Australia is a net food exporting country and about 70% of food produced is exported.

Australia is one of the world’s largest agricultural export nations for wheat, barley, beef, dairy products, wine and wool.

Australian agriculture feeds 60 million people directly and contributes to the food security of 400 million more through research advances.

Australia ranks 16th in the world for spending on agricultural R&D.

Agriculture in 2011 used 53% of land and 55% of water resources.

In 2011, the sector contributed 2.4% of GDP ($1.285 trillion), 5% of Australia's total exports ($13.2 billion) and employed 279,000 Australians directly.

Over the three decades to 2011, the number of Australian farmers has declined by 40% but the value of farm exports increased by an average of 5% per year.

In irrigated agriculture, water use declined 43% while production rose 39%.

A third of agricultural businesses have reported setting aside a combined 8.4 million hectares of land for conservation or protection purposes.

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“Australia is uniquely placed to assist developing countries in the area of agriculture. We are recognised as having particular expertise and experience in agricultural research and development over a wide range of climatic and environmental conditions, from dryland farming to tropical livestock and agricultural production.”

In 2011 Australia ranked 17th among food exporting countries, with 2% of total global exports. These exported commodities all involve species that are exotic to Australia. Adapting these foreign species to growing conditions in Australia has created a strong flow of benefits from engaging internationally with agricultural R&D organisations.

Australia is free from many pests and diseases found in other countries, including major livestock diseases such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and foot and mouth disease (FMD). Maintaining this largely disease-free status is a priority. So too is maintaining high levels of food safety, both for exports and domestic consumption. According to the OECD, Australia ranked equal first with Denmark and the UK for food safety performance in 2010.

Australia’s agricultural production base is limited by poor soil quality, drought and frost. Compared with soils in the Northern Hemisphere, Australian soils have less organic matter, low levels of phosphorus and other nutrients, and poorer structure that results in reduced nutrient storage and water-holding capacity.

In 2012–13, ACIAR administered and managed more than $73 million in project funds, $77 million in multilateral programs with the IARCs, and $7 million in building research capacity.

There are 93 active postgraduate fellowships for scientists from developing countries associated with ACIAR projects, with 257 scientists completing studies at either masters or PhD level.

**THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH**

- ACIAR aims to leverage Australia’s advanced agricultural science expertise in the arena of international development, sustainability and food security.
- ACIAR recognises that Australia shares similar production challenges with developing countries and benefits greatly from international engagement in seeking solutions.
- ACIAR invests in agricultural science and extension in Australia, via International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs), and in more than 40 developing countries.
- Since 1982 ACIAR has commissioned and managed more than 600 research projects involving more than 50 Australian research bodies and 150 institutions in partner countries.
- Independent impact assessments of 130 ACIAR projects have demonstrated estimated total benefits of $31.9 billion from a total project expenditure of $379 million.

**LAND USE IN AUSTRALIA**

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Excluding Antarctica, Australia is the driest continent, and agricultural productive capacity is affected by rainfall distribution. Long-term average annual rainfall varies from less than 300 millimetres per year in central Australia to more than 3,000 mm in northern Queensland. Run-off into rivers is low—on average, only a tenth of this rainfall is captured in rivers or subterranean aquifers—compared with a world average of 65%.