Congratulations Norah

Sweetpotato farmers in Papua New Guinea will be pleased to learn of the recent graduation of Dr Norah Omot, who received a PhD from the University of Canberra.

Her studies, sponsored by ACIAR through a John Allwright Fellowship, identified weaknesses in the process of bringing the vegetables from production to market in PNG.

“In particular, I looked at what consumers want and whether suppliers are meeting their needs,” Dr Omot said of her thesis, Long-distance marketing of sweetpotato from the highlands of Papua New Guinea: an analysis of consumer preferences and supplier responsiveness.

Dr Caroline Lemerle, ACIAR’s research program manager for Agricultural Systems Management, recognised Dr Omot’s PhD as a valuable contribution to agricultural development in PNG.

“By identifying market orientation, Norah’s thesis can assist sweetpotato smallholders with growing to demand and generating income for their families,” she said. “Certainly it has the potential to form the basis for future research.”

Dr Omot is now running the NARI program ‘Enabling environment’, which is identifying the socioeconomic barriers to sustainable agricultural development in PNG.

John Dillon Fellows visit Canberra

“The agricultural research is vital in the development process. It is the source of new technology, and production technology is the source of economic growth. As projects have produced new technologies it has become important to ensure clear strategies are available to facilitate the efficient development, transfer and application to intended users.”

— JOHN DILLON

NEW STAFF

David Shearer has been appointed as ACIAR’s director corporate. Dave joined ACIAR in 2006 as Agribusiness research program manager and has acted in the role of director corporate since the departure of Lisa Wright. He is experienced in delivering corporate objectives for a range of government agencies. He also brings a sound knowledge of ACIAR’s operating environment, a broad understanding of the Australian Government’s aid strategy and a strong understanding of agricultural development. These capabilities will assist in strategically positioning ACIAR during a time of rapid change in the aid program. Last year Dave received an Australian Development Council (ADC) Australian Leadership Award in recognition of his capabilities.

GLOBETROTTERS

ACIAR research program managers undertake a hefty travel schedule, with partner visits, project reviews and in-country consultations. We’ll report on some of the highlights of trip visits in the next few issues of Partners.

In May, Debbie Templeton, ACIAR’s Impact Assessment research program manager, travelled to Cambodia. She presented a 3 day workshop to 36 attendees representing four components of the New Policy Program Safeguarding Food Security in Rice-Based Farming Systems. She also met with project proponents to discuss the formulation of a new project on rainfed, rice/livestock-based farming systems at Khon Kaen University. The overall aim of the project is to improve the reliability of achieving postharvest practices.

ACIAR’s principal adviser for strategy and policy, Simon Hearn, travelled to Jakarta in April. The purpose of the visit to Indonesia was to attend the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Board meeting. He provided a discussion paper to an IFPRI workshop covering climate change, price volatility and food security. The workshop was co-hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (Indonesia). While in Jakarta, Simon also held bilateral discussions with project leaders covering two ADP projects: ADP/2005/066 Markets for high value commodities in Indonesia: promoting competitiveness and inclusiveness; and ADP/2005/068 Plausible futures for economic development and structural adjustment – impacts and policy implications for Indonesia and Australia.

In March, ACIAR’s research program manager for Soil Management and Crop Nutrition, Gamini Keerthisinghe, travelled to Thailand to attend a project review workshop of SMCN/2007/215 Improving the reliability of rainfed, rice/livestock-based farming systems at Khon Kaen University. The overall aim of the project is to improve the reliability of achieving profitable returns at the household level from rice and cattle production in rainfed rice-based farming ecosystems in Mahasarakham province. Gamini also met with project proponents to discuss the formulation of a new regional project on rainfed lowland rice and livestock farming systems.
ACIAR COMMISSIONERS

Chair: Joanna Hewitt
With her depth of experience in international agricultural research—most recently on consultancy projects with the International Food Policy Research Institute, which is part of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research network—Ms Hewitt brings a lot to the Commission. Among her former appointments, Ms Hewitt was Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and has held several Deputy Secretary positions at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Holding a Masters in International Relations, she was a lead negotiator with the World Trade Organization. She is also a former member of the ACIAR Board of Management.

Commissioner: Professor Kym Anderson
Kym Anderson is a professor with the School of Economics at the University of Adelaide. He is also Foundation Executive Director of the university’s Wine Economics Research Centre, and formerly held the same position with its Centre for International Economics Studies. He is on the Board of Trustees with the International Food Policy Research Institute and holds several other international board memberships in the fields of rural development and commodity economics.

Commissioner: Dr Conall O’Connell
Dr Conall O’Connell is the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and has held several positions with government agencies. These include the Department of Environment, Environment Australia and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. He has completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University.

Reappointed Commissioner; David Crombie
Mr Crombie has more than 30 years commercial and representational experience in agriculture, including as managing director of major agricultural development and pastoral companies. He is Director of GRM International and a former President of the National Farmers Federation, as well as Chair of Meat and Livestock Australia and the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

Continuing Commissioners
Mr Peter Baxter, Director-General of AusAID; Dr Joanne Daly, member of the CSIRO Executive Management Council; and Dr Nick Austin, chief executive officer of ACIAR.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

CORPORATE PUBLICATIONS
ACIAR Annual Operational Plan 2011–12

TECHNICAL REPORTS

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS
Extending low-chill fruits in northern Thailand: an ACIAR–World Vision collaborative program
David N. Harris, IAS70, 52 pp. $40 (plus postage & handling)

The economic impact in Indonesia and Australia of investment in plantation forestry research, 1987–2009
Bob Lindner, IAS71, 90 pp. $55 (plus postage & handling)

MONOGRAPHS

Integrated pest and disease management for sustainable cocoa production: a training manual for farmers and extension workers (2nd ed.) John Konam, Yak Namaliu, Rosalie Daniel and David Guest, MN131(2nd ed.), 36 pp. $9 (plus postage & handling)

Jorani and the green vegetable bugs (Lao translation) Bob Martin and Deborah White, MN137b, 48 pp.

Beef production in crop–livestock systems: simple approaches for complex problems
W.H. Winter (ed.), MN145, 160 pp. $57 (plus postage & handling)

FINAL REPORTS (AVAILABLE ONLINE ONLY)

ASIA


PNG AND PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES


Identifying pilot sites and research methods for soil health research in the Pacific region  Dr Mike Smith, Dr Tony Pattison and Mr John Bagshaw, Final Report for project PC/2010/038, <aciar.gov.au/publication/FR2011-03>

NEW PROJECTS
ASEM/2009/053  Developing agricultural policies for rice-based farming systems in Lao PDR and Cambodia
FST/2010/013  Developing markets and products for the Pacific island and PNG Canarium nut industry
FST/2009/051  Increasing productivity and profitability of Indonesian smallholder plantations
HORT/2010/011  Improving the sustainability of cocoa production in eastern Indonesia through integrated pest, disease and soil management in an effective extension and policy environment
LPS/2008/048  Sustainable livestock grazing systems on Chinese temperate grasslands

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ACIAR’S 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 Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) operates as part of Australia’s international development cooperation program, with a mission 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. It also administers Australia’s contribution to the International Agricultural Research Centres.