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# partners

IN RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT



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## About Partners

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**Front cover:** Woman harvests coffee in Vietnam. Photo: Giang Pham/CARE International in Vietnam.

**Back cover:** Meat for sale at a wet market.



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## From the CEO

Professor Andrew Campbell

**While the world, including our region, is still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been very heartening for ACIAR and our partners to be able to resume international travel – with risk management measures in place of course.**

I was very pleased in early June to be back in the field in Lao PDR, seeing the scale-out of our long-running fish passages research led by Prof Lee Baumgartner of Charles Sturt University, being implemented by the Lao Government, funded by the Asian Development Bank. It is very rewarding to see adoption of our research being funded by the large development banks with strong policy buy-in from partner countries.

After a very productive few days in and around Vientiane, it was a great pleasure to join fellow Commissioners and colleagues in Vietnam, the focus of this edition of Partners. The articles here give a small sample of a rich history of investment and partnership over almost thirty years.



ACIAR CEO Professor Andrew Campbell with Australia's Ambassador to Vietnam Robyn Mudie following a ceremony in which the two were awarded medals for contributions to Vietnam's agriculture and rural development. Photo: ACIAR.


The Commission for International Agricultural Research and Policy Advisory Council (PAC) enjoyed a very intense week of field visits and partner discussions in the Mekong Delta and Hanoi. The Mekong Delta has long been a rice and fruit bowl for Vietnam, and well beyond. Most of Vietnam's rice and fruit exports are grown here.

The Mekong Delta is a global hotspot for the impact of climate change on food security and livelihoods. A combination of rising sea levels, landscape subsidence from groundwater pumping, and reductions in sediment coming into the delta because of upstream dams and development, is seeing creeping saltwater intrusion. This creates consequent changes in farming systems, notably from rice to shrimp farming. In a very low, flat landscape, net 'sinking' of around 50 mm per year will see profound changes every decade, which is a confronting challenge for farming systems research.

The Commission and PAC were struck by both the magnitude of the problem, but also the strength of ACIAR research partnerships, and the calibre of the young scientists from Can Tho University and other research partners.

The Commission and PAC also met with senior government leaders in Hanoi. Australian Ambassador to Vietnam Robyn Mudie and myself were honoured to be awarded medals by the Vietnamese Government for contributions to agriculture and rural development, reflecting great work of many ACIAR colleagues and partners over 30 years.

Immediately prior to our visit, ACIAR General Manager, Country Partnerships, Dr Peter Horne led a partnership health check with Dr Douang, Vice-Minister of the Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), which confirmed that the MARD-ACIAR partnership is in great shape, ready to advance into genuine co-investment, in co-designed programs, around jointly agreed priorities.

This is indicative of our overall partnership with Vietnam, which is highly productive for the benefit of both countries, as reflected in the articles in this edition of Partners. 

**Professor Andrew Campbell**  
Chief Executive Officer, ACIAR





# Knowing what women think, feel and do: a pathway to equity

Could drawing a picture of your spouse or trying to remember what they are wearing, or mapping out what you do in 24 hours and role-playing, work as strategies to improve gender equity? Researchers on a project supported by ACIAR and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have demonstrated that these activities can do just that.

Ms Nơí works in a coffee plantation in northern Vietnam. She has participated in gender research-for-development activities delivered to meet local, cultural and language needs. Photo: Giang Pham, CARE international in Vietnam.

## Key points

- 1** An ACIAR-supported project is helping the contribution of women working in coffee production in northern Vietnam to be recognised and valued.
- 2** Using social tools and games to build a shared understanding of the role and value of women is proving effective at improving gender equity.
- 3** The in-county team is tailoring the translation of gender equity ideas into local dialects and making training culturally appropriate, helping to support localisation in research-for-development.





And it is one step the project is taking to determine how women working along food value chains and women professionals working in related research can be empowered.

The research team behind the project has analysed a suite of tools used to ensure that Thai ethnic minority women who farm Arabica coffee in the mountainous areas of northern Vietnam are respected and treated fairly and that their contributions in the household and on the farm are valued and respected.

CARE International, the in-country project partner, specialises in gender and development but wanted the Australian researchers to help find evidence to show how and why gender relations are improved and whether women are empowered or not when specific tools are used.

### Gender-inclusive training

The project takes a transformative gender approach using Gender Action Learning System and Social Analysis and Action tools to guide critical discussions on social norms and activities in producer households, groups and communities to achieve progress in gender equity.

Using this approach, 5 “gender dialogue” training sessions were conducted with ethnic minority Thai men and women. Dialogue topics included challenging men’s roles; challenging gendered stereotypes and social norms; labour division and gender-based violence; intra-household power and decision-making; and sharing feelings.

Methods of gender transformative approaches used in these dialogues included a 24-hour activity clock, role playing, problem tree analysis, couple dialogues, storytelling and drawing activities.

These methods proved eye-opening for both men and women in the communities. After seeing his wife’s 24-hour activity clock for which she worked with a research assistant to detail all the paid and unpaid labour that she does (including family and caring responsibilities and looking after small livestock), one male participant said in the training: ‘Oh, god! My wife works so much and has no time to rest; I [didn’t] know until now. I usually come home from work, just lie down, watch movies and play with my phone and wait [for] my wife [to call me] for dinner. I have to change.’

A husband and wife took part in the drawing exercise, sitting on the floor, back-to-back, facing in opposite directions. They had to describe what their partner looked like and what they were wearing to see how attentive they were. It’s a fun activity that often elicits laughter.

The wife, in this case, said: ‘I feel very emotional. This is the first time after 10 years of marriage that my husband listens to me and also the first time he holds my hand and says such things.’ Minutes earlier, the husband was saying he really respected his wife and showed gratitude for everything that his wife did for their family.

‘Through those sorts of participatory activities, CARE is facilitating what can be quite difficult or even non-existent conversations between husband and wife,’ says Dr Rochelle Spencer, the project leader and founding co-director of the Centre for Responsible Citizenship and Sustainability at Murdoch University.

‘From there you can actually start to really help the community at the household level guide what kind of changes they want to have brought about by these changed social relations.’

As part of their data collection, the researchers gather all the clocks, drawings, sticky notes and other resources generated by the community. They are analysed and can end up being turned into tools to raise awareness and bring about social change.

The researchers start challenging entrenched patriarchal social norms about gender roles in the household (such as who controls finances) by reminding the men of their own realisation that their wives are capable, hardworking partners.

‘By opening up a safe space for people to talk about the experiences of women farmers that are often taken for granted, assumptions about the roles of men and women are challenged, and that’s how we begin to catalyse change,’ says Dr Spencer.





## Empowering women researchers

Supporting female junior social scientists to develop their abilities for gender analysis has been key to the project. The COVID-19 pandemic threatened to put a dint in progress but in fact it facilitated an unexpected and welcome change.

‘During COVID, localisation became a reality,’ says Dr Spencer. The Australian researchers took a remote support role, providing proper resourcing to support in-country partners so as to not over-burden them with the increased research responsibility.’ For instance, funds were transferred to partners to lead local implementation while Australian researchers provided online training and remote support for fieldwork through evening debriefs and online sense-making workshops with the research teams.

For Dr Huong Ngo Thi Thanh, a Policy Researcher at CARE International in Vietnam, the added responsibility was much welcomed. ‘I have really felt more empowered,’ she says. ‘Admittedly, at the beginning, I was a bit worried about whether I could do it or not. What if I made the wrong decision? However, after some time and with support from the Australian researchers, I gradually felt more confident.’ As a result, Dr Ngo has been more proactive in coordinating activities, foreseeing challenges and solving problems, both technical and logistical in nature. ‘Personally, I found the open communication and frequent updates with the Australian team to be very important so that I could get their guidance in time to ensure quality for the project,’ she says.



Thai ethnic minority women who farm Arabica coffee in the mountainous areas of northern Vietnam participated in a variety of activities designed to build awareness and appreciation for their contributions. Photo: Giang Pham, CARE International in Vietnam.

## The power of language

Strong collaboration between the Vietnamese and Australian researchers is key to the project’s success.

Feminism in Vietnam doesn’t necessarily have the same connotation or history as it does in many developed countries. Dr Spencer recalls their first in-country training session on Feminist Participatory Action Research. The Vietnamese translators animatedly discussed finding the correct and appropriate word to describe “feminist” where all the participants became involved in spirited debate. ‘We quickly became aware a key concept underpinning our project was somewhat contentious and problematic for gender analysis training,’ says Dr Spencer.

It turns out that the literal translation of “feminist” or “feminism” into Vietnamese sounds heavy and violent, which easily fosters misunderstandings in local communities, explains Dr Ngo. ‘For those who are unfamiliar with the terminology, they might imagine feminists as people who are very strong [and] violent and do not respect good traditional practices,’ she says. ‘That perspective might negatively impact our work. Of course, we still use that translation, but we try to frame it in more friendly terms when speaking with the public.’

The translation of “feminist” becomes much more challenging when working with ethnic minorities, as this project does, because the mainstream Vietnamese translation does not exist in the many different dialects of the ethnic minorities.

‘So we usually use Vietnamese words and explain their meaning,’ says Dr Ngo. ‘The vocabulary we use to explain feminism is new to our beneficiaries so in our training, we created the context and situation where the words appear and are used so they can understand its meaning better.’

Tailoring language and the expression of ideas to suit a cultural context have proven effective strategies to communicate gender equity concepts to local communities. Giving voice and words to the idea of gender equity within a culture is an important step in people increasing their understanding of the issue and taking steps towards improving gender equity in a way that resonates with local men and women, as have the other strategies used by the project team. Together these are opening the opportunity for the development of self-directed strategies to maximise the involvement of women and their equitable treatment. 🌱

**ACIAR PROJECT:** Analysing gender transformative approaches to agricultural development with ethnic minority communities in Vietnam, SSS/2018/139.

# Vietnam co-designs fellowship to local needs

For Vice Director of Vietnam's Western Highlands Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute Dr Phan Viet Ha, leadership capacity is a central tenet that Vietnam needs in order to confront future agricultural and food security challenges adeptly.

Having worked on an ACIAR-supported project in improving the sustainability of coffee and black pepper farming systems and value chains, Dr Phan recognises that having a combination of technical expertise and 'soft' skills creates the best leaders.

Dr Phan says he wants to develop his leadership capacity substantively and effectively at an international level. 'A leader needs to foster ties and collaborate with national and international partners to achieve a desired common goal,' says Dr Phan.

Now, as a recipient of a John Dillon Fellowship (JDF) from ACIAR, he is participating in the program in the first JDF cohort tailored to Vietnam.

## Country-specific focus

Funded by ACIAR and developed jointly with the University of New England, the JDF aims to enhance leadership skills, opportunities and pathways for mid-career professionals engaged in agricultural

research for development. It aims to develop 4 core skills: values-based leadership; collaboration and communication; project management; and gender equity and social inclusion.

In response to the emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic that restricted travel and face-to-face learning, ACIAR redesigned the delivery of the program to focus on individual country cohorts and be adaptive to the distinctive needs and requirements of partner organisations and the agriculture sector in each region. In 2021, 2 cohorts consisting of 18 fellows each were carefully selected from various ACIAR partner organisations in the Philippines and Vietnam.

ACIAR General Manager, Outreach and Capacity Building, Ms Eleanor Dean explains the shift. 'In the past, our cohorts of JDF have been people selected from all over the Indo Pacific region and they have to come to Australia to do the course.

'Obviously, with travel restrictions, we couldn't do that, but we still wanted to be delivering the course and looked for the best way to do that.

'The Philippines and now Vietnam are 2 countries where there is a good level of maturity within the agricultural innovation system and our relationships with our institutional partners there are really strong.

She adds that having a country focus also allows the program to support local institutional capacity building.

## Partnering with Vietnam

'In Vietnam, we worked with a select number of institutions to co-design the program, consult on what the program should emphasise and identify participants,' Ms Dean adds.

Moving to country cohorts reflects the long-standing and strong relationship between Australia and Vietnam and the 29-year collaborative relationship

## Key points

- 1 ACIAR is supporting the delivery of the John Dillon Fellowship program within Vietnam to enable 19 mid-career agricultural research professionals to develop leadership skills.
- 2 Taking a country-specific focus allows the program to continue despite travel restrictions and supports national institutional capacity building.
- 3 The Philippines was the first to start delivering a local JDF, and one is planned for Bangladesh.







Eleanor Dean, ACIAR General Manager, Outreach and Capacity Building, joins a planning activity at an alumni event. Photo: ACIAR.



The fellows started discussing their project ideas very early on during one rare opportunity to meet each other in Hanoi - the first time they attended the training together physically. Photo: ACIAR.

between ACIAR and Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). ACIAR alumni in Vietnam are among the most active and well organised in the ACIAR alumni network.

The new JDF creates another opportunity to trial a partnership model with Vietnam that is not research- or project-based. This is also a feature of the ACIAR-MARD partnership that allows for flexibility to work together to address a common problem or deliver a shared objective such as capacity building.

The program is running 16 weeks of professional development distance training in which the fellows design and implement collaborative projects that address a pressing challenge in research, extension, policy or management. Travel restrictions permitting, a 2-week immersive workshop and study tour in Australia is also planned for late 2022.

For the Vietnam cohort there is a special emphasis on management and leadership issues that are most relevant to the country.

'In my capacity where I connect and lead all scientific research and international cooperation projects of the Institute, I realise the value of having a good feedback mechanism among team members,' says Dr Phan.

'It stimulates more collaborative discussions that help develop strong mutual respect among all members and improve communication and work efficiency. Ultimately, it helps reach our goal: improve the quality of our research proposals and project management at the Institute.'

As part of the program, the Vietnam JDF recipients formed into small groups to develop and pitch a research proposal to ACIAR. With input from ACIAR, all proposals have now been funded - testament to the success of the collaborative approach.

'The fellows will now spend several months together on their projects,' says Ms Dean. It will put to the test not only their research skills but also their leadership and management skills as developed through the program.

### Ongoing improvements

In her recent trip to Can Tho, Vietnam, Ms Dean reiterated the importance of ongoing capacity building.

'Australia and ACIAR are committed to the continued professional development of our alumni. As we have invested through one or more of our fellowship programs, we want to continue to support our alumni's career journey and to continue to help them learn new skills, widen networks and drive improvements in agriculture in their country.'

She adds that there would not be an alumni program without the enthusiasm, drive and commitment from the alumni themselves.

JDF is a flagship program of ACIAR established in 2002 in recognition of Professor John L Dillon's life-long commitment to agricultural research. Bangladesh will be next in line to have a country-specific JDF cohort. 🌱

**MORE INFORMATION:** Find more information about the John Dillon Fellowship at [aciarc.gov.au/fellowships/john-dillon-fellowship](https://aciarc.gov.au/fellowships/john-dillon-fellowship).

# Small fish, big role

**Around 492 million people depend at least partially on small-scale fisheries for their livelihoods. This includes 60 million employed in the sector plus an additional 53 million reliant on them for subsistence. Yet the sector is often overlooked and undervalued.**

To help draw attention to the role and importance of small-scale fisheries, the United Nations has marked 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture.

For ACIAR Research Program Manager for Fisheries, Professor Ann Fleming, this is good news. Most ACIAR-supported fisheries research is focused on supporting the livelihoods of those dependent on small-scale fisheries, including both marine and inland fisheries. Knowing its importance to food security and its value to people's culture and community economies helps ensure research is prioritised appropriately.

'We do need to collect evidence that demonstrates the significance of small-scale fisheries and traders, who are often women, and their importance to food

security, nutrition and income. We are focused on understanding the role of fisheries in contributing to resilient livelihoods in the face of climatic shocks and global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic,' Professor Fleming says.

'And it's important not to just focus on the collecting and harvesting of fish and other seafoods such as crustaceans, molluscs and seaweeds, but also their processing and trade. There's a whole lot of enterprises and small business opportunities for people from diverse social identities that trade fish.'

While there is no internationally agreed standard definition of small-scale fisheries, Professor Fleming describes them as including subsistence fishing and the limited use of technology.



Women play an important role in small-scale fisheries often gleaning fish from the inter-tidal zone. Photo: ACIAR.

## Key points

- 1 2022 is the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture.
- 2 Around 492 million people depend in some part on small-scale fisheries, and it comprises 40% of global fisheries.
- 3 ACIAR invests in small-scale fisheries to improve environmental outcomes and people's health and livelihoods.





A matrix of factors that consider technical, social and cultural characteristics of a fishing activity can be used to help consider what is a small-scale fishery. This can include factors such as type of fishing gear, boat length and size, catch rates, significance of fishing as a livelihood and the ethnicity of the people fishing.

Preliminary findings from the FAO's 'Illuminating Hidden Harvest' report, which is due out in late 2022, shed some light on the importance of small-scale fishing. It reports that 40% – or 37 million tonnes – of the global fish catch comes from small-scale fishing, with the proportion in Asia being much higher. So, while in one sense it is small in scale, in another, it is anything but small.

## Fisheries sustainability

The impact of small-scale fisheries therefore not only has an impact on the many people who catch and consume fish but also on the health of the fish stocks and their environments.

According to Professor Fleming the 'jewel in the crown' of ACIAR-funded freshwater fisheries research is the fish ladder work that started in Lao PDR and

**Small-scale fisheries not only have an impact on the many people who catch and consume fish, but also the health of fish stocks and their environment.**

is now being rolled out in Myanmar, Cambodia and Indonesia.

Fish 'ladders' allow fish to traverse rivers freely to feed and breed despite obstacles such as dams and weirs, built to aid water management for agriculture. Their development and implementation with local communities across

South-East Asian countries has helped to increase fish stocks in small tributaries and wetlands supporting better environmental and human health outcomes.

'The focus of our fish ladder work is to support local communities manage the fish passages and the sustainability of their local fisheries resource. The fish ladders return those stocks to their breeding grounds. It is a form of community-based fisheries management,' says Professor Fleming.

'While there is a technical intervention to improve river connectivity, the community focus of the work is about sustainable harvests.'

In June 2022, on the back of the success of the work, the Australian Government announced more funding to support fish ladders across the Mekong region.

## Involving women

A key message and thematic component of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture is to acknowledge the central role women play in small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture.

Professor Fleming explains one of the unique roles of women: 'Traditionally, women have responsibility, knowledge and ownership of the intertidal zone, harvesting vertebrates, seaweeds and small fish for example.'

She adds that the role of women in processing fish also has great potential to evolve into value-adding.

'In one ACIAR-supported project in Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste we are working with communities to innovate new ideas of value adding with fish products, with a specific focus on women's enterprises,' she says. 'In this way we focus on better utilising the fish catch and minimising waste loss rather than promoting more fishing pressure on already stressed stocks.'

'For instance, producing fish powder by drying, grinding and packaging fish. The powder can then be sprinkled on meals. That's really very important because it can be used in baby foods and for younger children to help them get access to key nutrients during their first critical 1,000 days of life when the brain, body and immune system is developing.'

Such fish powders can be locally produced and their development taps into local enterprises and particularly women's expertise.

In an interview conducted for the limited podcast series 'ACIAR Voices', Dr Meryl Williams – former Director General of WorldFish and gender equity advocate – reflects on the growing appreciation of the role of women in small-scale fisheries.

'The roles of women are really starting to come out,' says Dr Williams. She credits the 'careful work' of ACIAR that has ensured women have been substantially involved in fisheries projects, notably in the Pacific region.

'I've seen the work in the Pacific bear fruits with actual projects. But more than projects, of course, farms and community group enterprises in places like Fiji and Tonga... [have led to] people actually prospering because of the work that ACIAR did. I've seen it grow into the gender policy, which now informs the whole of ACIAR work.'

With both women and small-scale fisheries as a whole getting more attention for the role they play in supporting communities and healthy environments, it is anticipated both will continue to flourish. 🌱





# New practices boost mango production, income in Vietnam

Vietnam may not come to mind when thinking about the international mango trade, but it's among the world's 15 largest producers of the fruit. Mangoes are a significant contributor to the nation's economy.

## Key points

- 1 Mangoes are an important crop in southern Vietnam, largely supplying local markets.
- 2 Farmers who have adopted new practices identified in this project are likely to increase production by 25–30% and see an increase in mainstream retail grocery sale opportunities.
- 3 Interventions identified by this project, aimed at improving supply chain development, can increase farmer incomes on average by US\$2,000 per season.

Mangoes that reach retail markets in good condition through improved postharvest practices are helping to improve farmer incomes in southern Vietnam. Photo: Griffith University.





Vietnam's mango industry remains underdeveloped and has huge potential for growth. A booming economy and rising demand for the fruit both locally and abroad are encouraging, says Professor Robin Roberts, from the Griffith Asia Institute at Griffith University.

Most of Vietnam's mango farmers are smallholders and face challenges such as small volumes, process inefficiencies and high production costs.

To improve profits for smallholder farmers, an ACIAR-supported project is helping develop supply chains for mango production in southern Vietnam. In 2018, the project mapped mango supply chains. From 2019 to 2022, the project has been implementing changes along a single supply chain to demonstrate the potential of different interventions.

The 4-year project, which is ending later this year, is part of the ACIAR aid commitment to the region to bolster cooperation and find solutions to mango trade issues through research.

### Higher profit for mango farmers

The project aligns with Vietnam's focus on developing mango cultivation, which is a priority for government at the national level. Also, rising affluence in Vietnam has resulted in greater concern amongst consumers for food safety, 'buy local' sentiment and better treatment for farmers.

Poor fruit quality and short shelf life are issues for mangoes grown and sold in Vietnam, which the project has sought to address.

According to Mr Dinh Hoang, lead researcher on the project for Vietnam's Southern Centre for Agriculture and Rural Policy and Strategy (SCAP), mango has surpassed banana to take second place (after dragon fruit) in terms of export turnover, commanding an export volume of more than 600,000 tons. The export value of mangoes in 2021 was US\$310 million – an increase of 71.46% on 2020 (US\$180.8 million).

**Mango cultivation has the ability to improve the livelihood of thousands of smallholder farmers.**

About half of Vietnam's mangoes are produced in the south. Most fruit is consumed locally, leaving around 20% for the export market. There are 4 major varieties grown, and the project focused on the 2 most popular – Cat Chu and Cat Hoa Luc.

Mr Hoang says mango cultivation has the ability to improve the livelihood of thousands of smallholder farmers. A hectare of mangoes yields about US\$15,000–20,000 per year as income.

A number of mango farmers from southern Vietnam are former rice farmers, attracted to mango cultivation because of higher returns.



Photo: Griffith University.



## Interventions and value chain approach

The ACIAR-supported project has studied ‘practical’ interventions, testing, and prioritising those that have demonstrated success in supply chains.

The high cost of production for mangoes has a significant impact on the profitability of crops for farmers. Mr Hoang says many farmers lack knowledge of good management practices (GMP) and tend to overuse fertilisers, which contributes to reduced fruit quality in the supply chain.

The trial application of improved technologies and management practices have demonstrated mango farmers of the Cat Chu varieties increase income by 17% as the fruit received better grading, commanding a higher price. Mr Hoang estimates that farmers may see an average increase of US\$2,000 in seasonal income.

A key intervention of the project focused on improving the presentation of mangoes, to raise their profile in the market.

Professor Roberts says much of the research focused on technical aspects of mango supply chains. This includes both the consumer end of the chain and refining technologies to improve handling and shelf-life.

Sap-burn and hot water treatments have made the fruit look better and last longer, which is important for retailers and vendors. After treatment, mangoes in supermarkets can last between 7 and 10 days. An increase from just 3 or 4 days.

Sap-burn management is used to maintain the visual integrity of the fruit while hot water treatment is

generally used to disinfect mango for fruit fly. The fruit is dipped into hot water with the duration of dipping time dependent on the type of cultivar and size. This is applied before the packing process.

Professor Roberts emphasises that when studying demonstration supply chains, it became apparent that ‘interventions or changes at the demand end of the chain were necessary’.

The trial application of improved technologies and management practices have demonstrated mango farmers of the Cat Chu varieties increase income by 17% as the fruit became bigger resulting in higher grading which commands a higher price. Professor Roberts estimates that farmers may see an average increase of US\$2,000 in seasonal income as a result of both reducing cost of fertilizing and increasing price of mango grade 1.

Raising the profile of mangoes in consumer minds by improving packaging methods and instore display, associated with premium products, has contributed to an increased value in the marketplace.


Based on the project activities and evaluations, mango farmers from southern Vietnam, if they adopt practices put forward by the project, could see an increase in production of 25–30%, as well as a decrease in postharvest losses.

The project also trialled the introduction of a freezing protocol for mangoes, which would give farmers another trading channel for fruit that doesn’t meet quality requirements for being sold fresh. If adopted by the industry, says Dr Robin, this would provide another revenue stream and reduce on-farm losses.

## Scaling-up adoption of interventions

The research team from the project are enthusiastic about working further with supply chain stakeholders from southern Vietnam. They hope to implement proven interventions which can deliver increased income potential for farmers.

It’s also important to expand the supply chain of the mango to include other parts of the value chain like the processing industry such as those which produces juices and jams.

The longer-term plan for the southern Vietnam mango industry is to implement traceability and accreditation. This work is being continued by other international agencies and government bodies. 

**ACIAR PROJECT:** Improving smallholder farmer incomes through strategic market development in mango supply chains in southern Vietnam, AGB/2012/061.



A new trolley enables growers to treat mangoes directly as they are picked. Photo: Griffith University.





Improving meat handling practices at points of sale in Vietnam through SafePork is helping to improve food safety standards. Photo: International Livestock Research Institute.

## Simple practices improve pork safety in Vietnam

Pork is the most-consumed meat in Vietnam. With ACIAR support, the country is developing and evaluating market-based approaches to improving food safety that are scalable for informal and formal retailers alike.

The popularity of pork makes it the most important animal protein source for Vietnamese consumers. A previous ACIAR-funded project identified a significant health risk, with up to 2 of every 10 pork consumers experiencing illness from food-borne diseases annually.

Funded by ACIAR, SafePORK is a collaboration between the International Livestock Research Institute, Hanoi University of Public Health, University of Sydney, Vietnam National University of Agriculture and National Institute of Animal Sciences. It aims to develop and test low-cost interventions to make pork safer for the community.

Pork has been a key staple protein in Vietnam for many years. It is also popular during festival periods and, for consumers, it's versatile for home cooking.

'About 80% of Vietnamese people eat pork every day so the project has a huge opportunity to create positive change for consumers,' says Dr Pham Duc Phuc, Deputy Director of the Centre for Public Health and Ecosystem Research at Hanoi University of Public Health.

For producers, pigs require less land to raise than cattle or goats. Small-scale producers may be raising pigs primarily for their own households, knowing they can easily sell excess meat.



## Pork production and supply

Pork in Vietnam is produced and sold in a range of contexts. There are 3 main markets for pork meat: informal or wet markets; emerging formal markets; and niche markets that are targeting small- and medium-scale producers. A lot of producers operate on a small scale to rear, slaughter and butcher their pigs, then sell their pork to provide direct income for family households.

Improved animal rearing and safer meat handling practices across the industry are creating new opportunities for smallholder farmers to sell more product, including into higher-value domestic markets.

For Ms Vu Thi Thuy, a retailer from Hung Yen province, pork generates half of the total income for her family. She and her husband slaughter and sell 2–3 pigs each day.

‘If there are food-borne diseases in pork, it critically reduces how much we can sell,’ says Ms Thuy.

‘If one person gets sick, that information gets shared with everyone in the community. Reducing these diseases means consumers feel more confident buying from my shop, and in higher quantities.’

## Why market-based approaches?

Contamination points are not necessarily obvious. Many consumers take comfort in shopping with larger sellers and brands as they may have better-documented processes. However, when researchers on the SafePORK project collected samples from retailers, they found that samples from both supermarkets and informal wet markets had contamination present.

High-cost interventions (such as infrastructure upgrades) have been trialled with little success. These measures can’t generate change without effective training and incentives for the industry, as well as an enabling environment.

Smaller-scale interventions look to gradual, steady improvements in safety, based on evidence. A participatory approach that involves industry representatives and authorities ensures solutions are affordable and scalable for farmers, producers and sellers at all levels of the supply chain.

The SafePORK project team has developed and tested new research tools to investigate suitable interventions.

Pork retailer Mr Nguyễn Đăng Chử in Tien Lu district, Hung Yen province, washes his hands as one of the simple interventions introduced to improve food safety. Photo: International Livestock Research Institute.



Photo: International Livestock Research Institute.





Project leader Dr Fred Unger of the International Livestock Research Institute says: 'We've created food safety performance tools but we're also utilising simpler changes with lower-investment requirements.

### **When deployed at scale, small changes can make a huge difference.**

industry, to move producers one small step at a time towards better practice. When deployed at scale, these small changes make a huge difference.'

Small changes successfully implemented by working with the pork sellers include better hygiene practices (such as washing hands, surfaces and implements regularly), guarding against outside contamination (with aprons and appropriate footwear), utilising refrigeration where possible and reducing meat transport times.

'Nudges' utilise positive reinforcement and suggestions to influence behaviour. We're using visual cues, based on successful examples from the healthcare

## **Community impact**

Initiated in 2016, the project has trained more than 500 workers across the community, including slaughterers, retailers, canteen staff, health workers and consumers. All training programs have been developed to be gender-inclusive and have been successful in attracting female participants.

For Ms Luan Thi Tot, a pork retailer in Thai Nguyen province, raising pigs and selling pork is her primary household income. It covers daily expenses and school fees for her daughter. Ms Tot has received training, a guide and some equipment through the SafePORK project.


Ensuring better food safety practices across suppliers not only benefits consumers. It also ensures return clientele for sellers like Ms Luan, helping to generate consistent income for families.

'Since COVID-19, high-income consumers often go to the supermarket or convenience store to buy pork. Consumers buy smaller quantities now and are more concerned with cleanliness,' says Ms Luan.

'Despite this, I've been able to maintain the same volume of pork sales as before. When consumers come to buy, they see better equipment and that the shop is cleaner. They trust me more and keep coming back to me to buy pork.'

The project team is now taking the low-cost interventions it designed and tested to an additional 10 slaughterhouses and 34 retailers in 3 provinces. The establishment of a local brand in Hoa Binh has created market linkages for farmers and producers to food retailers in Hanoi.

SafePORK is also linking with other food safety initiatives to share findings and ensure the project maximises its impact. Other projects in Vietnam are now planning to roll out the SafePork interventions to more than 300 retailers and 30 slaughterhouses across 6 provinces.

With an increasing understanding that human and animal health is connected, practical solutions that ensure safe animal and meat management practices at informal markets remains a hot-topic issue worldwide. SafePORK aims to not only find effective solutions to improving food safety in Vietnam but also share its findings with the scientific community worldwide. 

**ACIAR PROJECT:** Safe Pork: Market based approaches to improving the safety of pork in Vietnam, LS/2016/143.



# Joining forces for safer agrichemical use

ACIAR is supporting research to gather information on how agrichemicals are being used in Laos and Vietnam to develop safer, more effective farming practices.

Fertilisers and pesticides – known collectively as agrichemicals – help to control pests, disease and weeds. They support crop growth and food security around the world.

But improper distribution and use can create risks for farmers, consumers, the broader community and the environment.

An ACIAR-supported project is bringing together research teams from Australia, Laos and Vietnam to understand how agrichemicals are currently being accessed and used – and identify gaps between these approaches and ‘best practice’ that can help to protect crop production into the future.

## Pesticides, fertiliser use

While institutional advice and regulations exists in both Laos and Vietnam, little has been documented about compliance and what drives agrichemical use in different production systems and contexts.

This project aims to document both the current policies and the frameworks that are in place

across the different nations. It also aims to answer the questions of what influences farmers to use agrichemicals, and why. The project examined drivers, influences and attitudes towards agrichemicals.

Dr Lucy Carter, Senior Research Scientist at CSIRO, and the project leader, explains: ‘If we can understand how farmers balance risks, production pressure and family wellbeing, we can start to think about how to maximise incentives and support for safe practice around agrichemical use.’

The project brings together researchers from Laos (National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute, National University of Laos), Vietnam (Plant Protection Research Institute, National University of Agriculture, National Institute of Medicinal Materials) and Australia (CSIRO). They will gather data to inform the development of safer and more efficient agrichemical practices.

Researchers have conducted literature reviews on farmer use of agrichemicals in Laos and Vietnam. They identified current policies, regulations and conceptual frameworks, relevant institutions as well as patterns, practices and drivers of agrichemical use.

‘The project is laying the foundation for understanding how farmers use agrichemicals so that environmentally safe and healthy use of chemical inputs in agriculture can be ensured in the future,’ says Dr Clemens Grünbühel, Research Program Manager for Social Systems at ACIAR.

## Agricultural intensification

The literature review and a cross-country comparison of findings have shown that agricultural practices are intensifying. With farming in both countries becoming more commercial, and as climate change increasingly affects land-use options and the incidence of pest and disease outbreaks, farmers need tools, training and support that can help them maintain crop production and use agrichemicals safely.

### Key points

- 1 Agrichemicals help to control pests, diseases and weeds in food crops, supporting food security.
- 2 Improper distribution and use of agrichemicals can create risks for farmers, consumers, the wider community and the environment.
- 3 ACIAR are supporting researchers from Australia, Laos and Vietnam to identify systems and tools for safer, more effective practices that can protect crop production into the future.





Vietnamese consumers, traders and farmers all have a role to play in improving agrichemical use practices by creating both demand and supply for safely produce food. Photo: ACIAR.

The use of agrichemicals is also being affected by changes in labour availability. As individuals migrate from rural to more urban areas, a reduced workforce means more interest in labour-saving technologies.

Oula Boupakaly, Assistant Professor of Agriculture at the National University of Laos and the project's in-country research partner, says farmers are increasingly relying on agrichemicals to maintain yields and profitability, but the risks of using them are not being managed adequately to ensure environmental sustainability and guard human health. Better knowledge of how to apply and handle chemicals could protect farmers' lives and livelihoods.

### Market influencers

Agrichemical manufacturers and retailers also have a role to play. Product formulation, labelling and retail availability needs to align with best-practice standards to help ensure farmers have access to accurate information to make informed decisions on agrichemical use.

'One of the solutions for promoting safe use of agrichemicals is educating consumers. Consumers showing concern for food safety influences how producers use these chemicals,' says Dr Phonevilay Sinavong, researcher at the National Agriculture and Forestry Institute of Laos.

All consumers want food that is safe to eat. Better financial incentives, access to safer products and

information about the benefits of low-intensity agrichemicals could give farmers more scope to explore changing their use of these products. Linking food safety with safe agrichemical use and sustainable crop management practices could help to incentivise more consumers to pay premiums.

This needs to go hand in hand with better protective equipment availability and practices to ensure the safety of farmers. Education for producers and retailers is needed to ensure farmers understand the risks, as well as options available to them when applying fertilisers and pesticides.

### Building a full picture

Project teams have conducted interviews with local agrichemical users and traders, district and provincial-level agricultural employees, local leaders, associations and advisory service officers.

Responses will help the project team build a fuller picture of how decisions on agrichemical use – by farmers, traders and other local stakeholders – are being made. Alongside policies and frameworks, understanding market dynamics, consumer expectations and the role of product makers, new data from the project will inform approaches to agrichemical practices for Laos and Vietnam into the future. 🌱

**ACIAR PROJECT:** Understanding agrichemical use in South-East Asian agriculture, SSS/2020/143

# Vietnam visit highlights ACIAR work in building capacity, strengthening ties

Australia's Commission for International Agricultural Research (Commission) and Policy Advisory Council (Council) travelled to Vietnam in June to learn about the country's agricultural development priorities and explore research opportunities with Australia.

The delegation saw first-hand the key challenges facing Vietnam's agricultural development and gained in-person experience with some of the ongoing efforts of ACIAR and its Vietnamese partners to address these challenges.

Commission Chair Fiona Simson said it was an 'amazing' trip.

'It was great for my first trip as a Commissioner to see some of the work that ACIAR has been doing in Vietnam, to see the results of some of that work, and to see some of the challenges and opportunities that our work is trying to address,' Mrs Simson said.

On their week-long visit, the delegation visited Southern Horticultural Research Institute (SOFRI), rice research and development partners in the Mekong Delta, and greenhouses where Can Tho University researchers are experimenting with alternative crops on saline land.

'For me, the highlight of the trip was being able to meet and talk to farmers: shrimp farmer Mr Tang Van Xua; mangrove farmer in the Mekong Delta Mr Tran Nghia Sy; and vegetable farmers in Hanoi Mrs Nguyen Thi Luyen and Mr Nguyen Van Duyen. We were able to talk with the vegetable growers about their farms and their cooperative and see their vegetables in the markets.

'Those were the things that really made the trip come alive for me.'

Through a series of high-level meetings, the delegation heard Vietnamese leaders' priorities for the agriculture sector, and their commitment to international collaboration in agricultural research. They also held meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, who awarded commemorative medals to Ambassador Ms Robyn Mudie and ACIAR CEO Professor Andrew Campbell

for their contributions to Vietnam's agricultural and rural development.

Mrs Simson said these firsthand experiences to see the challenges and opportunities facing agriculture and food systems in Vietnam helped her understand them fully.

She valued seeing how ACIAR and partners are working with smallholder farmers to make their situation more tenable, and help them and their industries address climate change, sustainability and food security challenges.

Mrs Simson is also President of the National Farmers' Federation, and said while there are major differences between farmers in Vietnam and Australia, there were also important similarities.

## Key points

- 1 The Commission for International Agricultural Research and the Policy Advisory Council travelled to Vietnam.
- 2 The Annual In-Country Meeting gave the delegation the opportunity to learn about the country's agricultural development priorities and explore research opportunities with Australia.
- 3 Commission Chair, Fiona Simson, said meeting farmers and researchers who had benefitted from ACIAR-supported research was impactful.





Commission and PAC in Vietnam. Photo: ACIAR.

'The thing that often stands out to me when travelling is that on the face of it the differences may seem very stark. Clearly, in Vietnam, there are a lot of very small landholder farmers who are very poor.'

'Yet the similarities between what they want for their families, and what they want as people, and what they'd like to achieve as farmers, is strikingly similar to Australian farmers.'

'And some of the challenges and opportunities that we're facing in both countries are also strikingly similar. So that's often my takeaway, and it certainly is here in Vietnam.'

The visit was also a public diplomacy event for the Australian Government as it continues to develop its strategic partnership with the Vietnamese Government. Notably, 2023 will mark 50 years of the Australia-Vietnam partnership and 30 years of ACIAR in Vietnam.

The visit also highlighted the importance of ACIAR-funded capacity building activities for Mrs Simson and the other delegates. They met ACIAR alumni and Can Tho University students who are currently participating in ACIAR-supported research.

'[It] really brought home to me how much that part of the program adds to our in-country partnerships. I don't think I had really appreciated the value of that until meeting these amazing young people here in Vietnam, and seeing what benefits and contributions they're giving to their communities.'

For Mrs Simson, the visit demonstrated the strength of the ACIAR approach.

'I think for research to be useful, then it needs to be targeted, and it needs to be credible, and we need to

have people on the ground and the extension needs to be to be there.'

'So to me, I think research community understands that it needs those connections more than ever. ACIAR is as good as an example as I have found of bottom up research that's driven by the community. ACIAR partners with that community through its relationships to achieve the outcomes it has identified that it needs. That's the gold standard for research, in my view. I hope that we can continue to achieve that and build on that.'

'Our strength is enabling; that's what we do. We enable agricultural scientists [through] best practice research to share with and partner with countries who need those skills and knowledge. We enable them to step up and fully partner with us to achieve the outcomes in their own countries. So I think ACIAR has to play a role in the global stage. Despite being a small organisation, we have very deep links globally.'

The respect that Vietnamese research partners and government representatives showed to the ACIAR delegation impressed Mrs Simson.

'ACIAR has huge respect. Wherever ACIAR goes, it has and demands huge respect, and that is one of the things that I think sets ACIAR apart. People love ACIAR and the work that it does, and you are able to see those tangible benefits in the people that it works, and the countries that it partners, with. That is something that is absolutely alone to ACIAR.'

She said strong relationships with Australia's neighbouring countries was crucial for a range of reasons including trade and biosecurity. As President of the National Farmers' Federation, she said its members were becoming more concerned about these issues. 🌱



# Ambassador Robyn Mudie: an advocate for Vietnam-Australia relations

Ms Robyn Mudie recently completed her term as Australia's Ambassador to Vietnam, marking an important milestone in her nearly 30-year diplomatic relationship with the country.

Ambassador Mudie's Vietnam journey began when she started learning the Vietnamese language to deepen her knowledge and understanding of the country's history and political development while studying South-East Asia for her Honours degree at the University of Adelaide. She subsequently joined the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 1990 and was posted to the Australian Embassy in Hanoi as Second Secretary from 1993 to 1995 before returning 24 years later as Ambassador in 2019. Ambassador Mudie says ACIAR has provided great moments of inspiration and wonderful memories during her time in the country.

It was on a recent visit to Vietnam's mountainous north-west that she saw first-hand an example, she says, of the excellent way in which ACIAR supports projects that help local farming communities.

The project, which began in 2017, aims to improve livestock production and is helping farmers move away from less efficient wild grazing practices to producing large-scale feed that can be stored for long periods.

'These new, more intensive techniques enable farmers to maintain their herds throughout the year, even at times when feed is not readily available,' explains Ambassador Mudie.

'It's important work because it builds a much more sustainable economic model for the community.'

It's projects like these that help strengthen the strategic partnership between Australia and Vietnam, says the Ambassador.

She adds that this work is so critical because it helps people in the region – one of the country's poorest – to generate reliable livelihoods for themselves. Generating positive outcomes and tangible results is important to the Ambassador; she says she wants to ensure the relationship with Vietnam and Australia delivers real benefits and builds enduring and deep relationships, such as the one she has developed over time with the country.

'We have been working closely with Vietnam for over 5 decades across 3 core pillars of security cooperation, economic engagement and innovation,' says Ambassador Mudie.

'We find that these 3 pillars really support a strong and sustainable future for this country and we are highly committed to continuing our engagement with Vietnam across all of them.'

## Australia-Vietnam agricultural development

Australia and Vietnam have complementary agricultural production profiles, with 2-way trade in agriculture, fisheries and forestry products worth about A\$4.4 billion in 2021. Vietnam sells prawns, cashews, fish, coffee and fruit to Australia, and Australia exports rural commodities such as wheat, cotton, barley and live cattle to Vietnam.

Research, technology and innovation have helped to drive Vietnam's transformation to an export-focused economy producing commodities that meet international standards. ACIAR has played a role in this transformation.

### Key points

- 1 Australia's Ambassador to Vietnam Robyn Mudie says the Australia-Vietnam relationship has been strengthened thanks to ACIAR.
- 2 The human connections ACIAR and Vietnam have developed through research project implementation have benefited both countries.







Agriculture also remains central to Vietnam's rural communities, where pockets of poverty and significant gender gaps remain, says Ambassador Mudie.

Research for rural development is vital to address these gaps, especially linking poorer rural areas to exports through free trade agreements.

'Applying new agricultural research and technology will provide women with opportunities to improve their household income, skills and confidence,' says Ambassador Mudie.

'It increases the efficiency and productivity of women farmers, and through sharing their knowledge with others or building cooperatives, they will have further leadership opportunities.'

Ambassador Mudie says ACIAR-supported research and the ACIAR-Vietnam relationship have played an important role in the broader Australia-Vietnam relationship.

The ACIAR-Vietnam partnership is long-standing, based on mutual benefits and respect for each other, which is reflected very clearly through the development of the 10-year strategy for ACIAR-Vietnam research collaboration.

'I also highly appreciate the strong human linkages ACIAR has developed through research project implementation in Vietnam. I have witnessed how Vietnamese partners from national to provincial levels highly regard ACIAR for its investment in building human resources for Vietnam. ACIAR, therefore, contributes greatly to our goal of supporting Vietnam to build a strong and sustainable future.'

In the past 3 years, Ambassador Mudie has also witnessed 3 major ACIAR achievements.

In 2020, on behalf of the Governor-General of Australia, she awarded ACIAR Country Manager for Vietnam, Ms An Thi Thanh Nguyen, the Australian Public Service Medal in recognition of her outstanding contribution to fostering the Australia-Vietnam bilateral relationship in agricultural research.

In 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, ACIAR and its Vietnamese counterparts successfully launched the Vietnam cohort of 19 John Dillon Fellows, who have now received training to develop their leadership and science management skills.

And in the past few years, the positive impacts of the decade-long investment by ACIAR in collaborative research for vegetables, beef cattle and agroforestry development significantly improved the livelihoods of thousands of smallholder farmers from the poorest region of north-west Vietnam.

The Ambassador says she hopes ACIAR-funded research in Vietnam will develop to include partnerships with the private sector and create better opportunities for the poor residents in rural and urban areas and that ACIAR will continue to put women at the centre of any economic development models.

'If we do not support women to develop the power and the knowledge to lead their enterprises, then the economy will only be half as good as it could be,' says Ambassador Mudie.

'I am very proud to have overseen Australia's and ACIAR's strong contribution to women's economic empowerment during my term as Ambassador, and privileged to have been part of Australia's ongoing contribution to the economic development of this unique and remarkable country.' 🌱



Ambassador Robyn Mudie (second from right) meets with the Vietnamese research partners of ACIAR during her visit to Dien Bien province in April 2022. Photo: Trong Chinh, Vietnam News Agency.



## Regional roundup

This issue's regional roundup is longer than usual as we're celebrating the return to many in-person meetings and trainings. While virtual meetings have an important role in ACIAR-supported activities – nothing replaces meeting, networking and learning from each other in real life.



The 6 ACIAR-funded scholars after graduating: (L-R) Rezki Antoni Suhaimi (Indonesia), Moh. Faozan Tsani (Indonesia), Aye Myint Swe (Myanmar), Nyi Nyi Tun (Myanmar), Somphou Phasulath (Lao PDR), Vaviyo Simonkhoun (Lao PDR). Photo: CSU.

### South-East Asia: scholars graduate

Six scholars from across South-East Asia are among the first graduates of a new program developed by Charles Sturt University (CSU) to advance river and fisheries management.

The scholars completed the final hands-on component of CSU's Graduate Certificate in Fish Conservation and Management and graduated at the university's Albury-Wodonga campus in Australia in April 2022.

The course's development and the scholars' financial support are part of a broader ACIAR-funded project led by CSU to facilitate greater adoption of fish conservation technology in South-East Asia through improved scientific capacity and governance structures.

The governments of Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar each nominated 2 scholars. ACIAR provided scholarships for the 6 students, as part of the project 'Translating fish passage research outcomes into policy and legislation across South-East Asia'. This project builds on a series of ACIAR investments to fund research and install fish passages. These are water ladders that allow fish to cross obstacles like dams that are being built to support irrigation and hydropower. Fish are a crucial protein source and income stream for many rural communities.

The new course is the only graduate certificate dedicated to fish conservation and management offered in Australia and has a solid industry-based foundation designed to prepare graduates for a career in freshwater fisheries management and research.





### The Philippines: official visits

During April 2022, the Australian Ambassador to the Philippines His Excellency Steven Robinson visited an ACIAR-supported project in Biliran province. The ‘Enhancing Livelihoods through Forest and Landscape Restoration’ project in Biliran is working with communities and government partners on developing new techniques and approaches to reforestation, including better seedling production and improved livelihood opportunities to support economic and biodiversity development.

A delegation of senior officials from the Philippines Department of Science and Technology (DOST), led by Undersecretary for Research and Development Dr Rowena Cristina Guevara, visited Australia from 17 to 23 April to establish and strengthen linkages and partnerships with Australian universities and research institutions, including ACIAR, to revitalise the Philippines’ science technology and innovation. ACIAR Policy Advisory Council member Dr Reynaldo Eborra, Executive Director of the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic, and Natural Resources Research and Development (DOST-PCAARRD) was part of the delegation.



Australian Ambassador to the Philippines His Excellency Steven Robinson (fifth from right) joins ACIAR staff on a project site visit in Biliran province. Photo: ACIAR.



Philippine officials on a visit to ACIAR in Canberra, Australia. Photo: ACIAR.

### Australia: Staff mark 40 years of ACIAR

On 3 June 1982, the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982* was passed by the Australian Parliament, establishing ACIAR as a statutory agency within the Foreign Affairs portfolio. ACIAR was subsequently established as Australia’s specialist agricultural research-for-development agency.

At the time, the legislation described ACIAR as being created to ‘...encourage research for the purpose of identifying, or finding solutions, to agricultural problems of developing countries.’

Since then, ACIAR has gone on to fund more than 1,500 research projects connecting Australian scientists and research institutions with their counterparts in nearly 40 countries throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

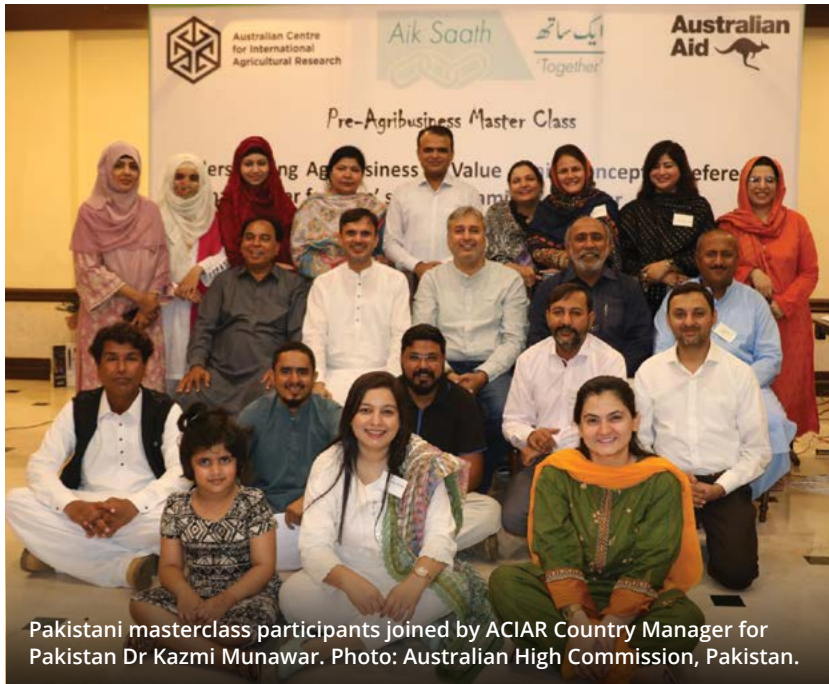
Read, listen and view more at [aciar.gov.au/aciar40](https://aciar.gov.au/aciar40).



Australia-based ACIAR staff pose for a photo to mark 40 years of ACIAR. Photo: ACIAR.







Pakistani masterclass participants joined by ACIAR Country Manager for Pakistan Dr Kazmi Munawar. Photo: Australian High Commission, Pakistan.



ACIAR Indian alumni met in person for a networking event with ACIAR Country Manager Dr Pratiba Singha and Assistant Manager Chetali Chhabra. Photo: ACIAR.

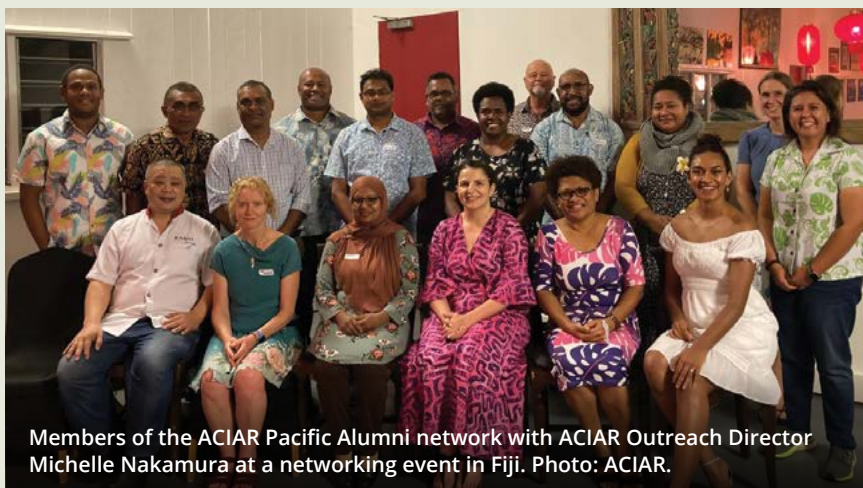
### South Asia: professional development

In Pakistan, 42 people including 20 women attended 2 Pre-Agribusiness Master Classes supported by ACIAR. Participants included mid-level policy managers and advisers from government, academia, institutes and donors. Delivered by local and Australian session leaders, the classes included an intensive 6-week period of consultation, planning and preparation of training resources. Post-training evaluation indicated that most participants had increased their awareness and belief in the relevance of value chain thinking and commitment to approach their roles differently in the future. Qualitative feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

In India, 8 ACIAR Indian alumni met in person. The one-day event saw them get to know each other and solidify their relationships. The alumni – scientists from different agricultural research areas – also set out their vision and plan of action regarding what they want to achieve together as ACIAR alumni in India.

ACIAR South Asia Regional Manager Dr Pratibha Singh participated in the event. She said it was a lively gathering and the alumni brought great energy and ideas to the table. She hopes they will drive future alumni activities that will strengthen the potential for scientific collaboration and networking in the region.

### Pacific region: Fiji alumni meet-up



Members of the ACIAR Pacific Alumni network with ACIAR Outreach Director Michelle Nakamura at a networking event in Fiji. Photo: ACIAR.

In May, senior academics from the Fiji National University and the University of the South Pacific participated in the ACIAR-supported Leadership Development Program. Led by the Leadership Alliance, the program aims to enhance the management and leadership skills of selected academics. ACIAR Outreach Director Michelle Nakamura officially launched the workshop and later attended a networking session with the Pacific Alumni network. 🌿





# ACIAR Voices celebrates research luminaries

To mark 40 years of ACIAR, we have launched a limited podcast series: ACIAR Voices. Six leading agricultural scientists share their stories of improving lives through research-for-development and their connections with ACIAR.

## Professor Gabrielle Persley

### ACIAR history



Appointed in 1982 as the first Science Advisor to ACIAR, Professor Persley speaks about the environment of the 1970-80s that, mixed with the well-formed ideas of key visionaries, led to the formation of ACIAR.

## Professor David Kemp

### Grasslands management



Renowned for transforming the lives of livestock herders, take a deep dive with Professor Kemp to explore how improving grassland management with ACIAR helped alleviate poverty in China and Mongolia.

## Mr Stephen Midgley

### Forestry development



Having worked on the longest running ACIAR project, one on community forestry in Nepal, Mr Midgley shares how sustainable forest management can deliver economic growth and community benefits.

## Dr Harry Nesbitt

### Seeds of Life



After helping to re-establish rice production in Cambodia after the civil war ended in 1975, Dr Nesbitt helped Timor-Leste through the ACIAR-supported Seeds of Life project by improving access to better crop varieties.

## Dr Meryl Williams

### Gender inclusivity



With an ACIAR fellowship named in honour of her contributions, Dr Williams talks about gender equity in international research-for-development, drawing from her fisheries and aquaculture experience.

## Dr Joanne Meers

### Vaccinating chickens



Dr Meers worked on an ACIAR-supported project that developed a vaccine for a devastating chicken disease that could easily be used by smallholder farmers – helping to keep their chickens, livelihoods and food security safe.





**40**  
YEARS



Australian Centre  
for International  
Agricultural Research  
EST. 1982

**Australian  
Aid**

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is part of Australia's international development cooperation program. Its mission is to achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems for the benefit of developing countries and Australia. ACIAR commissions collaborative research between Australian and developing-country researchers in areas where Australia has special research competence. ACIAR also administers Australia's contribution to the international agricultural research centres.