

# Thailand



**A\$0.2** million  
**Budgeted funding**



**1**

**Bilateral and regional  
research projects**

Australia and Thailand have longstanding and deep connections. Formal diplomatic relations commenced in 1952. We cooperate in a broad range of areas of mutual interest, including trade and investment, law enforcement, counterterrorism, education, security, migration and tourism. The bilateral relationship is supported by mutual membership of international and regional organisations. Thailand moved from being an aid recipient to an aid donor in 2003.

An overview of Australia's relationship with Thailand is available on the DFAT website.

**Thailand is one of five original members of ASEAN and has nurtured close ties with other member states over the years. As the second-biggest economy in ASEAN, Thailand actively promotes integration efforts under the ASEAN Economic Community.**

Over the last four decades, Thailand has made significant progress in social and economic development and moved from a low-income to an upper-middle-income country.

The agriculture sector of Thailand contributes only 8% to the national GDP but agriculture plays two essential roles in Thai society. First, as a major source of food supply, not only for its own people but also globally; and second, as a major source of employment. About 30% of the population is engaged in agricultural production. In 2018, agricultural products made up approximately 17% of total exports. Many of these, such as natural rubber, rice, cassava, sugar and canned pineapple, are ranked first or in the top 10 of market share in the world market.

Just like its neighbours, Thailand's agriculture sector faces problems such as fluctuating prices of agricultural products, inappropriate use of farm inputs, lack of water, depleted natural resources and ageing farmers. Thailand is also facing the effect of climate change and natural disasters such as floods and droughts. In early 2020, Thailand was hit with possibly its worst drought in 40 years.

To lay a foundation for long-term development leading to systematic growth and solutions to these problems, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives is implementing a 20-year Agriculture and Cooperatives Strategy (2017-2036). The development plan envisions to secure farmers' livelihoods, grow the agriculture sector and sustain agricultural resources. Last year, the Bangkok Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives announced plans to allocate as much as A\$5.4 billion to boost the Thai agriculture sector. The organisation plans to introduce and implement smart farming to 4,500 Thai communities nationwide, starting in 2020.

## Country priorities

Since transitioning from aid recipient to aid donor in 2003, Thailand maintains a strong technical cooperation program that includes development projects, volunteer and expert programs, fellowships, scholarship and training courses. Thailand works with ACIAR to share its technical expertise with neighbouring countries and support regional economic growth.

## 2020–21 research program

ACIAR works with Thailand on one regional-scale project that addresses 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. Each project description is referenced in a list at the end of this section, which provides the project title and code.

### Social Sciences

Previous ACIAR work reported that turning research into practical innovation is increasingly challenging in an era of accelerating global resource demand and climate change, creating an imperative for transformational change across farms, landscapes, markets, institutions and populations. A small research activity will generate practical insights and actionable recommendations for ACIAR programs to better integrate agricultural practice change and community engagement. Dr Mary Johnson of RMIT University will lead a literature study from the Mekong region, comparing and contrasting public health promotion approaches and agricultural extension to find practical lessons and areas for cross-disciplinary learning and innovation. A diagnostic framework and supporting resources will be produced for use by ACIAR to assess project proposals to ensure that agricultural practice change and community engagement are at, or redefining, the cutting edge of agricultural extension.<sup>1</sup>

## Current project

1. A framework for assessing agricultural extension approaches and an analysis of transferrable public health approaches [Australia, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam] (SSS/2019/186)

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