

# China

 **A\$0.2** million  
Budgeted funding

 **4**  
Bilateral and regional  
research projects

The Australia–China bilateral relationship is based on strong economic and trade complementarities, a comprehensive program of high-level visits and wide-ranging cooperation. In 2014, the Australian Prime Minister and Chinese President agreed to describe the relationship as a ‘comprehensive strategic partnership’. Australia has largely phased out bilateral aid to China. In recognition of China’s growing role as an aid donor, Australia and China signed a memorandum of understanding on development cooperation in 2013, which was renewed in 2017. The memorandum of understanding facilitates cooperation in shared development objectives on issues of regional or global importance, such as the first project, which targeted the management of malaria in Papua New Guinea.

An overview of Australia’s relationship with China is available on the DFAT website.

**In early 2020, China reaffirmed that the development of agriculture, rural areas and farmers’ issues remained at the very top of China’s domestic priorities for the seventeenth consecutive year.**

This first policy statement for the year emphasised a focus on the dual tasks of fighting poverty and strengthening areas of weakness in relation to agriculture, rural areas and farmers. In particular, China will focus on improving infrastructure and public services in rural areas, ensuring supplies of key agricultural products, promoting an increase in farmers’ income and strengthening grassroots governance in rural areas. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all sectors of the economy, the Chinese Government has reaffirmed its goal of eradicating absolute poverty by the end of 2020.

Soil degradation, excessive use of groundwater and soil contamination are among the major issues in the main grain-production regions, especially in north-eastern China. To address these problems, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Finance jointly released the Black Soil Conservation Tillage Action Plan in north-eastern China 2020–2025 in March 2020. The plan announced that the total area adopting conservation tillage in north-eastern China will reach 140 million mu (93 million hectares) in north-eastern China by the end of 2025. According to the plan, the government will support the development of high-performance conservation agriculture machinery, while expert groups at the ministry and provincial levels will be established to provide technical guidance. ACIAR invested in two conservation tillage projects between 1992 and 2003, and with government support the technology now has been widely adopted in China.

In light of substantial achievements by China in the development of its society and economy, changes are in place to foster a relationship between ACIAR and China that is substantially or totally focused on trilateral collaboration.

## Country priorities

In August 2019, ACIAR signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS). CATAS is China’s national institution for tropical agricultural research, which employs nearly 4,000 scientists across a range of fields and disciplines. The memorandum of understanding will see greater collaboration between ACIAR and CATAS in contributing to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals through brokering trilateral partnerships across South-East Asia and the Pacific region.



A detailed study of horticultural markets in China is part of a broader project to design practical horticulture marketing policy reforms in Pakistan. Photo: ACIAR. ACIAR project: ADP/2014/043.

*Fusarium* wilt (Panama disease) has affected banana crops in many countries in the world and is a potential theme for trilateral collaboration between Australia, China and another partner country. CATAS, together with Guangdong Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the International Tropical Fruits Network, is planning to host an international workshop on *Fusarium* wilt in late 2020 or early 2021. At this time, ACIAR will take the opportunity to discuss potential cooperation on *Fusarium* wilt with CATAS and Guangdong Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

During 2020–21, ACIAR will continue developing opportunities for trilateral collaboration with other Chinese research organisations, including the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS). This includes joint work with Indonesia and the CAAS Citrus Research Institute on citrus greening disease, which will bring China’s expertise in the management of the disease to the Indonesian context. We are also developing opportunities for trilateral collaboration with Pakistan on citrus and forages.

ACIAR is also exploring opportunities to work with the CAAS Center of International Agricultural Research, which in 2019 hosted a number of events including an international workshop on women’s empowerment that attracted many participants from Asia. These events aligned well with the ACIAR gender equity policy and strategy, and we believe great impacts will be delivered if we can work together in this field. In 2020, ACIAR will seek to develop a collaborative arrangement with the CAAS Center of International Agricultural Research.

## 2020–21 research program

ACIAR supports four projects in China, all of which are part of regional projects. The projects address our high-level objectives, as outlined in the 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by ACIAR and partner organisations.

The following sections briefly describe individual ACIAR-supported projects and anticipated outputs in China. The projects are grouped according to research program. Each project description is referenced in a list at the end of this section, which provides the project title and code.

### Agribusiness

The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor will provide Pakistan with preferential access to the world’s fastest growing horticulture market. Understanding this market and China’s experience in market reform is valuable for increasing growth, employment and productivity in Pakistan’s horticultural markets. A project led by Professor Jeffrey LaFrance of Monash University has undertaken a detailed study of horticultural markets in China as part of a broader project to design practical horticulture marketing policy reforms in Pakistan. This will help improve producer and consumer welfare, with attention to gender and poverty dimensions. The study finishes in 2020, and its outputs will support the development of commodity market models and provide an analysis of domestic and export market potential.<sup>1</sup>

Success in rural transformation is not only measured by income growth of the rural population, but also by the degree of inclusiveness in society. A project in China, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan, led by Dr Chunlai Chen of the Australian National University, endeavours to understand the nature and drivers of rural transformation in order to provide better policy advice to underpin the success of transformation. In 2020–21, the project will select study regions and collect data to understand the components of success.<sup>2</sup>

### Horticulture

Huánglóngbīng, or citrus greening disease, is a destructive bacterial disease of citrus. It is spread mainly by the Asian citrus psyllid and infected propagation material. All commercially cultivated citrus varieties are susceptible to the disease and currently there is no cure. Effective management is considered the largest challenge ever faced by citrus industries worldwide. A new project led by Dr Jianhua Mo of the NSW Department of Primary Industries will leverage international expertise to tackle the deficiencies in current huánglóngbīng management practices. A trilateral project with partners from Australia, Indonesia and China will be conducted to enhance the sustainable management of huánglóngbīng and the Asian citrus psyllid in Indonesia and China, and increase the preparedness of the Australian citrus industry for an incursion of both the disease and the vector.<sup>3</sup>

### Livestock Systems

China and Mongolia have more than 520 million hectares of inter-connected grasslands that support the livelihoods of more than five million low-income pastoral households. The grasslands also support various ecosystem services, from improving air and water quality to providing a carbon sink. A project, led by Dr Colin Brown of the University of Queensland, seeks to address concerns over the condition of these grasslands and the livelihoods of herders in China and Mongolia. The project will conclude at the end of 2020. Having identified the incentives that will drive improved management of grassland grazing systems in previous years, the project will deliver a suite of incentive-based policies that are designed to improve grassland management practices and pastoral livestock systems, for the consideration of stakeholders.<sup>4</sup>

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See page 209 for contact details

### Current and proposed projects

1. Policy and institutional reforms to improve horticultural markets in Pakistan [China, Pakistan] (ADP/2014/043)
2. Understanding the drivers of successful and inclusive rural regional transformation: sharing experiences and policy advice in Bangladesh, China, Indonesia and Pakistan (ADP/2017/024)
3. Preparedness and management of huánglóngbīng (citrus greening disease) to safeguard the future of citrus industry in Australia, China and Indonesia (HORT/2019/164)
4. Strengthening incentives for improved grassland management in China and Mongolia (ADP/2015/107)

