

Sri Lanka



A\$0.5 million
Budgeted funding



2

Bilateral and regional
research projects

Following a 26-year civil war and a tsunami in 2004 that left tens of thousands of people dead, injured or homeless, Sri Lanka has moved ahead to achieve middle-income country status. ACIAR is exploring opportunities for re-engagement based on mutual benefit and co-investment.

While Sri Lanka ranks 72 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index 2020, growth has not been uniform. Significant pockets of poverty exist in the former conflict districts of Mullaitivu, Manar and Kilinochchi in the Northern province, as well as Batticaloa in the Eastern province and Moneragala in the Uva province.

Australia has a strong interest in ensuring Sri Lanka continues its development as a secure, stable and prosperous partner of Australia in the Indian Ocean region, underpinned by an effective post-conflict reconciliation process.

ACIAR had a broad collaborative research program with Sri Lanka from 1980 to the early 2000s, which covered fisheries, agriculture policy, forestry, animal health and crops. In 2016, Australia's Commission for International Agricultural Research requested an assessment of re-establishing a collaborative research program with Sri Lanka. A scoping study concluded that there was a conducive environment to re-establish a collaborative research program with Sri Lanka, and that it should start with a multidisciplinary project in aquaculture for freshwater shrimp, focused on communities in the Northern province. Given Sri Lanka's middle-income status, any further re-engagement with Sri Lanka will build on lessons from this first project and on significant co-investment from Sri Lanka.

2021-22 research program

The 2016 scoping study for ACIAR's re-engagement with Sri Lanka identified 6 broad areas for potential future collaboration with Sri Lanka. Given that the partnership is completely new, in 2020-21 we started a single multidisciplinary project in aquaculture for freshwater shrimp, which includes a socioeconomic component, focused on communities in the Northern province.

This year we start a second project looking at ways to reduce food loss in fruit and value chains in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, as part of the Food Loss Research Program (see page 8).



ACIAR is supporting a project that is investigating stocking, monitoring and harvesting practices to optimise fish and prawn productivity and improve product quality. ACIAR project FIS/2018/157

Agribusiness

Horticulture, especially fresh fruits and vegetables are important food commodities in both Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Maintaining quality and freshness under humid tropical conditions presents a vast challenge in meeting the growing demand for domestic consumption and export. Supply chains are inadequate and inefficient. Food losses are large, especially during seasonal gluts. Associate Professor Anwar Shah of Quaid-e-Azam University leads a new project using mango and tomato as focal commodities to map value chains in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, to identify the extent and root causes of food losses. The project will then design and demonstrate affordable technological and organisational options to mitigate losses and create new economic opportunities. Sri Lanka provides a useful case study to contrast the fruits and vegetables value chain of Pakistan, as the 2 countries are at different stages of development and face different exposure regimes and vulnerabilities. This project is part of the ACIAR-IDRC Food Loss Research Program (see page 8).

Project: Developing food loss reduction pathways through smart business practices in mango and tomato value chains in Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Food Loss Research Program) (CS/2020/193)

Fisheries

Sri Lanka has a well-developed and sustainable inland reservoir fishery that makes up about 12–15% of total fish production and significantly benefits rural communities in the former conflict-affected Northern province. Management practices and stocking strategies for sustainable culture-based fisheries, based on a co-management strategy, have been established in a previous ACIAR project and have increased the productivity of the reservoir fishery. The Government of Sri Lanka has long recognised the potential for the extensive culture of the indigenous giant freshwater prawn (*Macrobrachium rosenbergii*) in inland reservoirs, but development has been ad hoc, with productivity and returns relatively low. A project led by Dr Clive Jones of James Cook University is investigating stocking, monitoring and harvesting practices to optimise fish and prawn productivity and improve product quality. The project will also conduct market-chain analysis to ensure farming practices meet market product requirements and benefits are socially equitable.

Project: Improved productivity, efficiency and sustainability of the culture-based fishery for finfish and giant freshwater prawn in Sri Lankan reservoirs (FIS/2018/157)

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