment Series (no. 19).

Mama Lus Frut Scheme

Wastage of fallen fruit in the small landholder oil palm industry in Papua New Guinea was addressed through the Mama Lus Frut scheme, first introduced in 1997. The scheme allows participants to harvest this wastage, providing a valuable income source. A study commissioned to assess the contribution of the Mama Lus Frut Scheme to poverty reduction concluded that the scheme has increased the incomes of oil-palm producers, many of whom struggled to stay above the poverty line. This has resulted in increased expenditure on items such as food,

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clothing and education as well as the empowerment of women through a greater degree of economic independence. The analysis was published as Number 20 in the Impact Assessment Series.

Impact assessment of ACIAR projects on foot and mouth disease

In October 2002 a study was commissioned to assess the economic benefits of the foot and mouth disease (FMD) projects supported by ACIAR over a 12-year period in Southeast Asia. The assessment showed that the gains attributable to ACIAR-improved FMD diagnostic capability are \$6.5 million in net present value terms over the next 30 years. With a total cost of \$6.1 million (in 2000–01 dollars), the benefit–cost ratio was around 1.7:1. A major benefit for Australia has been the development of diagnostic and FMD management skills within the team of collaborating Australian scientists. Given the substantial economic cost an FMD outbreak would impose on the Australian meat industry – estimated to be \$2.7 billion in the first year alone – enhanced FMD management would generate substantial economic returns, in terms of losses avoided. This impact assessment was published as Number 21 in the Impact Assessment Series.

Poverty analysis of the banana skipper project

A previous study of the economic benefits of work to control the banana skipper butterfly, a pest of banana crops in PNG, was extended to cover the impact of the project on poverty. The analysis showed that the banana skipper control program has increased effective incomes across all income levels of banana producers and consumers. The overall effect has not lifted people out of poverty, but the importance of bananas as a subsistence food crop means that these people are not as poor as before the project. This impact assessment was published in IAU's Impact Assessment Series (no. 22).

Assessment of ACIAR's bluetongue projects

Bovine ephemeral fever (bluetongue) has been the subject of a number of projects aimed at reducing the incidence of this disease, reported in sheep in China since the 1950s. During epidemics, prevalence of the disease reaches 30 per cent, with mortality rates of 1–2 per cent. The existence of the disease had been a major barrier to trade with China. Additionally, Malaysia was importing sheep from Australia throughout the 1990s, but importation of Australian sheep has been hampered by bluetongue-related deaths reported in 1987, 1988 and 1989. To gain an understanding of the impact of these projects a study assessing their worth was commissioned. The ACIAR ephemeral fever/bluetongue projects have resulted in a net present value of \$4.6 million, with a benefit–cost ratio of 2.3:1. This impact assessment will be published in 2003–04 as part of the IAU's Impact Assessment Series.

Capacity-building workshops

Three-day research evaluation workshops were held in conjunction with the ACIAR training program for project leaders in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, and at Los Baños in the Philippines. The workshops demonstrated to attendees how to evaluate the likely and actual impacts of agricultural research. A demonstration of the DREAM model was also given at each of the workshops.

