



# Pacific Crops Research Program Strategy

## Global context/trends

Pacific island countries are characterised by their geographic isolation, small land areas and dispersed populations. This poses a unique challenge to the development of the Pacific region and its agriculture. While a drive towards food self-sufficiency is evident in many government policies, the reality for most countries includes rising food imports, growing trade imbalances and an explosion of 'lifestyle diseases', related to higher consumption of imported processed foods. The islands are also in the frontline for climate change, with rising sea levels and severe climate events already negatively impacting fragile ecosystems and economies.

## International fit

Agriculture is in transition in the Pacific islands, with a move towards developing diverse small- and medium-size enterprises. These enterprises will increasingly use intensified technologies—to produce more high-value crops, products and services—to supply growing urban markets, the tourism and hospitality sectors, and export markets. At the same time, traditional agriculture continues to be the mainstay for rural communities and remote islands.

Key challenges include: complex traditional land tenure and social systems that limit the land and labour available for commercial agriculture; the lack of adequate planning and regulatory frameworks to support intensified land use; and a deteriorating natural resource base—degraded by poor soil-management practices and exacerbated by invasive pests and diseases. This is leading to decreased agricultural productivity and increased clearing of forests, with collateral damage to the coastal ecosystems on which fisheries and tourism depend. Limited capacity in research, education, and support services makes it harder to address these challenges.



## Research themes

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) Pacific Crops program was formed in 2009, to help focus Australian development assistance on the unique challenges of the region. Aligning closely with the priorities of the Land Resources Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the program focuses on improving food and nutritional security, improving natural resource management, and building trade in agriculture products, while improving biosecurity.

Research themes	Priority research areas
Improved food and nutritional security:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Developing strategies and technologies to support the improved production, post-harvest handling and consumption of diverse, nutritious, locally-grown food crops and products.</li> <li>» Developing and promoting the adoption of technologies to improve the resilience of food production in the face of threats, such as invasive pest and climate variability.</li> </ul>
Integrated and sustainable natural resource management:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Supporting the development of sustainable land-use planning, policies, and legislation.</li> <li>» Developing and promoting the adoption of more sustainable technologies for intensified agricultural production and processing.</li> <li>» Strengthening national and regional capacity to prepare for, respond to, or adapt to, climate change and natural disasters.</li> </ul>
improved biosecurity and increased trade in agricultural products:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Develop technologies and capacity to identify and manage risks associated with emergent pests, diseases and weeds that threaten food production, trade or the environment.</li> <li>» Develop value-chain analysis and other interventions to identify opportunities and enhance the competitiveness of agricultural commodity chains for local and export markets.</li> </ul>

## Countries

Country	% of budget: active projects
Papua New Guinea	20
Fiji	43
Kiribati	2
Samoa	11
Solomon Islands	11
Tonga	3
Vanuatu	10

## Delivery on corporate goals

ACIAR goal, to improve:	Contributions of projects in the Pacific Crops program (examples)
Food and nutrition security.	» Developing strategies for improving diet and health in communities through increased consumption of diverse fruits and vegetables.
Productivity and resilience of crop, livestock, forestry and fisheries systems.	» Strengthening integrated crop management in support of sustainable intensification of high-value crop production. » Understanding the sensitivity of Pacific staple crops to climate change.
Smallholder and community livelihoods.	» Pacific Agribusiness Research for Development Initiative. » Rehabilitating cocoa for improving livelihoods in the Pacific.
Animal and plant biosecurity.	» Developing cleaner export pathways for Pacific agricultural commodities.
Sustainable interactions between agricultural and ecosystem services.	» Improving soil health in support of sustainable development in the Pacific.
Individual and institutional R&D capacity.	» Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme for the University of the South Pacific.

## Future focus

The challenge will be to continue supporting the sustainable intensification and diversification of Pacific cropping systems in the face of adverse economic forces and increasingly uncertain climate. While it will be important to develop the necessary supporting technologies, emphasis will also be given to understanding the economic incentives and social constraints that affect technology adoption, with a view to enabling innovation.

## Research Program Manager

**Dr Richard Markham**

**P:** + 679 337 9392 **F:** + 679 337 0021

**E:** richard.markham@aciar.gov.au

### Further information

Australian Centre for International  
Agricultural Research (ACIAR)

38 Thynne Street, Fern Hill Park  
Bruce ACT Australia  
GPO Box 1571 Canberra ACT 2601  
Australia

**P:** +61 2 6217 0500 **F:** +61 2 6217 0501

**E:** [aciar@aciar.gov.au](mailto:aciar@aciar.gov.au)

[aciar.gov.au](http://aciar.gov.au)



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[aciar.gov.au](http://aciar.gov.au)

