Australian Government

Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research

ACIAR

ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN 2024–25

About ACIAR

Research that works for developing countries and Australia

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is the Australian Government specialist agricultural research-for-development agency, within the Australian development program.

Vision

ACIAR looks to a world where poverty has been reduced, and the livelihoods of many improved through more productive and sustainable agriculture emerging from collaborative international research.

Mission

To achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems, for the benefit of developing countries and Australia, through international agricultural research partnerships.

Enabling legislation

ACIAR is established by the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982*, as amended. Also established under the Act are the Commission for International Agricultural Research and the Policy Advisory Council.

Responsible minister

ACIAR is part of the Australian Government Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio, and is accountable to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Penny Wong.

Governance

ACIAR has an executive management governance structure headed by the Chief Executive Officer, who reports directly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

This report should be attributed as the ACIAR Annual Operational Plan 2024–25

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Cover photo: Project reviewers met with farmers and researchers to discuss progress of a trial in Kenya that is comparing varieties of rapid-cooking beans (ACIAR project CROP/2018/132).
Credit: May Muthuri | ACIAR

ACIAR

ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN 2024–25

ACIAR


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OF AGRICULTURE AND RU

Welcome

ACIAR operates in a challenging global environment where smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters, and their communities, are increasingly impacted by global-scale challenges.

These challenges, which include climate change and increasing frequency of extreme weather events, equitable access to food, resources and technology, and geopolitical influences and tension, are interconnected and compounding. They require the collective action of individuals, civil society and national governments to find and implement solutions. However, resolutely addressing these challenges requires regional and global cooperation.

Australia's International Development Policy clearly articulates Australia's role in building regional resilience through sustainable development. The mandate of the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982* positions ACIAR as a strategic member of Team Australia in the endeavour to establish a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

Building climate resilience

The people and communities in the countries where ACIAR works are among the most vulnerable to climate change, globally. They are experiencing the tangible and intensifying effects of changing weather patterns, with devastating effects on food system resilience and economic stability. Mitigating impact and reducing future risk depend on significant investment and regional and international cooperation.

ACIAR is committed to investing in research that builds resilience in rural communities and empowers our research partners to lead climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. Most new projects established by ACIAR will have a strong emphasis on climate adaptation and mitigation, aligning our climate objectives with broader research-for-development objectives and sustainable development goals.

Embedding equality and inclusivity

Australia's International Development Policy holds the position that 'no country can meet its development potential without ensuring all its people have every opportunity to reach their full potential.' Addressing inequality requires an understanding of the root causes of inequality and exclusion, which include unequal power relations, economic, social and political disadvantages, and cultural and institutional disempowering systems.

ACIAR acknowledges that to achieve its research-for-development objectives, the principles of gender equality and social inclusion must be applied across our internal processes and external investments. We are committed to embedding these in all aspects of research, capacity development and outreach.

Developing potential

Opportunities for researchers in our partner countries to develop to their full potential are also at the heart of the work of ACIAR. Our capacity-development programs and activities support the development and strengthening of skills, knowledge and understanding of individuals and organisations. Through these opportunities, as well as project-based opportunities, partner country scientists become an integral part of achieving our shared development objectives and outcomes.

The ACIAR Capacity Development Program delivers structured fellowships and scholarships that are frequently reviewed and improved to achieve optimum benefit for scholars, their institutions and ACIAR. We also continuously strengthen our alumni programs to support ongoing opportunities for learning and mentoring in agricultural research for development.

Consulting deeply

Through the ACIAR Country Network, we are consulting more deeply with in-country partners, strengthening partnerships and supporting locally led research. Increased consultation with partner countries ensures our investments address evolving regional and national priorities, and enhance partners' capacities to tackle complex and intensifying issues related to food and nutrition security, climate change, rural opportunities and economic transition in the Indo-Pacific region.

Delivering on our mission

I look forward to the results and impact of our research for development partnerships in 2024–25, as we address challenges and strengthen links to deliver meaningful research and capacity development programs.

I encourage you to read on about our global partnerships and collaborations; our support of more than 170 research projects across 33 countries; and our highly regarded capacity-development program, that has an alumni exceeding 800 research scientists, policymakers and agricultural leaders worldwide.

I feel incredibly privileged and honoured to lead the global ACIAR team, and I am very proud of the work that we do as we continue to deliver on our important mission.

Wendy Umberger
Chief Executive Officer, ACIAR

Definitions

ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ACIAR Act	*Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982*
ADBI	Asian Development Bank Institute
AIRPOH	ACIAR–IDRC Research Program on One Health
Alliance	Alliance for Agricultural Research and Development for Food Security
APAARI	Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CABI	Centre for Agricultural Biosciences International
CGIAR	formerly the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CultiAF	Cultivate Africa's Future Fund
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DOST–PCAARRD	Department of Science and Technology–Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	gross domestic product
icipe	International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (of Canada)
SPC	Pacific Community
UN	United Nations
WorldVeg	World Vegetable Center

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Overview

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) brokers and supports collaborative international research partnerships to improve livelihoods and community resilience in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors in the Indo-Pacific region.

While working to our mandate, the world continues to be affected and influenced by inter-related and complex global challenges of climate change, economic and political volatility, and urbanisation. The ACIAR operating environment is concurrently affected by weather extremes, natural disasters, food and energy shortages, and geopolitical tension.

As an agency of the Australian Government, within the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio, ACIAR partners bilaterally and multilaterally with governments and institutions in the Indo-Pacific region to find solutions to grow food more efficiently, increase food system resilience, improve human nutrition and reduce poverty, as well as manage natural resources sustainably. While striving for more productive and sustainable agriculture, we must also support adaption to and mitigation of the effects of climate change.

In line with the Australian Government's development program, our work aims to build the capacity of individuals and institutions and identify opportunities for private sector-led development. Improving agricultural productivity and the profitability of enterprises, particularly small and medium enterprises, in our partner countries creates opportunities for improved livelihoods, more employment and increasing engagement for young people in rural areas.

The work of ACIAR reflects Australian Government policy imperatives articulated in:

- Australia's International Development Policy
- Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 is consistent with the purpose stated in our enabling legislation and reflects the policy imperatives of the Australian Government. It sets out 6 high-level strategic objectives to guide partnerships, programs and projects, which provide the framework of our operating program.

Three of our strategic objectives build knowledge to underpin crucial development objectives and 3 ensure that our work is equitable, inclusive and empowering. However, the way we design and implement partnerships and programs remains flexible and continuously evolves to meet the changing environments in which we work and the changing capacity of our partner countries.

ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027

ACIAR brokers and invests in research partnerships with developing countries in the Indo-Pacific region to build knowledge to support crucial development objectives

Strategic objectives 1, 2 & 3

1. **Food security and poverty reduction**
   Improving food security and reducing poverty among smallholder farmers and rural communities
2. **Natural resources and climate change**
   Managing natural resources and producing food more sustainably, adapting to climate variability and mitigating climate change
3. **Human health and nutrition**
   Enhancing human nutrition and reducing risks to human health

ACIAR works to ensure that its research-for-development programs are equitable, inclusive and empowering

Strategic objectives 4, 5 & 6

4. **Gender equity and women's empowerment**
   Improving gender equity and empowerment of women and girls
5. **Inclusive value chains**
   Fostering more inclusive agrifood and forestry value chains, engaging the private sector where possible
6. **Capacity building**
   Building scientific and policy capability within our partner countries

ACIAR operational model

Operational model

The ACIAR operational model of brokering science partnerships between the Australian innovation system and our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific region is as relevant today as it was when ACIAR was established in 1982.

Effective science in the field depends on the quality and durability of partnerships between farmers, researchers, industry and government. Our outstanding track record of building and sustaining deep, trusting partnerships for more than 40 years is now a great strategic asset.

The variability of influencing factors in each partner country means that our programs for research and capacity development must be based on partner insight and designed according to partner priorities. Programs must be flexible to adapt to sudden and significant changes in the operating environment, as well as anticipate slower and evolving impacts, such as climate change.

Our partnership approach reflects and embraces the growing research and leadership strengths of our country partners, aligns partner needs with areas of comparative advantage in the Australian innovation system, and maximises the mutual benefit achieved from international research collaborations between Australian and country partner institutions.

Within this evolving context, our operational model continues to deliver against our enabling legislation, Australia's International Development Policy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, through 3 key areas of work:

1. **Global research collaborations**

   We develop and foster partnerships and strategic relationships with international research and development agencies. We also develop and foster partnerships with research-for-development donors and the private sector to pursue shared goals and ensure that ACIAR-funded research results are implemented at scale.

2. **Bilateral and regional research projects**

   We generate knowledge and develop capacity in ACIAR-funded projects and programs to empower smallholder farmers, extension agents, scientists, small and medium enterprises, and policymakers to take on the intersecting challenges of growing more and healthier food and reducing poverty while using resources sustainably and addressing and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

3. **Scientific and policy capacity-development activities**

   We identify and establish opportunities for individuals and institutions in partner countries to boost research, technical, policy and management skills in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and management of land and water resources.

ACIAR plays an important role in delivering on the objectives of Australia's International Development Policy. ACIAR makes material contributions to development by ensuring that our investments in research and capacity development are based on genuine partnership, are locally led, address the needs and priorities of partner countries and support peaceful, prosperous and climate-resilient development in our region.

Regional stability and economic security

Australian security and economic interests are linked to those of countries of our region. The Australian Government's investment in agricultural research for development, through ACIAR, supports the promotion of peace and economic growth in our region. It also consolidates Australia's position as a trusted science partner and leader in the agriculture and natural resources sectors.

Food security and poverty reduction

The strategic objective to improve food security and reduce poverty among smallholder farmers and rural communities is central to the purpose, vision and mission of ACIAR. Reducing poverty is a key component of Australia's development program to support its objective of advancing a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

The ACIAR research portfolio supports innovation in food production systems to increase food production, provide more nutritious food and produce marketable surpluses to help improve livelihoods. Increasingly, our investment in food security and poverty reduction must address the challenges and constraints imposed upon food production systems by climate change.

Innovation and investment in food systems increases the resilience of farmers, communities and science agencies in partner countries in the face of ongoing and future disruptions such as climate change, natural disasters, economic shocks, civil unrest and global pandemics.

During 2024–25, ACIAR will support the development of more-resilient food production systems through global collaboration, investment in partnerships and facilitation of capacity-development opportunities. We continue our collaboration with Canada's International Development Research Centre to deliver the Food Loss Research Program. The Research Program develops regional and bilateral projects that strive to develop climate-resilient, innovative, sustainable and profitable food value chains. Our Capacity Development Program enables partner country scientists to develop scientific, research and leadership skills to contribute to food systems resilience.

ACIAR projects improving food systems in 2024–25 include:

- Food loss in the *Pangasius* catfish value chain of the Mekong River Basin (CS/2020/209)
- Sustainable intensification systems for climate-resilient development in Pacific island countries (CLIM/2020/186)
- Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands (FIS/2019/124)
- Increasing the productivity and profitability of smallholder beekeeping enterprises in Papua New Guinea and Fiji (LS/2014/042)
- Crop health and nutrient management of shallot–chilli–rice cropping systems in coastal Indonesia (SLAM/2018/145)
- Cropping system intensification in the salt-affected coastal zones of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India (LWR/2014/073)

Natural resources and climate change

Our second research-based objective, 'managing natural resources and producing food more sustainably, adapting to climate variability and mitigating climate change', is fundamental to the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters in the Indo-Pacific region. Many countries experience a degraded natural resource base, such as poor soil health and water quality, and these issues are increasingly amplified by the growing impact of a changing climate.

Increasingly, our research investments seek to support farmers and agriculture sectors in partner countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change and reduce emissions from agricultural production systems and value chains. ACIAR strives to broker partnerships and invest in research that can develop new knowledge and capacity to progress the science and practice of transforming food systems and livelihoods that are most under pressure to adapt to climate change or must introduce new technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The integration of climate change adaptation and mitigation across the ACIAR research portfolio is a part of the commitment of the Australian Government to support our regional neighbours to adapt and build resilience to the multiple and complex impacts of climate change.

Throughout 2024–25, ACIAR will engage with partners to understand and guide investments in climate change adaptation and mitigation, and to support capacity development that enables the transition to more resilient and sustainable food systems while protecting natural resources in our partner countries.

ACIAR projects addressing natural resources and climate change in 2024–25 include:

- Transformation pathways for Pacific coastal food systems (CLIM/2020/178)
- Regreening for the future: integrating climate change adaptation pathways into community-led regreening in eastern Africa (CLIM/2022/140)
- International Mungbean Improvement Network 2 (CROP/2019/144)
- Regional networks for large-scale coral and fish habitat restoration in the Philippines (FIS/2019/123)
- Responding to emerging pest and disease threats to horticulture in the Pacific islands (HORT/2016/185)
- Resilient and low-carbon livestock systems for trade and food security in the rangelands of eastern and southern Africa (LS/2020/152)
- Climate-smart agriculture opportunities for enhanced food production in Papua New Guinea (ASEM/2017/026)
- Farmer options for crops under saline conditions in the Mekong River Delta, Vietnam (SLAM/2018/144)
- Trees for salinity in Pakistan (WAC/2021/136)

Human health and nutrition

Better nutrition, food safety and food security are priority issues in our partner countries, and therefore are fundamental elements of the research and programs supported by ACIAR and its partners.

Throughout the Indo-Pacific region, countries, provinces and communities are experiencing the triple burden of nutrition – acute hunger and malnutrition alongside increasing levels of obesity and diet-associated diseases. In many countries higher incomes and urbanisation have led quickly to obesity and a rise in the incidence of non-communicable diseases, which in many cases are affecting previously under-nourished communities.

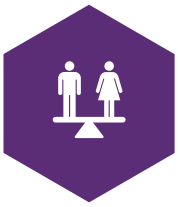
If the UN Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved by 2030, there must be global transformation of how food is produced, processed, distributed and consumed. Many projects in our research portfolio are designed with an element of enhancing human nutrition, improving environmental health and reducing risks to human health.

With greater awareness of the potential impact of zoonotic disease, ACIAR supports the continued operationalisation of One Health, in partnership with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). ACIAR is a partner in the Australian Government's Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative and supports regional research collaboration on issues at the intersection of human, animal and environmental health that affect food security and nutrition.

During 2024–25, ACIAR will continue to develop partnerships and broker research relationships that address the many factors that influence the nutritional value of food harvested and the safety of the food production system.

ACIAR projects supporting healthier food systems in 2024–25 include:

- Agribusiness-led inclusive value chain development for smallholder farming systems in the Philippines (AGB/2018/196)
- Village-based biological control of fall armyworm in Zambia (CROP/2022/112)
- A nutrition-sensitive approach to fisheries management and development in Timor-Leste and Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, Indonesia (FIS/2017/032)
- Driving vegetable food environments to promote healthy diets in Pacific island countries (HORT/2021/141)
- Timor-Leste bacteria enteropathy and nutrition study (LS/2021/126)
- Climate-smart coastal landscapes for sustaining fisheries-based livelihoods and food security in the Pacific (SSS/2021/120)
- Water security for locally relocated coastal communities in the western Pacific region (WAC/2022/128)



Gender equity and women's empowerment

Gender equity is crucial to alleviating poverty in rural communities and a key consideration in all contexts in which ACIAR operates. As more than half the world's farmers are women, ACIAR cannot credibly pursue its objectives around food security, human health and nutrition, climate change and reducing poverty unless we also promote gender equality and equity vigorously, both externally and internally.

A key commitment of Australia's International Development Policy is to support all people to fulfill their potential, including through new international strategies for gender equality, and disability equity and rights. ACIAR is contributing to the target of the Australian Government that 80% of all development investments will address gender equality and investments of more than A$3 million will include specific gender equality objectives.

Consistent with Australia's International Development Policy, all ACIAR research and capacity development investments reflect the principles of gender equity in design and implementation. Currently approximately 35% of project leaders in ACIAR-supported research are women, and we will continue to seek to address barriers to project leadership for women scientists. We will strive to keep the proportion of senior positions in ACIAR that are occupied by women over 50%. The proportion of women in senior roles in ACIAR increased from 11% in 2016 to 53% in June 2024.

ACIAR projects improving equity and empowerment in 2024–25 include:

- Integrating smallholder households and farm production systems into commercial beef supply chains in Vietnam (AGB/2020/189)
- Towards more profitable and sustainable mabé pearl and shell-based livelihoods in the western Pacific (FIS/2019/122)
- Enhancing private sector-led development of the canarium industry in Papua New Guinea (Phase 2) (FST/2017/038)
- Improving smallholder wellbeing through participation in modern value chains: sustaining future growth in the Pakistan citrus industry (HORT/2020/129)
- Improving agricultural development opportunities for female smallholders in rural Solomon Islands (SSS/2018/136)
- Optimising soil management and health in Papua New Guinea integrated cocoa farming systems (Phase 2) (SLAM/2019/109)
- Transforming smallholder food systems in the Eastern Gangetic Plain (WAC/2020/148)

Inclusive value chains

Effective, efficient and inclusive value chains have the power to transform livelihoods of some of the poorest regions of the world. Unlocking the potential for people to participate equitably in markets and benefit from the opportunities provided by business is a proven way to create employment, improve business outcomes for smallholders and communities and increase economic security in developing countries.

Understanding and supporting the introduction of value chain interventions across the ACIAR research portfolio, ensures that smallholder farmers benefit from innovations at all stages of the value chain, ranging from new livestock genetics to meet consumer demand, through to carbon markets to establish climate-resilient production systems.

ACIAR invests in research opportunities that aim to deliver knowledge, technology and capacity that leads to new, more efficient or better business systems and build partnerships to increase the efficiency, safety and inclusivity of supply chains. Research projects also link best practices in agriculture, fisheries and forestry to opportunities to support innovation in production systems and value chains, and create new domestic market opportunities.

During 2024–25, ACIAR and IDRC will continue the Food Loss Research Program – a series of projects working with partners in developing countries to address food loss along the value chain through innovative, locally driven solutions. Read more on page 18.

ACIAR projects fostering inclusive value chains in 2024–25 include:

- Evaluating service provision approaches and value-chain interventions to support milk cooperatives to grow the smallholder dairy sector of Indonesia (IndoDairy 2) (AGB/2021/124)
- Evaluating carbon markets as a pathway to establishing climate resilient coffee agroforestry systems in Papua New Guinea (CLIM/2024/101)
- Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan (CROP/2020/167)
- Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands (FIS/2019/124)
- Coconut and other non-traditional forest resources for the manufacture of engineered wood products (FST/2019/128)
- Asian chicken genetic gains: a platform for testing, delivering, and improving chickens for enhanced livelihood outcomes in Southeast Asia (LS/2019/142)

Capacity development

Innovation in agriculture is a key pathway to poverty reduction, increased food security and economic growth. Developing the capacity of agricultural researchers and policymakers and their networks and institutions contributes to innovation potential and supports partners to deploy relevant and effective agricultural knowledge, practices and policies to support the mission of ACIAR.

The ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 committed to building our investment in postgraduate research training for individual scientists, as well as value-added training in management, and leadership and complementary skills to strengthen research capability. The strategy also identified the value of developing ongoing relationships with the network of ACIAR collaborators to contribute to sustained and improved capacity.

Capacity development is an intrinsic factor in all research projects that ACIAR brokers. This ensures that the people we work with have the skills, resources and knowledge to sustain new initiatives, systems and approaches, so our investments lead to lasting change. The collaborative international programs and partnerships underpinning ACIAR-supported research also serve to improve Australian scientific capabilities.

We will continue to strengthen our Capacity Development Program to further integrate with the Research Program of ACIAR, a key recommendation of the mid-term review of the 10-year strategy.

ACIAR projects developing capacity in 2024–25 include:

- Digital monitoring of VietGAP compliance for high-value domestic markets and potential export in smallholder fruit value chains from Northwest Vietnam (AGB/2022/114)
- Locally led learning to turn polders into flexible assets for adaptation (CLIM/2021/137)
- Integrating the electrification and smart mechanisation of 2-wheel tractors with precision agriculture for improved productivity and sustainability (CROP/2023/129)
- Increasing technical skills supporting community-based sea cucumber production in Vietnam and the Philippines (FIS/2016/122)
- Building effective forest health and biosecurity networks in Southeast Asia (FST/2020/123)
- Development of area-wide management approaches for fruit flies in mango for Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and the Asia-Pacific region (HORT/2015/042)
- Managing heavy metals and soil contaminants in vegetable production to ensure food safety and environmental health in the Philippines (SLAM/2020/117)

Operating structure

ACIAR is established by the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982* (ACIAR Act), as amended, and is an agency of the Australian Government, within the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio.

ACIAR is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and a statutory agency under the *Public Service Act 1999*. ACIAR operates predominantly on budget appropriation from Australia's Official Development Assistance.

ACIAR has an executive management governance structure headed by the CEO, who reports directly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The CEO manages the administrative and financial affairs of ACIAR and its staff, subject to, and in accordance with, any directions given by the Minister. An executive team supports and advises the CEO on strategic priorities and corporate and operational policies.

The CEO is also supported by an Audit and Risk Committee, which provides independent assurance to the CEO on financial and performance reporting responsibilities, risk oversight and management, and systems of internal auditing of ACIAR.

Also established under the ACIAR Act is the Commission for International Agricultural Research and the Policy Advisory Council, to provide expert strategic advice to the Minister on international agricultural research for development.

Commission for International Agricultural Research

The role of the Commission for International Agricultural Research under the ACIAR Act is to provide strategic advice to the Minister on the formulation of programs and policies to identify agricultural problems and find solutions in developing countries. The Commission also provides advice to the Minister on the functions of ACIAR, and priorities for the ACIAR program and funding.

Policy Advisory Council

The role of the Policy Advisory Council under the ACIAR Act is to provide advice to the Minister on the agricultural problems of developing countries and strategic aspects of national and regional development. The Council plays a role in facilitating partnerships and being pivotal in discussions for setting priorities and research focus as ACIAR continues to develop strategies with partner countries.

ACIAR is a small government agency in the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio of the Australian Government. The Chief Executive Officer leads a staff of 90 (full and part-time) in 2024–25.

- 65 people are located at ACIAR House in Canberra, Australia
- 25 people are locally engaged staff located at missions and embassies of the Australian Government throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

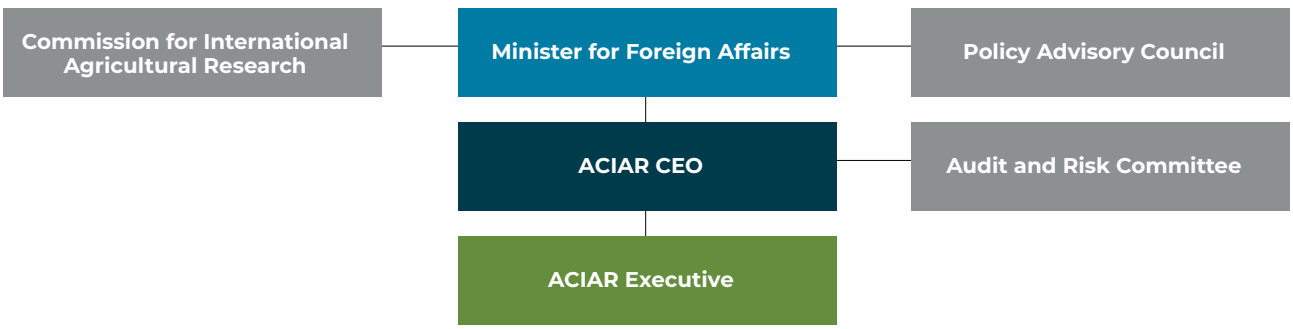
Staff are organised into 3 lines of management:

- Research
- Partnerships
- Corporate

More information about our executive staff and governance arrangements is available on the ACIAR website.

www.aciar.gov.au
>About ACIAR

Governance structure of ACIAR



ACIAR regions and partner countries


KEY
Pacific
1 Fiji
2 Kiribati
3 Palau
4 Papua New Guinea
5 Samoa
6 Solomon Islands
7 Tonga
8 Tuvalu
9 Vanuatu
East and Southeast Asia
10 Cambodia
11 China
12 Indonesia
13 Laos
14 Mongolia
15 Philippines
16 Thailand
17 Timor-Leste
18 Vietnam
South Asia
19 Bangladesh
20 India
21 Nepal
22 Pakistan
23 Sri Lanka
Eastern and Southern Africa
24 Ethiopia
25 Kenya
26 Malawi
27 Mozambique
28 Rwanda
29 South Africa
30 Tanzania
31 Uganda
32 Zambia
33 Zimbabwe
ACIAR Country Office
BEIJING
EAST & SOUTHEAST ASIA
HANOI
MANILA
PACIFIC
DILI
JAKARTA
PORT MORESBY
SUVA
CANBERRA

Funding and expenditure

Table 1.1 Overview of planned funding and expenditure, 2024-25

Budget estimate		
Funding		**A$ million**
Administered	Administered appropriation	107.06
	Special accounts	6.00
	Total administered funding	**113.06**
Departmental	Departmental appropriation	10.01
	s 74 Retained revenue receipts[a]	1.37
	Expenses not requiring appropriation[b]	1.34
	Total departmental funding	**12.72**
Total funding		**125.78**
Expenditure		**A$ million**
Administered	Bilateral and regional research projects[c]	82.74
	Global research collaborations[d]	18.79
	Scientific and policy capacity development[e]	9.35
	Outreach	2.18
	Total administered costs	**113.06**
Departmental	**Total departmental costs[f]**	**12.72**
Total expenditure		**125.78**

a) Revenue from external sources.
b) Depreciation, amortisation and audit fees.
c) Includes program support and impact evaluation.
d) Includes unrestricted funding to international centres.
e) Does not include training and communication activity within projects.
f) Includes salaries, executive, Commission, Policy Advisory Council and corporate support.

Table 1.2 Planned contribution to ACIAR activities by external funders or partners, 2024-25

Activity area	Partner funder	Expenditure
		A$ million
Regional and country projects	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	10.74
Postgraduate scholarships	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	3.50
Food Futures Research Program	International Development Research Centre (Canada)	0.45
Total		**14.69**

Note There is no external funding expenditure on projects and programs in Africa by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Table 1.3 Australia's funding to international agricultural research centres, 2024-25

International centre	Unrestricted	Restricted (project specific)	Total
	A$ million	A$ million	A$ million
CGIAR	17.30	4.84	22.14
Other centres	1.49	0	1.49
Total	**18.79**	**4.84**	**23.63**

Note 'Other centres' encompasses international partners that do not belong to the CGIAR network.

Table 1.4 **Planned project expenditure by country, 2024-25**

Region and country	Target appropriation budget allocations	ACIAR base appropriation	DFAT and other external funding	Total allocation
	%	A$ million	A$ million	A$ million
Pacific region	**26.6**	**16.72**	**1.44**	**18.16**
Fiji	—	5.41	0.02	5.43
Kiribati	—	1.16	0.34	1.50
Samoa	—	1.26	0.02	1.28
Solomon Islands	—	2.12	0.36	2.48
Tonga	—	0.92	0.02	0.94
Vanuatu	—	1.29	0.34	1.63
Pacific island countries	—	0	0.34	0.34
Papua New Guinea	—	4.56	0	4.56
East and Southeast Asia	**49.6**	**31.22**	**3.78**	**35.00**
Cambodia	—	4.27	0.31	4.58
Indonesia	—	6.47	1.13	7.60
Laos	—	5.73	1.10	6.83
Myanmar*	—	0.14	0	0.14
Philippines	—	4.52	0.81	5.33
Thailand		0	0.25	0.25
Timor-Leste	—	3.26	0.11	3.37
Vietnam	—	6.83	0.07	6.90
South Asia	**15.3**	**9.63**	**0.14**	**9.77**
Bangladesh	—	4.29	0	4.29
India	—	0.67	0	0.67
Nepal	—	0.85	0	0.85
Pakistan	—	3.30	0.07	3.37
Sri Lanka	—	0.52	0.07	0.59
Eastern and Southern Africa	**8.5**	**5.36**	**1.42**	**6.78**
Ethiopia	—	1.75	0.20	1.95
Kenya	—	2.55	0	2.55
Malawi	—	0	0.20	0.20
Mozambique	—	0.01	0.34	0.35
Rwanda	—	0.25	0	0.25
South Africa	—	0.03	0.14	0.17
Tanzania	—	0.03	0.20	0.23
Uganda	—	0.15	0	0.15
Zambia	—	0.32	0	0.32
Zimbabwe	—	0.27	0.34	0.61
Total project expenditure		**62.93**	**6.78**	**69.71**

Note Due to rounding, not all subtotals add up to the total.
*Planned project expenditure for Myanmar will not occur in 2024–25.

2

Global collaborations

ACIAR works with international partners to foster and implement global research collaborations that support strategic development in agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

The ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 proposes that by leveraging strategic international partnerships we influence and promote more productive and sustainable agricultural systems for the benefit of low-income and lower-middle-income countries, and Australia.

ACIAR builds and maintains multilateral and strategic partnerships with a range of international organisations, institutes and associations that are engaged in agricultural research and the delivery of global public goods.

The funding and support of international agricultural research centres is one of the roles of ACIAR, mandated by the ACIAR Act. We foster and maintain active working relationships with international agricultural research centres by providing timely, reliable and consistent funding, as well as strategic advice on research and governance.

The largest component of funding is provided to CGIAR, an international network of research centres dedicated to reducing rural poverty, increasing food and nutrition security for human health, and improving natural resource management and ecosystem services. In addition to CGIAR, we establish and foster partnerships with other international research centres and networks relevant to our mission.

ACIAR also develops and manages co-investment alliances and partnerships with like-minded organisations and donors. Co-investment partnerships demonstrate deep trust, enabling partners to leverage capacity and complement research strengths to build a critical mass of resources to invest in research that is more ambitious and wide-reaching.

During 2024–25, we will continue to strengthen multilateral and strategic partnerships by serving the international agricultural research community as:

- a valued engaged investor
- a strong and innovative partner
- a strategic research-for-development facilitator
- a broker of Australian science (by engaging relevant Australian research expertise).

The ACIAR Multilateral and Strategic Partnership Program will also work to progress Strategic Change 6 of the refreshed ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, which is ‘Maximising the value of our multilateral investments by strengthening our partnerships with multilateral agricultural research-for-development institutions’.

Australia as a global contributor

Partnerships built by the ACIAR Multilateral and Strategic Partnership Program contribute to Australia’s global citizenship goals. Our deep engagement in collaborative international research maximises the influence of the Australian agricultural innovation system and the international standing of Australia.

Investing in global agricultural innovation

Australia has invested in CGIAR since its establishment in 1971. CGIAR is the world's largest publicly funded global agricultural innovation network, comprising 15 research centres employing more than 9,000 scientists who work mostly in low-income and lower-middle-income countries.

With 50 years of experience, a presence in 89 countries, and a deep knowledge of local customs, values and markets, the CGIAR system works closely with more than 3,000 partner organisations. These include national and regional research institutes, civil society organisations, academia and the private sector.

CGIAR works towards a world free of poverty, hunger, malnutrition and environmental degradation. It is directly connected to the global development agenda and operates on an annual budget of about US$900 million.

The CGIAR research centres, shown in the map below, conduct world-class, interdisciplinary research that combines biophysical and social sciences to deliver development impact at scale. The research centres are responsible for hands-on research programs and operations guided by policies and research directions set by the CGIAR System Board with guidance from the CGIAR System Council.

A strong research-based relationship between ACIAR and CGIAR was forged soon after the establishment of ACIAR in 1982. As a result of amendment of the ACIAR Act in 1992, ACIAR became Australia's representative to CGIAR.

As a significant funder of CGIAR, Australia has high-level representation on CGIAR governance bodies, including the CGIAR System Council. ACIAR actively contributed to the One CGIAR reform to ensure CGIAR is well placed to deliver against both the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

During 2024–25, CGIAR is expected to launch its ambitious 6-year CGIAR Portfolio 2025–2030, which is intended to accelerate the implementation of the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy.

Australia contributes to CGIAR alongside other international funders, as well as significant donors, including the World Bank and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Further information on CGIAR governance and funding can be found on the CGIAR Governance and CGIAR Dashboards sites on the CGIAR website.

In addition to participating in the governance of CGIAR, Australia has many scientists who contribute as research leaders within the CGIAR and its research centres.

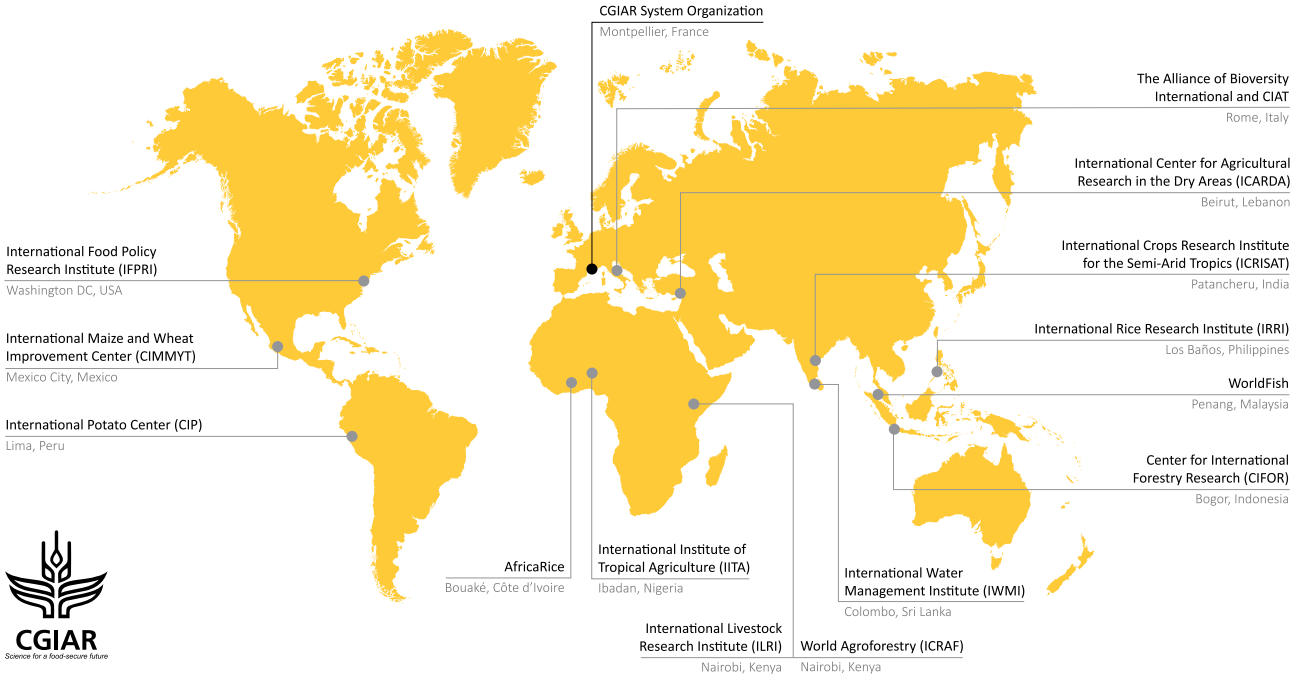


Figure 2.1 **Location of the agricultural research centres of the CGIAR system** Source: CGIAR

CGIAR investment 2024–25

Australia, through ACIAR, provides restricted project funds and unrestricted core funds to CGIAR. Restricted funding is delivered through specific research projects by individual centres of the CGIAR network. Unrestricted funding constitutes more than half of Australia's total support to CGIAR. Unrestricted funding is reviewed annually and in 2024–25 will be approximately A$22 million (Table 1.3).

The CGIAR research portfolio strives for global and regional impact by organising its work around 3 Action Areas:

- Systems Transformation
- Resilient Agrifood Systems
- Genetic Innovation.

These Action Areas align with the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, which aims to ensure that research provides real solutions for development. The strategy has 7 implementation approaches:

- embracing a systems transformation approach
- leveraging ambitious partnerships for change
- positioning regions, countries and landscapes as central dimensions of partnership, worldview and impact
- generating scientific evidence on multiple transformation pathways
- targeting risk management and resilience as critical qualities for food, land and water systems
- harnessing innovative finance to leverage and deliver research through new investment and funding models
- making the digital revolution central to our way of working.

The new One CGIAR research portfolio, centred on transforming food, land and water systems in a climate crisis, is well underway, with the first year of results now available on the CGIAR Results Dashboard.

To ensure research excellence and value of the investment in CGIAR for Australia, during 2024–25 ACIAR will:

- participate at the highest levels of governance of the CGIAR system, through membership and leadership on the CGIAR System Council and other advisory groups
- continue our collaboration with other donors to CGIAR through participation in multi-funder activities that align with ACIAR strategy and Australian interests
- coordinate Australian engagement with CGIAR, including consultation with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and other Australian organisations
- engage ACIAR specialists in the technical oversight of CGIAR Research Programs and in strengthening our partnership with CGIAR to achieve Strategic Change 6 of ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027.

Impressive return on investment

CGIAR delivers impressive economic, social and environmental returns on research investment. A 2020 study calculated a benefit:cost ratio of 10:1 for CGIAR investment since 1961, which is primarily due to enhancing the yields of staple food crops in developing countries. There are additional less-easily measured payoffs, such as greater food abundance, cheaper food and reduced rates of hunger and poverty, and a smaller geographical footprint of agriculture.

CGIAR research outputs have helped keep Australian farmers competitive in world markets by increasing yields and reducing costs. CGIAR germplasm has been incorporated into, and has greatly improved, Australian plant and livestock breeding programs. For example, 98% of all wheat grown in Australia is derived from CGIAR wheat germplasm. CGIAR germplasm is also prominent in improved varieties of sorghum, maize and chickpea in Australia.

Partnering in global and regional programs

In addition to our partnership with CGIAR, ACIAR has multilateral partnership arrangements with a number of other international agricultural research centres and networks.

During 2024–25, we will support global research collaborations with:

- The Pacific Community
- Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
- World Vegetable Center
- CABI
- International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology
- Asian Development Bank Institute

Pacific Community

The Pacific Community (SPC), previously known as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, has been the principal scientific and technical organisation working to support development in the Pacific region since 1947. SPC is an international development organisation owned and governed by 26 country and territory participants.

SPC and ACIAR have worked in partnership for more than 30 years and SPC is a key partner of both ACIAR and DFAT. SPC helps deliver on Australia's strategies to support the production of strategic regional public goods with strong benefits for the region's agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors, particularly in regard to biosecurity.

SPC provides regional specialist technical expertise to strengthen or, in some cases, supplement regional and national capacity. Several core functions of SPC are of particular interest to ACIAR:

- to strengthen sustainable management of natural resources (fisheries, forestry, land use, agriculture, minerals, water)
- to improve pathways to international markets
- to improve multi-sectoral responses to climate change and disasters
- to advance social development through the promotion of human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity and opportunities for young people
- to improve multi-sectoral responses to non-communicable diseases and food security.

ACIAR currently provides core and project funding to the Land Resources Division and the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division. The current core strategic partnership agreement, associated with this funding, extends to December 2026.

The partnership between ACIAR and SPC supports the production and maintenance of scientific, technical and management capacities, and activities in agriculture and fisheries that provide shared benefits for agricultural development activities of Pacific island countries and territories. Our funding is also aimed at building stronger strategic relationships between our organisations, enhancing strategic management capacity in the Land Resources Division and strengthening capacity for coastal fisheries development in Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division.

SPC facilitates the participation and engagement of ACIAR in regional consultation processes such as Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry, Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services, and Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry Services. During 2024–25, ACIAR and SPC will collaborate to progress strategic regional initiatives, particularly mitigating the impacts of current and future risks.

Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions

The Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) promotes and coordinates the national agricultural research institutes in the Asia-Pacific region, through inter-regional and inter-institutional cooperation. APAARI works to strengthen agrifood research and innovation systems in Asia and the Pacific, based on strategic priorities identified through regional consultation processes.

ACIAR has a history of working with and supporting APAARI. We provide annual core funding for research communication, knowledge management, advocacy for agricultural biotechnology, support for capacity development, and participation in expert consultations with national agricultural research system leaders.

World Vegetable Center

The World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg) is an international non-profit research and development institute committed to alleviating poverty and malnutrition in low-income and lower-middle-income countries through increased production and consumption of vegetables. It also manages the world's largest vegetable gene bank. WorldVeg undertakes research and development to realise the potential role of vegetables for healthier lives and more-resilient livelihoods. Through its extensive networks and research partnerships WorldVeg disseminates improved varieties of vegetable crops and promotes improved production methods to farmers. This results in higher vegetable harvests, higher incomes, more jobs and healthier, more-nutritious diets.

Investment in WorldVeg is an investment in research into the nexus between agriculture, livelihoods, nutrition and health. ACIAR provides WorldVeg with both core funding and project-specific funding.

ACIAR has a strategic partnership arrangement with WorldVeg, which supports plant breeding activities and capacity building in low-income and lower-middle-income countries in Asia, the Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa. The partnership focuses on the development of improved vegetable varieties, introduction of improved agricultural practices, collaboration and capacity building of public and private seed sectors and long-term support of the International Mungbean Improvement Network.

ACIAR funding has enabled:

- better conservation of vegetable crop biodiversity and development of more resilient crops to address current and future biotic and abiotic constraints to vegetable production in the context of climate change
- development, evaluation and validation of good agricultural practices for vegetable production that are safe for consumers, profitable and sustainable for all value-chain stakeholders
- collaboration to strengthen the capacity of smallholder farmers and national partners from both the public and private sectors in vegetable production and commercialisation
- enhanced mungbean germplasm conservation, discovery of novel traits, and strengthened international collaboration, knowledge and technology sharing on mungbean improvement.

WorldVeg has brought significant benefits to Australian agriculture, particularly through its mungbean breeding program, which has provided the varieties grown across much of northern Australia for many years. WorldVeg also holds varieties of tomato with genetic resistance to tomato yellow leaf curl virus, which poses an ongoing threat to the Australian tomato industry.

CABI

CABI (formally known as the Centre for Agricultural Biosciences International) is an intergovernmental, not-for-profit organisation established by a UN treaty. Australia is a member of CABI, along with 49 other member countries from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe.

CABI addresses issues of global concern through science, information and communication, with a focus on international development and research, publishing and microbial services.

CABI works to improve global food security, combat threats to agriculture and the environment from pests and diseases, protect biodiversity from invasive species, and improve access to agricultural and environmental knowledge. CABI improves lives worldwide by providing information and applying scientific expertise to solve problems in agriculture and the environment.

Australia's membership fee, through ACIAR, enables CABI to address key issues of importance to both organisations. The funding supports PlantwisePlus (including Pesticide Risk Reduction pathway), the CABI Development Fund and Australia's CABI membership (services relating to CABI's scientific expertise, products and resources). The CABI Development Fund invests in pilot projects to enable the development of strategies for climate-change adaptation and mitigation actions in smallholder agriculture; and in strengthening the plant biosecurity capacity and skills of partner countries. Australia's investment in CABI has contributed to improved agricultural outcomes for low-income and lower-middle-income countries and delivered benefits to Australian agriculture, particularly in the area of biosecurity.

International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology

The International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (*icipe*) plays an important role in agricultural research for development, particularly in the use of insect science for sustainable development, to ensure food security and improve the overall health of communities. ACIAR has engaged *icipe* as an implementing partner on research projects since 2015. In 2024–25, ACIAR will continue to strengthen its relationship with *icipe*, by providing core funds under the *icipe*–ACIAR Partnership Arrangement, and advocating that other funders commit to the organisation as strategic long-term (core) funders and partners.

Asian Development Bank Institute

The Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) is a subsidiary body of the Asian Development Bank. It plays a role in demand-driven policy research, capacity building and outreach to address sustainability challenges and accelerate socio-economic change towards realising inclusive and sustainable growth for the Asia-Pacific region.

The new partnership between ACIAR and ADBI supports climate-resilience research with a focus on food and nutrition security, and implementing capacity development initiatives for researchers, policymakers and practitioners of climate-resilient agricultural policies, practices and technology. Additionally, knowledge sharing and dissemination on effective strategies to enhance climate resilience in the agriculture and food production sectors will be core to the partnership.

The partnership will also emphasise the importance of evidence-based policies and investments to promote climate-smart agriculture and sustainable food systems at the national and regional levels for the Asia-Pacific region.

Building strength through collaboration

Co-investment programs enable ACIAR to harness the complementary skills of partners, leverage ACIAR funds, and engage in larger and more ambitious programs.

Co-investment programs take many forms, from shared design and implementation of a suite of research, to programs designed to support industry and build capacity.

International Development Research Centre

Our most significant partner in terms of co-investment is Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). IDRC was a model for ACIAR when Sir John Crawford submitted his recommendation to Prime Minister Fraser in 1981 to establish a centre for international agricultural development in Australia. Of all our multilateral partners, IDRC is most like ACIAR in that it is a specialist statutory agency investing in research as a form of strategic official development assistance.

In June 2024 ACIAR and IDRC renewed the partnership framework to 2030, to identify shared priorities and further develop collaboration to support a range of research initiatives through joint programming. Current co-investments are 50:50 partnerships and include:

- Food Loss Research Program, described on this page
- ACIAR–IDRC Research Program on One Health (AIRPOH), described on page 19.

Food Loss Research Program

The Food Loss Research Program aims to gain a deeper understanding of the drivers of food loss, from the farm through to the consumer. The program marks an important evolution in looking at food from a systems perspective. In some countries where ACIAR operates, there is a lack of post-harvest infrastructure for reducing food loss. While technological solutions exist, in many of the countries in which ACIAR works they have not been adopted or implemented at scale.

The Food Loss Research Program, launched in 2021, addresses inequity and barriers to market and value chain information. Through 4 projects the program seeks to:

- examine agricultural value chains within food systems at a provincial or local level in 2 or more countries in which ACIAR and/or IDRC work
- conduct foresight exercises until 2050, stipulating how value chains are likely to change given trends in labour, technology, mechanisation, climate change, urban and rural density, and nutritional requirements
- engage private agribusinesses along the value chain to document their experiences of food loss and explore models of innovation to mitigate food loss in the long term
- assess interventions that are currently being used at a local scale across the value chain
- assess factors that enable or prevent the transfer of intervention strategies from one location to another.

Food Loss Research Program projects

- Adopting a gender-inclusive participatory approach to reducing horticultural food loss in the Pacific **(CS/2020/191)**
- Developing food loss reduction pathways through smart business practices in mango and tomato value chains in Pakistan and Sri Lanka **(CS/2020/193)**
- Food loss in the catfish value chain of the Mekong River Basin **(CS/2020/209)**
- Managing food value chains for improved nutrition for urban vulnerable populations in Africa (Africitiesfood) **(CS/2020/210)** (Project concluded)

One Health program

One Health is a framework that recognises that the health of people, animals and the environment is interconnected. It provides an approach for developing more effective integration across the human and animal health systems in regard to regulations, surveillance, diagnostics and responses to disease outbreaks.

Globally, approximately 75% of newly emerging infectious diseases are zoonoses (diseases that can transmit from animals to humans). These diseases arise as a result of one or several factors that may be anthropogenic, genetic, ecological, socioeconomic or climatic in origin. Across the Indo-Pacific region, animal production systems are changing rapidly; however, local and regional capacity to diagnose, treat and control disease is generally weak and under-resourced.

Jointly funded for A$4.3 million, the ACIAR–IDRC Research Program on One Health (AIRPOH) is a portfolio of interconnected projects supporting research that will have a transformative impact on human, animal and environmental health. The program which runs until the end of 2025, aims to promote new ideas and thinking on One Health.

Research Program on One Health projects

- Developing strategies to reduce brucellosis transmission in Timor-Leste based on One Health collaboration **(LS/2022/161)**
- Policy support to the Philippines' national surveillance and control programs for African swine fever, avian influenza and antimicrobial resistance: a One Health systems approach to animal food security, public health resiliency and environment sustainability **(LS/2022/162)**
- Livestock enhancement through EcoHealth/ One Health assessment in Southeast Asia **(LS/2022/163)**
- The role of agricultural and forest landscapes on human and environmental health in Cambodia **(SSS/2022/164)**

Alliance for Agricultural Research and Development for Food Security

The Alliance for Agricultural Research and Development for Food Security (Alliance) is a joint initiative between ACIAR, the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture and the Crawford Fund.

Alliance partners undertake complementary activities and/or co-fund innovative approaches to research-for-development activities and delivery, using the unique and diverse strengths and expertise of the parties to better promote and achieve food security.

The Alliance recognised the potential for demand-led plant variety design to transform plant breeding for small-scale agriculture and food security. In 2014 it established the project 'Demand led plant variety design for emerging markets in Africa' (FSC/2013/019), which engaged with the plant-breeding and university sectors in many countries in southern and eastern Africa. The project concluded last year and has resulted in the adoption of resources in several institutions in Africa and beyond, enabling plant breeders to develop more high-performing varieties that meet customer requirements and market demand. The project has an alumni of more than 400 plant breeders.

A new project 'Developing and translating soil health information in Bangladesh with farmers and for farmers to build resilient agricultural systems' (SLAM/2021/107) has evolved from a shared interest between partners of the Alliance to develop a farmer-oriented soil health and resilience knowledge framework and evaluation system, to build resilient agricultural systems in Bangladesh. The project is taking a trans-disciplinary approach to soil health research and assess the impact of this approach in relation to practice change in farmers' fields. It brings together farmers, extension agents, researchers and government agencies, and potentially private sector partners, to work collaboratively through an iterative cycle of learning in order to address soil health risks related to climate change.

Director, Multilateral and Strategic Partnerships
Dr Bosibori Bett


3

ACIAR in the Indo-Pacific

Through longstanding partnerships with many countries in the Indo-Pacific region, ACIAR supports collaborative research on productivity, resilience, sustainability and equity in agriculture, forestry and fisheries systems to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods.

The work of ACIAR is organised into 4 regions of operation across the Indo-Pacific. Within each region, we facilitate a varied program of research and capacity development, reflecting the priorities, challenges and opportunities shared within each region and those that are unique to individual countries.

Our work is broadly characterised by global research collaborations (Chapter 2), bilateral and regional projects (Chapters 4 to 7) and scientific and policy capacity-development programs (Chapter 8). An Outreach Program (Chapter 9) raises awareness of ACIAR and communicates the impact and results of ACIAR-supported work through several platforms.

To maximise our effectiveness as an agricultural research-for-development agency, ACIAR builds and maintains longstanding partnerships with in-country agencies and organisations. These partnerships are fostered and supported by the ACIAR Country Network.

Through the Country Network, ACIAR identifies research and capacity development priorities collaboratively with partners in-country. These opportunities are considered collectively by all branches of ACIAR to ensure the most effective investment of research-for-development funding and best alignment of partner country and ACIAR priorities.

The Research Program brokers research partnerships and co-designs projects that will tackle the priority opportunities. During 2024–25, 174 projects will be active in our operational area. These projects are collaborations between Australian and international scientists, working together to address challenges in developing countries and building capability of in-country organisations and institutions.

Projects and partners

174

research projects and small research activities

33

countries where projects are located

68

commissioned organisations

338

collaborating institutions

Note: An organisation or institution may partner with ACIAR on more than one project, and in different roles. In this data, the same partner is counted once for its role as a commissioned organisation and once for its role as a collaborator. Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Country partnerships

To ensure our effectiveness as a development partner of choice across the Indo-Pacific region, the ACIAR Country Network is an essential component of our operational model to foster and support partnerships with in-country agencies and organisations.

The ACIAR Country Network comprises 25 locally engaged staff, based in 11 offices across the Indo-Pacific region. The network develops and maintains the strategic directions of our investments with in-country partner governments and their agricultural research and extension agencies, universities, and other stakeholders in agricultural value chains.

The Country Network achieves this through managing relationships, communication, coordination and administration of activities in the countries where ACIAR operates, and supporting research partners to develop, establish and administer activities related to research collaboration and capacity development. The Country Network is a vital link between Australian and international researchers and the relevant in-country research agencies.

Our relationships with partner countries respond as local research capability grows and the capacity of countries to fund research increases. At the same time, global challenges inevitably continue to affect the ability and extent to which some of our partner agencies can resource and participate in research collaboration.

The Country Network closely monitors and supports our in-country partners to navigate the challenges they face in engaging with research. Ongoing changes in circumstances mean our Country Network needs to be nimble and flexible when engaging with partner agencies.

ACIAR partner countries are increasingly playing a leading role in the design of projects and capacity-development programs, with countries now regularly co-investing alongside ACIAR in accordance with their capacity. This year, ACIAR, led by the Country Network, will be working with in-country partners to evolve and reinvigorate existing and develop new long-term partnership agreements, taking into consideration the prevailing circumstances in each country.

This approach aligns with the ambition of the Australian Government's International Development Policy, released in 2023–24, to ensure investments are locally led. It also demonstrates how ACIAR is contributing to the broader Australian Government development agenda. ACIAR has also been contributing to the drafting of the Development Partnerships Plans in our partner countries, using the local knowledge and expertise of our Country Network and ensuring the specialist areas of work which ACIAR can provide are included.

ACIAR Country Offices

ACIAR Country Network staff are located in the offices of Australian high commissions or embassies in the following countries:

Pacific

- Fiji (regional office for Pacific island countries)
- Papua New Guinea

East and South-East Asia

- Laos (regional office for Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar*)
- China
- Indonesia
- Philippines
- Timor-Leste
- Vietnam

South Asia

- India (regional office for India, Bangladesh and Nepal)
- Pakistan

Eastern and Southern Africa

- Kenya (regional office).

* One ACIAR staff member is located in Myanmar, but the location is a remote site of the regional office in Laos, not an ACIAR Country Office

More information about our Country Network is available on the ACIAR website.

www.aciar.gov.au
>Where we work

Regional investment

Pacific

54
projects

27%
research investment

East and South-East Asia

87
projects

50%
research investment

South Asia

27
projects

15%
research investment

Eastern and Southern Africa

20
projects

8%
research investment

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25. Some projects occur in more than one region, therefore the total of projects in each region will exceed the total number of individual projects listed on page 21.

Research program

The ACIAR Research Program works to build international science partnerships to tackle the challenges faced by smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters in the Indo-Pacific region.

ACIAR brings together research and scientific agencies from Australia, partner countries and international agricultural research centres to use science and technology to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, their families and their communities. This is achieved by addressing both global issues affecting livelihoods, such as climate change and biosecurity and local issues such as productivity and natural resource management.

The research programs operating in each partner country and within our 4 regions is determined through dialogue and consultation between ACIAR and in-country research partners. At the highest level, ACIAR-supported research is guided by the 6 strategic objectives of the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027.

Our research portfolio is organised in 9 areas:

- Agribusiness
- Crops
- Fisheries
- Forestry
- Horticulture
- Livestock Systems
- Social Systems
- Soil and Land Management
- Water.

Common to all research and capacity development investments are overriding themes of climate change resilience, adaptation and mitigation; improved livelihoods; food and nutrition security; and equity of outcomes for all community members.

We identify research priorities collaboratively with partner countries, broker and support research partnerships, and support collaboration in the design and implementation of projects to tackle those priorities. Once projects are established, we monitor and manage these investments throughout the lifecycle of research and capacity development investments to help maximise impact and return on investment.

Research projects are collaboratively designed and implemented through bilateral and regional partnerships led by a commissioned organisation (such as an Australian university, CSIRO, state government agency or private firm) or an international agricultural research centre or partner-country research agency. The projects are collaborations between the commissioned organisation, in-country research agencies, universities and government departments, other Australian or international research and development partners and stakeholders in the focus areas in which we work. We work closely with collaborators to support and manage research partnerships and to monitor the achievement of project milestones and impact.

We also work with other Australian government agencies to implement programs and projects with shared goals. Our largest and most important partnership with another government agency is with our portfolio partner, the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). To achieve the objectives of Australia's International Development Policy, our partnership with DFAT facilitates the scaling of new knowledge and technology with partners across the Indo-Pacific to help tackle challenges, such as the impacts of climate change that are affecting the food systems and the required to maintain healthy and equitable communities and a healthy environment.

Relationships with our in-country partners change as partner countries develop more capability in research and change focus on their research priorities. Our country partnership approach to research prioritisation adapts to deliver research projects that are consistent with jointly agreed priorities, needs and capabilities.

Our research program also evolves in response to new research opportunities enabled by new knowledge and technologies, and new research and development imperatives.

Projects are varied in design, execution and outcomes. Very broadly, projects range from research or investigations conducted by multidisciplinary teams, bringing together a group of partners across a number of organisations to work in multiple locations in more than one country over several years to develop new knowledge, technology or methodology, through to small research activities where an individual agency or specialist may conduct a desktop or scoping study over 12 months.

Impact and learning

Portfolio planning and impact evaluation helps us refine our priorities and learn lessons from current and past projects to inform the design and implementation of new investments, as well as enabling accountability to our Minister, the Australian Government and the Australian public.

An important aspect of our work lies in strategically planning for, and measuring, the impact of our investments. Consistent with the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018– 2027, the ACIAR Impact and Learning Team has 3 key areas of focus:

- systematic portfolio monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- informing improvements in investment prioritisation and design
- commissioning impact evaluation studies.

Systematic portfolio monitoring, evaluation and reporting

We are updating our monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework to ensure that project design reflects and supports Australian Government goals and objectives for sustainable development in our region, and enables longer-term and meaningful assessments of impact after project completion.

Informing improvements in investment prioritisation and design

The Impact and Learning Team supports improvements in the prioritisation and design of investments to ensure that the outcomes of ACIAR's work is aligned with the priorities of partner countries and Australia's International Development Policy.

Commissioning impact evaluation studies

We will continue to commission studies that quantify our contribution to achieving more productive and sustainable agricultural systems through international agricultural research and training partnerships. We will build on, and continue to develop, methods to understand and value the different contributions of agricultural research to improving food security, reducing poverty, enhancing human nutrition, reducing risks to human health, fostering inclusive value chains, and mitigating and adapting to climate change. With our commitment to gender equity and social inclusion, we will focus on empowering women and broader sectors of the community. The learnings from our impact studies will continue to build the scientific and policy capability within our partner countries and inform the commissioning of future work.

4

Pacific region program

The Pacific region is home to about 14 million people. Almost 11 million people live in Papua New Guinea, and the remaining 3 million live on island nations in the Pacific Ocean, with small individual populations, very low population densities and high proportions of people living in rural areas.

Three main themes define the development opportunities in the Pacific region in 2024–25: economic prospects, climate outlook and geopolitical dynamics.

Economic growth is predicted to be moderate in 2024 before increasing in 2025. As business activity resumed after the COVID-19 pandemic, Pacific economies expanded by an average of 3.5% in 2023. Growth of 3.4% is projected in 2024 and 4.0% in 2025.

Rural populations and entire national economies are vulnerable to the ongoing impacts of climate change and recurrent natural disasters. Over the last 50 years, a steady decline in per capita agricultural production has led to a growing dependency on imported food. However, agriculture, fisheries and forestry remain the backbone of the region's economy and culture, sustaining not only the livelihoods of millions but also playing a crucial role in maintaining food security.

In Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, agriculture accounts for about 35–40% of gross domestic product, while in Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and Vanuatu the contribution from agriculture is smaller, ranging from 12 to 20% of GDP.

The fishing industry contributes up to 10% of GDP throughout the region. However, this figure excludes postharvest activities in line with international standards, so for countries engaged in fish processing and trans-shipment, the economic significance of the fishing sector is greatly underestimated. Fisheries exports are important for about half of the nations in the region, and in 6 nations, fishery products account for approximately 80% or more of all exports. The tangible community and household benefits of fishing, such as nutrition and employment, are derived from coastal resources. In contrast, offshore resources contribute more to GDP, exports and government revenue.

For larger Pacific nations, forestry has been instrumental in driving economic growth, contributing to foreign exchange earnings, job creation and infrastructure development. Consequently, Pacific island countries and territories are confronted with the substantial challenge of balancing sustainable management of limited and diminishing forest and tree resources with the imperative for economic advancement. At the same time the social and environmental needs of growing populations must be addressed.

2024–25 program

Partner countries

Fiji
Kiribati
Papua New Guinea
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Tonga
Tuvalu
Vanuatu

54
projects

A$18.16 million

Investment in agricultural research for development

14
small research activities

40
research projects

Drivers of regional collaboration

Pacific region leaders have repeatedly identified 2 overriding threats to the economic development and wellbeing of people in the Pacific region:

- climate change and its impact on food systems
- the rapid rise of the incidence of non-communicable diseases, associated with declining diet quality.

Given these challenges, leaders have strongly emphasised the need for greater resilience in Pacific region food and agriculture systems. While investing in agriculture, fisheries and forestry has been widely recognised as one of the most effective ways of stimulating broad-based economic growth, the effort to increase resilience, rather than increasing productivity, now underpins the agricultural development agenda.

The Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development and the 2050 Strategy are national plans that map a pathway for Pacific island countries and territories to meet the ambitions of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2024, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu will present Voluntary National Reviews to highlight their progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and identify areas needing further support.

The Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Strategy for 2024–2050, endorsed by the Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services, also addresses the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The strategy outlines a bold vision for a future where agriculture and forestry systems in the Pacific island countries and territories are sustainable, resilient and contribute to the wellbeing of their people, economies and environment.

A valuable platform for driving regional collaboration is the biannual forum of the Heads of Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Services and the Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry, which ACIAR draws upon for research partnerships. The next Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry is planned to be held in Tonga in 2025 and further empowers Pacific member countries to influence discussions and direct ACIAR's regional priorities for the subsequent 2 years.

Regional collaboration is enhanced by the close working relationship between ACIAR and the Pacific Community (SPC). SPC is the principal scientific and technical organisation supporting research for development in the region and plays a key role in communicating research outcomes of relevance across the region.

Regional ACIAR program

While acknowledging the individual needs and unique research and development priorities of each partner country in the Pacific region, the scattered nature of the island nations and their small populations mean that many countries cannot address all their challenges and opportunities in agriculture on their own.

ACIAR has been at the forefront of transforming the agricultural landscape in the Pacific region by fostering collaboration between Australian and Pacific institutions to bridge gaps in knowledge, technology and resources. In 2024–25, ACIAR will invest a little more than A$18 million in agricultural research for development across 7 Pacific island countries and Papua New Guinea.

A central focus of ACIAR efforts in the Pacific region in 2024–25 will be fostering regional cooperation in research and capacity development to address shared challenges and opportunities. This collaborative approach encompasses projects on climate-resilient livelihoods, biosecurity, agribusiness development, community-based fisheries management, and integrated food systems and nutrition.

ACIAR aims to develop sustainable agricultural practices that are tailored to the region's unique environmental and socio-economic conditions by funding and facilitating research collaborations between Australian and Pacific institutions.

Current and proposed projects in the Pacific region, 2024–25

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Agribusiness				
Evaluating an alternative approach to sector development in Pacific island countries **AGB/2022/113**	Fiji	01/03/24	01/03/27	A$1,670,000
Crops				
Finding a genetic basis for oil palm responses to basal stem rot in a long-term infected block **CROP/2021/130**	Papua New Guinea	01/06/22	30/06/27	A$755,995
Scoping opportunities and research gaps for developing groundnut in Vanuatu **CROP/2023/186**	Vanuatu	01/11/23	30/06/25	A$575,411
Enhancing drought tolerance and food security in Papua New Guinea: the potential of new taro germplasm **CROP/2023/194**	Papua New Guinea	15/11/23	30/06/25	A$267,539
Sustainable agricultural intensification systems for climate resilient development in Pacific island countries **CLIM/2020/186**	Samoa, Tonga	01/02/23	31/12/26	A$1,633,625
Fisheries				
Half-pearl industry development in Tonga and Vietnam **FIS/2016/126**	Tonga, Vietnam	01/09/17	31/12/24	A$1,450,515
Improving peri-urban and remote inland fish farming in Papua New Guinea to benefit both community-based and commercial operators **FIS/2018/154**	Papua New Guinea	01/10/22	30/06/28	A$2,682,266
Towards more profitable and sustainable mabé pearl and shell-based livelihoods in the western Pacific **FIS/2019/122**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga	01/01/22	30/06/27	A$2,966,250
Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands **FIS/2019/124**	Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste	01/09/21	31/12/25	A$2,444,000
Coalitions for change in sustainable national community-based fisheries management programs in the Pacific **FIS/2020/172**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, South Pacific general, Vanuatu	01/09/21	31/12/25	A$7,664,545
Extending integrated analysis for improved food system outcomes in Timor-Leste and the Pacific region **FIS/2022/121**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu	01/10/23	30/09/26	A$2,500,000
Supporting resilient and equitable food systems: emerging oyster and seaweed mariculture enterprises and an exploration of co-culture of seaweeds in coastal communities in Fiji and northern Australia **FIS/2022/147**	Fiji	01/04/24	31/03/29	A$2,962,884
Planim Fiuja fo Yumi: co-planning climate-smart and equitable livelihood futures with small-scale fishing communities through a participatory and integrated approach to community engagement **FIS/2023/122**	Solomon Islands	22/01/25	21/09/29	A$3,816,085
Mitigating the incidence of ciguatera poisoning in Kiribati **FIS/2023/161**	Kiribati	01/04/24	31/03/26	A$491,737
Forestry				
Enhancing private sector-led development of the canarium industry in Papua New Guinea (Phase 2) **FST/2017/038**	Papua New Guinea	01/12/19	31/05/25	A$3,061,851
Promoting smallholder teak and sandalwood plantations in Papua New Guinea and Australia **FST/2018/178**	Papua New Guinea	01/01/22	31/12/25	A$2,201,386
Coconut and other non-traditional forest resources for the manufacture of engineered wood products **FST/2019/128**	Fiji	01/02/21	31/01/26	A$2,862,872
Livelihoods in forest ecosystem recovery **FST/2020/135**	Solomon Islands	01/11/22	31/10/28	A$3,544,264
Developing nut industries in Bougainville **FST/2022/124**	Papua New Guinea	01/07/23	30/06/25	A$250,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Horticulture				
Adopting a gender-inclusive participatory approach to reducing horticultural food loss in the Pacific **CS/2020/191**	Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	08/02/22	31/03/25	A$926,827
Responding to emerging pest and disease threats to horticulture in Pacific island countries **HORT/2016/185**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	01/04/18	31/03/25	A$5,360,526
Safeguarding and deploying coconut diversity for improving livelihoods in Pacific island countries **HORT/2017/025**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu	01/05/19	31/03/25	A$2,176,124
Protecting the coffee industry from coffee berry borer in Papua New Guinea and Australia **HORT/2018/194**	Papua New Guinea	01/07/19	31/12/26	A$2,400,500
Improving root crop resilience and biosecurity in Pacific island countries and Australia **HORT/2018/195**	Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	01/01/22	31/12/25	A$2,050,001
Enhanced fruit systems for Tonga and Samoa (Phase 2): community based citrus production **HORT/2019/165**	Samoa, Tonga	01/09/21	30/06/25	A$1,227,722
Driving vegetable food environments to promote healthy diets in Pacific island countries **HORT/2021/141**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	20/03/23	19/09/25	A$642,304
Pan genome analysis to support innovative utilisation of coconut germplasm resources in the Pacific and Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/158**	China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	01/01/25	30/06/29	A$3,700,000
Resilient commercial vegetable production systems for Pacific island countries **HORT/2023/165**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	01/07/24	25/06/27	A$1,200,000
Using carbon markets to drive multiple benefits for Papua New Guinea coffee farmers **CLIM/2022/109**	Papua New Guinea	02/12/24	28/02/29	A$2,565,000
Evaluating carbon markets as a pathway to establishing climate resilient coffee agroforestry systems in Papua New Guinea **CLIM/2024/101**	Papua New Guinea	08/04/24	30/06/25	A$436,253
Livestock Systems				
Testing and adapting the Pacific Regional Research Collaborative Framework **GMCP/2023/178**	Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	01/07/23	30/06/25	A$497,763
Strengthening beekeeping industries for improved production and livelihoods in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands **LS/2014/042**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands	01/07/19	31/12/27	A$3,100,000
A farm-planning approach to increase productivity and profitability of smallholder cattle systems in Vanuatu **LS/2018/185**	Vanuatu	01/01/22	31/12/25	A$1,770,000
Enhancing the management of antimicrobial resistance in Fiji and Samoa **LS/2019/119**	Fiji, Samoa	01/01/20	30/06/27	A$4,660,747
Strengthened surveillance for vector-borne zoonotic and livestock diseases in Papua New Guinea **LS/2021/158**	Papua New Guinea	19/04/22	31/03/25	A$250,000
Supporting greenhouse gas inventories and livestock data development in Fiji **CLIM/2021/160**	Fiji	06/10/23	28/11/25	A$735,278

	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Social Systems				
	Climate-smart agriculture opportunities for enhanced food production in Papua New Guinea **ASEM/2017/026**	Papua New Guinea	18/03/19	31/03/25	A$2,823,830
	Improving agricultural development opportunities for female smallholders in rural Solomon Islands **SSS/2018/136**	Solomon Islands	01/01/20	30/06/25	A$1,013,000
	Landcare: an agricultural extension and community development model at district and national scale in Fiji **SSS/2019/140**	Fiji	01/03/21	30/04/25	A$2,999,550
	Climate-smart regenerative ridge to reef landscapes for sustaining livelihoods of communities on custom land and food security in Vanuatu **SSS/2021/120**	Vanuatu	14/09/23	31/08/27	A$1,696,935
	Mitigating gender-based violence risk in international agricultural research **SSS/2022/116**	Papua New Guinea	01/06/23	31/12/24	A$250,000
	Developing an inclusive co-design process for strengthening food security in Western Province, Papua New Guinea **SSS/2023/134**	Papua New Guinea	01/0425	31/03/30	A$3,500,000
	Intersectionality and gender diverse climate change action in the Pacific: eliciting a Pasifika-led policy for future engagement **SSS/2023/183**	Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands	01/02/24	31/12/25	A$500,000
	Transformation pathways for Pacific coastal food systems **CLIM/2020/178**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands	01/02/23	31/03/26	A$1,965,540
	Governing co-benefits from circular food waste to energy systems in the Pacific **CLIM/2022/107**	Fiji	01/07/24	31/12/26	A$2,000,000
	Scoping the governance and co-benefits of circular food-energy systems in Pacific island countries **CLIM/2022/174**	Fiji	01/06/23	30/06/25	A$250,000
	Soil & Land Management				
	Better soil and land information for improving PNG agricultural production and integrated land use planning: building a revitalised **PNGRIS2 SLAM/2019/106**	Papua New Guinea	01/10/22	31/08/26	A$2,800,002
	Optimising soil management and health in Papua New Guinea integrated cocoa farming systems (Phase 2) **SLAM/2019/109**	Papua New Guinea	21/06/21	31/12/26	A$2,600,001
	Soil management in Pacific islands countries: investigating nutrient dynamics and the utility of soil information for better soil and farming system management **SLAM/2020/139**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu	01/01/23	31/12/27	A$2,650,221
	A review of the soil and agronomic constraints and opportunities in Pacific food garden systems **SLAM/2022/180**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	01/05/23	31/03/25	A$250,000
	Assessment of the capacity and sustainability of Pacific Agricultural Chemistry Laboratories **SLAM/2022/181**	Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu	13/03/23	28/02/25	A$500,000
	Sustaining soil fertility in support of intensification of sweetpotato cropping systems **SMCN/2012/105**	Papua New Guinea	15/02/16	30/04/25	A$3,073,417
	Water				
	Water security for locally relocated coastal communities in the western Pacific region **WAC/2022/128**	Fiji, Vanuatu	01/04/24	01/12/27	A$2,250,000
	Improving water governance in Papua New Guinea **WAC/2023/180**	Papua New Guinea	01/10/23	31/03/25	A$460,000

Note: This data was current at the time of publication. Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

www.aciar.gov.au

Pacific island countries

A$13.6 million
investment in agricultural research for development

37 projects

- **30** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **7** Small projects and research activities
- **29** Projects specific to Pacific island countries
- **8** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Pacific island countries and territories are home to abundant natural resources and significant geographic and cultural diversity. However, small and dispersed populations, limited economies, and vulnerability to natural disasters present development challenges across the region.

Over the past 2 decades, the coastal regions of Pacific island countries have undergone considerable change and development, however this increases the number of people that are more susceptible to natural climate variation and extreme weather events.

The International Monetary Fund estimates that Pacific island countries need to invest 6–9% of their GDP annually, over the next decade, to ensure their infrastructure is climate resilient and to protect coastal environments. However, access to international climate finance has fallen significantly short of this target.

Additionally, the region is confronting significant issues related to non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and obesity. These diseases account for around 75% of deaths in the region and their prevalence is influenced by food availability and consumption patterns.

Despite the threatening impacts of climate change, agriculture remains a vital source of income and livelihood for much of the population across the region and is a significant earner of foreign exchange. To ensure sustainable livelihoods, particularly in rural areas, the improvement of diets and programs to foster economic growth through trade are crucial development goals.

Rural communities

The populations of Pacific island nations are predominantly rural – up to 80% in some countries. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries are the backbone of the region's economy and culture, sustaining not only the livelihoods of millions but also playing a crucial role in maintaining food security.

The outmigration of Pacific islanders for seasonal work programs creates labour shortages, impacting productivity on farms and food production systems.

With over half the population in the Pacific region under the age of 23, the 'youth bulge' is anticipated to significantly influence the region's future development. This trend, particularly pronounced in the Melanesian countries of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, brings challenges such as rising unemployment and poverty, declining education quality, increased strain on fragile social services, more chronic health issues, and a heightened risk of social instability.

Political and economic environment

More than half of the world's population is voting in 2024, including 4 Pacific nations. Leadership changes from major elections in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, India and Indonesia potentially alter priorities for engagement in the Pacific region. Within the region, civil unrest in New Caledonia, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea also affects the operation and progress of research programs to varying extents.

Climate change

In addition to the detrimental effects on crop yields and agricultural output, climate change will negatively impact income levels from agriculture, food consumption, calorie availability, and child malnutrition severity.

Climate change and climate variability are having wide and varied impacts across the Pacific region. The transition from the El Niño event in late 2023 to a La Niña event expected in the second half of 2024 is expected to have a drastic effect on the region's food and water security, particularly in the agriculture and fisheries sectors where commodity yields are dependent on weather conditions.

During a La Niña event, reduced rainfall in some equatorial countries, like Tuvalu and Nauru, has led to water shortages and droughts. These conditions negatively impact local food sources like taro, banana and grapefruit. Conversely, in countries like Fiji and Solomon Islands, La Niña typically causes warmer ocean temperatures, increased rainfall and flooding leading to waterlogged crops, and a greater risk of diseases such as typhoid and dengue fever.

The impact of these events extends beyond land to the Pacific Ocean, which produces around 60% of the world's tuna catch (about 3 million tonnes worth close to US$7 billion annually). Known for its migratory traits, tuna tends to move eastward during El Niño events and westward during La Niña.

As the Pacific navigates through these challenges, efforts to improve sustainability and resilience in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors will be pivotal. The ability of the region to further harness its strengths and address its vulnerabilities will define its economic trajectory in the year ahead.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity is a growing challenge for Pacific island countries in the face of rapid urbanisation and increasing food importation. The World Health Organization has noted that despite an increase in calorie intake, the nutritional health of the Pacific population has deteriorated. This decline is linked to a transition from traditional diets to predominantly imported, low-quality foods. As a result, Pacific islanders are now experiencing some of the highest rates of obesity, diabetes, and micronutrient deficiencies globally. The slowing of agricultural output growth and declining income growth due to climate change could potentially worsen the issue.

Partnering with Australia

Australia has a long association with the countries of the Pacific region due to geographical proximity and through trade, investment and development relationships. Australia has supported and contributed development assistance according to the national development plans of individual countries partners, as well as supporting regional programs addressing biosecurity, climate-resilient agriculture, and food and nutrition security.

Australia's International Development Policy emphasises building resilience to the impacts of climate change, protecting the Pacific's ecosystems, and supporting economic diversification and gender empowerment in the region. These efforts will be formalised through Development Partnership Plans with specific countries in 2024. ACIAR, a key research and development partner since 1982, aligns its 10-year strategy with Australia's broader development objectives, reinforcing its commitment to the Pacific.

Regional priorities

The ACIAR program in the Pacific region has the goal of enabling regional collaboration in research and capacity building to address common issues and opportunities across the region. Our regional partner, SPC, emphasises integrated approaches to increasing resilience through research for development, including:

- deploying a diversity of species and products in trees, crops, livestock and aquaculture to increase resilience in the face of uncertainty
- growing a greater number and diversity of trees in forestry, agroforestry and horticulture systems to contribute to more sustainable and resilient agricultural landscapes
- diversifying crops to contribute to greater food security, nutrition and health
- better managing coastal fisheries and aquaculture to underpin healthier nutrition and more-resilient livelihoods
- strengthening market chains for greater equity and inclusion to contribute to improved and more-resilient livelihoods.

This regional direction guides ACIAR in brokering and supporting bilateral and regional research projects that address climate-resilient livelihoods, biosecurity, opportunities for stronger agribusiness development, community-based fisheries management, integrated food systems and nutrition.

ACIAR remains committed to supporting alumni and its capacity development programs and fellowships. By collaborating with Australian and international researchers, the ACIAR alumni offer valuable insights into the approaches that can enhance local food security resilience against external shocks and help identify strategies to secure future food supplies in the Pacific region.

The building of individual and institutional capacity in Pacific island countries is a critical part of Australia's support of agricultural development. This is achieved through targeted activities within projects to train researchers, as well as support for scientists to complete postgraduate degrees in Australia, through fellowship programs. In particular, the Pacific Agricultural Scholarship Support program, facilitated by ACIAR in partnership with the University of the South Pacific and Fiji National University, provides career advancement opportunities for researchers, as well as a framework for building institutional capacity by enabling researchers to undertake studies within their home region.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 37 agricultural research-for-development projects in Pacific island countries, 30 of which are specific to these countries and the remainder are part of wider regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR country partner organisations and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

Regional Manager, Pacific
Ms Mai Alagcan

Research Program Managers
Visit **aciar.gov.au** for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Pacific island countries, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Countries	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Evaluating an alternative approach to sector development in Pacific island countries **AGB/2022/113**	Fiji	01/03/24	01/03/27	A$1,670,000
	Crops				
	Scoping opportunities and research gaps for developing groundnut in Vanuatu **CROP/2023/186**	Vanuatu	01/11/23	30/06/25	A$575,411
	Sustainable agricultural intensification systems for climate resilient development in Pacific island countries **CLIM/2020/186**	Samoa, Tonga	01/02/23	31/12/26	A$1,633,625
	Fisheries				
	Half-pearl industry development in Tonga and Vietnam **FIS/2016/126**	Tonga, Vietnam	01/09/17	31/12/24	A$1,450,515
	Towards more profitable and sustainable mabé pearl and shell-based livelihoods in the western Pacific **FIS/2019/122**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga	01/01/22	30/06/27	A$2,966,250
	Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands **FIS/2019/124**	Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste	01/09/21	31/12/25	A$2,444,000
	Coalitions for change in sustainable national community-based fisheries management programs in the Pacific	Kiribati, Solomon Islands FIS/2020/172, South Pacific general, Vanuatu	01/09/21	31/12/25	A$7,664,545
	Extending integrated analysis for improved food system outcomes in Timor-Leste and the Pacific region **FIS/2022/121**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu	01/10/23	30/09/26	A$2,500,000
	Supporting resilient and equitable food systems: emerging oyster and seaweed mariculture enterprises and an exploration of co-culture of seaweeds in coastal communities in Fiji and northern Australia **FIS/2022/147**	Fiji	01/04/24	31/03/29	A$2,962,884
	Planim Fiuja fo Yumi: co-planning climate-smart and equitable livelihood futures with small-scale fishing communities through a participatory and integrated approach to community engagement **FIS/2023/122**	Solomon Islands	22/01/25	21/09/29	A$3,816,085
	Mitigating the incidence of ciguatera poisoning in Kiribati **FIS/2023/161**	Kiribati	01/04/24	31/03/26	A$491,737
	Forestry				
	Coconut and other non-traditional forest resources for the manufacture of engineered wood products **FST/2019/128**	Fiji	01/02/21	31/01/26	A$2,862,872
	Livelihoods in forest ecosystem recovery **FST/2020/135**	Solomon Islands	01/11/22	31/10/28	A$3,544,264

Program	Project title & code	Countries	Start	End	Total investment
	Horticulture				
	Adopting a gender-inclusive participatory approach to reducing horticultural food loss in the Pacific **CS/2020/191**	Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	08/02/22	31/03/25	A$926,827
	Responding to emerging pest and disease threats to horticulture in Pacific island countries **HORT/2016/185**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	01/04/18	31/03/25	A$5,360,526
	Safeguarding and deploying coconut diversity for improving livelihoods in Pacific island countries **HORT/2017/025**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu	01/05/19	31/03/25	A$2,176,124
	Improving root crop resilience and biosecurity in Pacific island countries and Australia **HORT/2018/195**	Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	01/01/22	31/12/25	A$2,050,001
	Enhanced fruit systems for Tonga and Samoa (Phase 2): community based citrus production **HORT/2019/165**	Samoa, Tonga	01/09/21	30/06/25	A$1,227,722
	Driving vegetable food environments to promote healthy diets in Pacific island countries **HORT/2021/141**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	20/03/23	19/09/25	A$642,304
	Pan genome analysis to support innovative utilisation of coconut germplasm resources in the Pacific and Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/158**	China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	01/01/25	30/06/29	A$3,700,000
	Resilient commercial vegetable production systems for Pacific island countries **HORT/2023/165**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	01/07/24	25/06/27	A$1,200,000
	Livestock Systems				
	Testing and adapting the Pacific Regional Research Collaborative Framework **GMCP/2023/178**	Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	01/07/23	30/06/25	A$497,763
	Strengthening beekeeping industries for improved production and livelihoods in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands **LS/2014/042**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands	01/07/19	31/12/27	A$3,100,000
	A farm-planning approach to increase productivity and profitability of smallholder cattle systems in Vanuatu **LS/2018/185**	Vanuatu	01/01/22	31/12/25	A$1,770,000
	Enhancing the management of antimicrobial resistance in Fiji and Samoa **LS/2019/119**	Fiji, Samoa	01/01/20	30/06/27	A$4,660,747
	Supporting greenhouse gas inventories and livestock data development in Fiji **CLIM/2021/160**	Fiji	06/10/23	28/11/25	A$735,278

Program	Project title & code	Countries	Start	End	Total investment
	Social Systems				
	Improving agricultural development opportunities for female smallholders in rural Solomon Islands **SSS/2018/136**	Solomon Islands	01/01/20	30/06/25	A$1,013,000
	Landcare: an agricultural extension and community development model at district and national scale in Fiji **SSS/2019/140**	Fiji	01/03/21	30/04/25	A$2,999,550
	Climate-smart regenerative ridge to reef landscapes for sustaining livelihoods of communities on custom land and food security in Vanuatu **SSS/2021/120**	Vanuatu	14/09/23	31/08/27	A$1,696,935
	Intersectionality and gender diverse climate change action in the Pacific: eliciting a Pasifika-led policy for future engagement **SSS/2023/183**	Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands	01/02/24	31/12/25	A$500,000
	Transformation pathways for Pacific coastal food systems **CLIM/2020/178**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands	01/02/23	31/03/26	A$1,965,540
	Governing co-benefits from circular food waste to energy systems in the Pacific **CLIM/2022/107**	Fiji	01/07/24	31/12/26	A$2,000,000
	Scoping the governance and co-benefits of circular food-energy systems in Pacific island countries **CLIM/2022/174**	Fiji	01/06/23	30/06/25	A$250,000
	Soil & Land Management				
	Soil management in Pacific islands countries: investigating nutrient dynamics and the utility of soil information for better soil and farming system management **SLAM/2020/139**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu	01/01/23	31/12/27	A$2,650,221
	A review of the soil and agronomic constraints and opportunities in Pacific food garden systems **SLAM/2022/180**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	01/05/23	31/03/25	A$250,000
	Assessment of the capacity and sustainability of Pacific Agricultural Chemistry Laboratories **SLAM/2022/181**	Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu	13/03/23	28/02/25	A$500,000
	Water				
	Water security for locally relocated coastal communities in the western Pacific region **WAC/2022/128**	Fiji, Vanuatu	01/04/24	01/12/27	A$2,250,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

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Papua New Guinea

A$4.6 million
investment in agricultural research for development

22 projects

- **15** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **7** Small projects and research activities
- **17** Projects specific to Papua New Guinea
- **5** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Agriculture is the primary economic activity of Papua New Guinea and is dominated by smallholder farming systems that support food, cash crop and livestock production. It generates income for more than 80% of the rural population and export revenue for the government. Agriculture contributes to around 30% of the country's gross domestic product.

In 2023, the government launched the Medium-Term Development Plan 4, 2023–2027 (MTDP4), which outlines strategies to grow the economy. Commercial agriculture, livestock development, forestry and fisheries featured among several broad-based investment strategies to drive economic and social development. On 27 May 2024, the government launched the National Agriculture Sector Plan 2024–2033 which aligns to the medium-term development plan and has the vision to 'make agriculture the engine for socio-economic growth and development through commercial agriculture'. Commodity commercialisation (including downstream processing and value adding), agriculture infrastructure, private sector participation and research and development (R&D) are among the major investment programs outlined in the plan.

The government anticipates 3% growth in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors in 2024, based on forecasts by the Asian Development Bank. Increasing productivity, efficiency and profitability of smallholder crop and livestock (including fisheries) farming systems, value adding and access to markets will enhance broader participation by women, men and youth in new opportunities and economic activities.

Rural communities

The population of Papua New Guinea is projected to reach 10.8 million in 2025. Currently, 88% of the population lives in rural areas. The proportion of young people is increasing, with demographics in 2021 showing more than 22% of population less than 18 years of age and almost 36% between 18 and 44 years. Continued population growth is leading to a youth bulge in the population. A recent survey by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) showed almost 60% of individuals under 25 years lived in rural communities. Creative strategies to engage the growing population are necessary to avoid increasing pressure on natural resources and agrifood systems. The highlands region will be particularly challenged being already more densely populated than the lowland regions. Rivalry amongst different ethnic groups, social structures and land tenure systems in many communities also poses a threat to agrifood systems.

Political and economic environment

Papua New Guinea started the 2024 year with civil unrest, with 17 January marked as Black Wednesday due to a riot, mass looting and vandalism in Port Moresby, which spread to other cities in the country. The riot was due to confusion related to decisions to increase tax on salaries and a glitch of the payroll system in the Department of Personnel Management. The civil unrest, supported by the police force, grew from frustration of the public due to increasing inflation, unemployment, general hardship and an unstable political environment. This, together with the aviation fuel crisis, has affected travel within the country, which in turn has affected ACIAR by postponing several in-country project meetings and reviews. Inflation continues to rise, which poses future threats of civil unrest and high costs of operation in the country for 2024 and 2025.

Climate change

Most rural communities and households in Papua New Guinea depend on locally grown rainfed crops for food and income. Few have access to reliable information, plans or adaptative capacity to manage the threats and risks of climate variability and climate change. A drought in 2016 resulted in widespread hunger in the highlands. In 2023, an extremely dry season in 3 lowland provinces resulted in severe crop loss, affecting food security in a number of rural communities. Climate variability has affected crop seasonality, causing changes to production patterns, such as flowering and fruiting times of crops. Farmers are concerned that disruption to planting seasons will lead to periods of hunger due to late cropping.

Food insecurity

The risks to household food security are influenced by several factors, including population growth coupled with low economic growth, changing attitudes to food consumption and diets, and increasing inflation. These factors have placed enormous pressure on existing food systems in terms of production and distribution of and access to food. An indication of the risk has been the continuous malnutrition and stunting affecting increasing numbers of children. The Health Department has raised this as an issue of importance, supported by an IFPRI survey which reported 34% of children under 5 years of age, in the survey, being stunted in their growth. In rural communities, long-term effects on health due to malnutrition and under-nutrition will impact labour availability and productivity. Enhancing natural resource management, seed quality, crops and livestock production systems and awareness of food consumption patterns will increase resilience of communities and agriculture systems.

Partnering with Australia

With shared history and shared geography, Australia values its long-standing ties with Papua New Guinea. The relationship has evolved to reflect a more mature, focused and innovative response to development priorities. Australia's development partnership with Papua New Guinea is governed by a comprehensive strategic and economic partnership, which reinforces the strong bonds between the 2 countries and strengthens an ambitious vision for the future.

The recently established Australia–Papua New Guinea Economic Development Partnership sets out 5 pillars through which Australia will deliver economic aid. Pillar 4 focuses on agriculture and aims to support work around export facilitation, local supply chains, biosecurity and agricultural productivity. Australia also supports agricultural development in the country through its other regional and multilateral programs, GrowPNG and the International Finance Corporation, which aim to support work around large-scale commercial agriculture and agribusinesses.

In agricultural research, Australia's support through ACIAR plays a significant role in building the resilience of smallholders and the capability of supporting organisations, and will continue to support Papua New Guinea in moving towards more sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry livelihood systems. Within the national landscape, the new National Agriculture Development Plan places a spotlight on the need to commercialise agriculture and the importance of private sector partnership for growing businesses and developing the sector. The plan identifies the role of science and research in improving agricultural systems and natural resource management, to increase the resilience of livelihoods.

Country priorities

ACIAR works with Australian and in-country partners in Papua New Guinea to improve the productivity and resilience of agrifood systems and enhancing access to markets and services.

In 2024–25, ACIAR research partnerships with Papua New Guinea will continue to focus on the sectors of horticulture, livestock, fisheries and forestry, striving to understand how to achieve scientific and socioeconomic benefits. Ultimately, the research works to secure improvements in food supply, food access and rural incomes for smallholders through increased productivity and enhanced access to markets and services.

The research partnerships established by ACIAR between partners in Australia and Papua New Guinea aim to:

- overcome social, cultural and policy obstacles to benefits from agricultural technologies, particularly with respect to gender equity and women
- improve smallholder vegetable production and starchy staple systems
- analyse commodity and market chains to guide policy and improve production and marketing for cocoa, coffee, coconut and oil palm crops
- enhance germplasm quality for high-value tree species to improve community forestry and agroforestry systems
- work with private sector partners and farmers to adopt promising agricultural technologies
- monitor and identify options for managing biosecurity threats
- enhance livelihoods from smallholder fisheries, and inland and marine aquaculture
- increase household income through diversifying agricultural and related value chain enterprises.

In 2024–25, ACIAR will work with partners to design an integrated strategy and program of agricultural research for development between ACIAR and key partners in Papua New Guinea.

The building of individual and institutional capacity in Papua New Guinea is a critical part of Australia's support of agricultural development. This is achieved through targeted activities within projects to train researchers, as well as support for scientists to complete postgraduate degrees in Australia, through fellowship programs.

ACIAR will continue to support partner institutions to build the capacity of research personnel through long-term and short-term courses, informal networking events and hands-on experience at the project level. Through this process, ACIAR plays a very significant role in contributing to the development of human capital of Papua New Guinea to gain skills and knowledge in sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 22 agricultural research-for-development projects in Papua New Guinea, 17 of which are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

Country Manager, Papua New Guinea
Dr Norah Omot

Research Program Managers
Visit **aciar.gov.au** for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Papua New Guinea, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Countries			
	Crops				
	Finding a genetic basis for oil palm responses to basal stem rot in a long-term infected block **CROP/2021/130**	Papua New Guinea	01/06/22	30/06/27	A$755,995
	Enhancing drought tolerance and food security in Papua New Guinea: the potential of new taro germplasm **CROP/2023/194**	Papua New Guinea	15/11/23	30/06/25	A$267,539
	Fisheries				
	Improving peri-urban and remote inland fish farming in Papua New Guinea to benefit both community-based and commercial operators **FIS/2018/154**	Papua New Guinea	01/10/22	30/06/28	A$2,682,266
	Towards more profitable and sustainable mabé pearl and shell-based livelihoods in the western Pacific **FIS/2019/122**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga	01/01/22	30/06/27	A$2,966,250
	Forestry				
	Enhancing private sector-led development of the canarium industry in Papua New Guinea (Phase 2) **FST/2017/038**	Papua New Guinea	01/12/19	31/05/25	A$3,061,851
	Promoting smallholder teak and sandalwood plantations in Papua New Guinea and Australia **FST/2018/178**	Papua New Guinea	01/01/22	31/12/25	A$2,201,386
	Developing nut industries in Bougainville **FST/2022/124**	Papua New Guinea	01/07/23	30/06/25	A$250,000
	Horticulture				
	Responding to emerging pest and disease threats to horticulture in Pacific island countries **HORT/2016/185**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	01/04/18	31/03/25	A$5,360,526
	Safeguarding and deploying coconut diversity for improving livelihoods in Pacific island countries **HORT/2017/025**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu	01/05/19	31/03/25	A$2,176,124
	Protecting the coffee industry from coffee berry borer in Papua New Guinea and Australia **HORT/2018/194**	Papua New Guinea	01/07/19	31/12/26	A$2,400,500
	Pan genome analysis to support innovative utilisation of coconut germplasm resources in the Pacific and Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/158**	China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	01/01/25	30/06/29	A$3,700,000
	Using carbon markets to drive multiple benefits for Papua New Guinea coffee farmers CLIM/2022/109	Papua New Guinea	02/12/24	28/02/29	A$2,565,000
	Evaluating carbon markets as a pathway to establishing climate resilient coffee agroforestry systems in Papua New Guinea **CLIM/2024/101**	Papua New Guinea	08/04/24	30/06/25	A$436,253
	Livestock Systems				
	Strengthening beekeeping industries for improved production and livelihoods in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands **LS/2014/042**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands	01/07/19	31/12/27	A$3,100,000
	Strengthened surveillance for vector-borne zoonotic and livestock diseases in Papua New Guinea **LS/2021/158**	Papua New Guinea	19/04/22	31/03/25	A$250,000

Program	Project title & code	Countries			
	Social Systems				
	Climate-smart agriculture opportunities for enhanced food production in Papua New Guinea **ASEM/2017/026**	Papua New Guinea	18/03/19	31/03/25	A$2,823,830
	Mitigating gender-based violence risk in international agricultural research **SSS/2022/116**	Papua New Guinea	01/06/23	31/12/24	A$250,000
	Developing an inclusive co-design process for strengthening food security in Western Province, Papua New Guinea **SSS/2023/134**	Papua New Guinea	01/04/25	31/03/30	A$3,500,000
	Soil & Land Management				
	Better soil and land information for improving PNG agricultural production and integrated land use planning: building a revitalised PNGRIS2 **SLAM/2019/106**	Papua New Guinea	01/10/22	31/08/26	A$2,800,002
	Optimising soil management and health in Papua New Guinea integrated cocoa farming systems (Phase 2) **SLAM/2019/109**	Papua New Guinea	21/06/21	31/12/26	A$2,600,001
	Sustaining soil fertility in support of intensification of sweetpotato cropping systems **SMCN/2012/105**	Papua New Guinea	15/02/16	30/04/25	A$3,073,417
	Water				
	Improving water governance in Papua New Guinea **WAC/2023/180**	Papua New Guinea	01/10/23	31/03/25	A$460,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

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5

East and Southeast Asia region program

Collectively, the countries that make up the ACIAR region of East and Southeast Asia are the most populous in the world and the region is regarded an economic powerhouse. Ten of the countries in Southeast Asia are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and engage closely in terms of trade and investment with countries in east Asia, including China.

Since 2009, China has become the largest trading partner of ASEAN nations and is also one of the most important sources of investment. Economic growth in ASEAN economies continues to demonstrate resilience with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) forecasting GDP growth rates of close to 5%. Noting some exceptions, such as Laos, which is experiencing high inflation and low growth in GDP.

With more than 100 million hectares of agricultural land, the ASEAN countries collectively are a major producer, supplier and exporter of crops, grains (including rice) and livestock products. Although agriculture only contributes to around 10% of total GDP of ASEAN nations, it accounts for approximately one-third of total employment. Given its significant role, the development of the food, agriculture and forestry sectors is vital to ensuring equitable and inclusive growth in the region.

Women's participation in equitable agricultural value chains is a prominent goal within ASEAN as an approach to addressing gender gaps in economic spheres. Food security, food safety and better nutrition remain priority concerns within the region. Overarching these priorities are the shared impacts of climate change, with increasing frequency of extreme heat, floods and storms, as well as less reliable and predictable rainfall patterns resulting in the loss of agricultural production and sustainability.

2024–25 program

Partner countries

Cambodia
China
Indonesia
Laos
Malaysia
Philippines
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Vietnam

87
projects

A$35 million

Investment in agricultural research for development

29
small research activities

58
research projects

Drivers of regional collaboration

The principal driver of regional collaboration in the ACIAR region of East and Southeast Asia is ASEAN, which for more than 50 years has addressed shared challenges and engaged with trade and development partners, including Australia and China. Recently, regional collaboration has been driven by critical factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitics and transboundary concerns.

Australia has worked closely with ASEAN since 1974, when it became the first Dialogue Partner of the association. While commemorating 50 years of dialogue relations in March 2024, ASEAN and Australia reaffirmed their commitment to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and a plan of action to implement the partnership, for the period 2025 to 2029.

Trade and investment are the major drivers of economic growth in the region, aided by overseas development assistance. The ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement came into force in January 2022 with the aim of strengthening regional economic integration and improving access to markets. In the agricultural research sector, ACIAR is supporting regional collaboration through support of the Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI).

Shared concerns about imminent and increasing threats posed by climate change have resulted in ASEAN creating a 'framework of ASEAN community building, with strategies and actions to enhance regional and international cooperation in supporting adaptation'.

In the field of agricultural research for development, regional cooperation plays a significant role, particularly regarding increasing resilience and adaptation to climate change, natural disasters and other shocks. Southeast Asia is one of the most natural disaster-prone regions of the world. Natural disasters threaten food security and rural livelihoods and have economic consequences for the whole region, so disaster mitigation is a shared goal among neighbouring countries. The ASEAN Declaration of 'One ASEAN, One Response' aims to increase the speed, scale and solidarity of disaster response in the region.

Cross-border challenges such as plant and animal biosecurity remain prominent and are driving efforts for regional integration. In the Mekong region, plant diseases have recently spread across borders, destroying crops of cassava, banana and plantation forests.

Regional ACIAR program

ACIAR engagement in the East and Southeast Asia region is strongly bilateral, based on robust partnerships with national research systems, long-standing diplomatic connections, and sustained development collaborations with Australia. However, there is a growing trend towards regional collaboration between countries facing shared challenges, particularly in relation to climate change. This is consistent with the research partnerships under ASEAN, which acknowledge that collaboration among member states is a sensible path towards addressing common challenges in the region.

The ASEAN drive towards regional economic integration and connectivity will increase demand from individual countries and regional bodies for research support that harmonises approaches to shared agricultural issues, including biosecurity, food safety and climate resilience. ACIAR contributes to this by funding regional research collaboration and through our support and chairing of APAARI.

Trilateral collaboration and new partnership models are emerging for ACIAR in the region. Driving these new partnership models are greater capacities that can be achieved when resources are pooled. This is translating into substantial co-investment from partners such as Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. While bilateral relationships remain the predominant model for development cooperation in the region, trilateral collaboration supported by ACIAR is increasingly possible and desired by partner countries.

In Southeast Asia we work primarily with 7 partner countries. However, we also work with development and coordinating organisations based in other countries in the region, collaborating on issues and programs of regional significance. For example, in recent decades Thailand has transitioned from aid recipient to aid donor. Thailand hosts regional organisations of relevance to ACIAR programs, including APAARI (page 16), the Asian Institute of Technology and the FAO regional office. We also include Thai expertise on projects of regional significance when opportunities arise.

Current and proposed projects in the East and Southeast Asia region, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Increasing the sustainability, productivity and economic value of coffee and black pepper farming systems and value chains in the Central Highlands Region of Vietnam **AGB/2018/175**	Vietnam	01/02/21	30/06/25	A$3,460,000
	Agribusiness-led inclusive value chain development for smallholder farming systems in the Philippines **AGB/2018/196**	Philippines	01/08/21	31/07/25	A$2,800,000
	Planning and establishing a sustainable smallholder rice chain in the Mekong Delta **AGB/2019/153**	Vietnam	25/02/22	30/12/25	A$2,600,000
	Integrating smallholder households and farm production systems into commercial beef supply chains in Vietnam **AGB/2020/189**	Vietnam	25/02/22	30/12/25	A$2,780,000
	Creating resilient communities through smallholder-inclusive tourism markets in Indonesia **AGB/2021/125**	Indonesia	01/07/23	31/12/28	A$2,800,000
	Digital monitoring of VietGAP compliance for high-value domestic markets and potential export in smallholder fruit value chains from the Northwest Region of Vietnam **AGB/2022/114**	Vietnam	01/04/25	31/10/28	A$2,104,039
	Evidence to underpin Indonesia's agtech transformation **AGB/2023/155**	Indonesia	01/09/24	31/08/27	A$1,497,866
	Evaluate the opportunities and constraints for growth of smallholder dairy value chains in the Philippines **AGB/2023/192**	Philippines	14/10/24	30/09/26	A$499,940
	Food loss in the Pangasius catfish value chain of the Mekong River Basin **CS/2020/209**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/04/23	30/06/26	A$1,441,700
	Partnering with trading companies to sustainably enhance smallholders' livelihood in the Central Highlands of Vietnam through pilot chain interventions towards high-quality Robusta coffee **CS/2023/181**	Vietnam	17/08/23	30/09/25	A$500,000
	Crops				
	International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	01/07/20	30/06/25	A$2,257,184
	Weed management techniques for mechanised and broadcast lowland crop production systems in Cambodia and Laos **CROP/2019/145**	Cambodia, Laos	01/04/25	31/10/28	A$2,257,184
	Agricultural innovations for communities: intensified and diverse farming systems for Timor-Leste **CROP/2021/131**	Timor-Leste	01/11/22	31/10/27	A$3,198,681
	Disease-resilient and sustainable cassava production systems in the Mekong region **CROP/2022/110**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/11/23	30/06/28	A$3,500,000
	Integrating the electrification and smart mechanisation of 2-wheel tractors with precision agriculture for improved productivity and sustainability **CROP/2023/129**	Cambodia	13/05/24	30/06/29	A$3,229,915
	Supporting greenhouse gas inventories and targeted rice mitigation options for Vietnam **CLIM/2019/150**	Vietnam	01/02/23	30/06/25	A$580,370

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Fisheries				
	Increasing technical skills supporting community-based sea cucumber production in Vietnam and the Philippines **FIS/2016/122**	Philippines, Vietnam	01/10/18	31/12/24	A$2,565,000
	Half-pearl industry development in Tonga and Vietnam **FIS/2016/126**	Tonga, Vietnam	01/09/17	31/12/24	A$1,450,515
	A nutrition-sensitive approach to fisheries management and development in Timor-Leste and Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, Indonesia **FIS/2017/032**	Indonesia, Timor-Leste	01/09/21	31/07/25	A$2,465,139
	FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia **FIS/2018/153**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	01/01/20	31/12/25	A$8,509,334
	Regional coral restoration networks and appropriate technologies for larger-scale coral and fish habitat restoration in the Philippines and Australia **FIS/2019/123**	Philippines	01/12/20	31/10/25	A$2,559,960
	Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands **FIS/2019/124**	Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste	01/09/21	31/12/25	A$2,444,000
	Institutional effectiveness and political economy of coral reef restoration in the Philippines **FIS/2021/112**	Philippines	01/09/21	30/06/25	A$1,783,101
	Extending integrated analysis for improved food system outcomes in Timor-Leste and the Pacific region **FIS/2022/121**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu	01/10/23	30/09/26	A$2,500,000
	Addressing key technical bottlenecks in the grouper supply chain in Vietnam (and Australia) through manufactured feed and hatchery developments that aim to improve small and medium-sized enterprises sector profitability **FIS/2022/148**	Vietnam	01/06/24	01/12/27	A$2,585,434
	Enhancing maritime environmental governance in Indonesia and the Philippines **FIS/2023/185**	Indonesia, Philippines	01/07/24	30/06/27	A$2,272,727
	The value of using a South-South triangular cooperation approach in mariculture for Cambodia and Indonesia **FIS/2024/105**	Cambodia, Indonesia	01/04/24	31/12/25	A$382,908
	Increasing capacity in population biology and harvest strategy implementation for sustainable tuna fishing and food security in Indonesia **FIS/2024/110**	Indonesia	01/06/24	31/03/26	A$499,414
	Forestry				
	Managing risk in Southeast Asian forest biosecurity **FST/2018/179**	Indonesia, Vietnam	24/09/21	31/12/25	A$1,900,220
	Building an effective forest health and biosecurity network in Southeast Asia **FST/2020/123**	Cambodia, Laos	01/11/21	30/06/26	A$1,898,717
	Forest restoration for economic outcomes **FST/2020/137**	Laos	01/07/23	30/06/28	A$4,306,332
	Retaining the jewels in the crown: Kalimantan peat forest remnants **FST/2021/145**	Indonesia	13/06/22	31/05/25	A$250,000
	Diversified livelihoods from native tree species in the Northwest Region of Vietnam **FST/2023/150**	Vietnam	20/07/24	30/06/26	A$347,643
	Sustainable expansion of forestry and wood processing in Laos and Australia **FST/2023/153**	Laos	15/11/24	14/11/29	A$3,100,000
	Scoping new co-governance research in Indonesian peatlands **CLIM/2022/138**	Indonesia	01/07/23	31/03/25	A$294,283

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Horticulture				
	Development of area-wide management approaches for fruit flies in mango for Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and the Asia-Pacific region **HORT/2015/042**	Indonesia, Philippines	01/01/20	31/12/25	A$3,037,493
	An integrated management response to the spread of Fusarium wilt of banana in Southeast Asia **HORT/2018/192**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	01/01/20	31/12/25	A$3,037,493
	Preparedness and management of huánglóngbìng (citrus greening disease) to safeguard the future of citrus industry in Australia, China and Indonesia (Phase 2) **HORT/2019/164**	China, Indonesia	01/01/21	30/06/26	A$1,789,999
	Smarter use of pesticides in tree crop systems in the Philippines and Indonesia for reduced fruit loss and improved safety **HORT/2022/125**	Indonesia, Philippines	01/07/24	31/12/28	A$3,150,000
	Scoping for the implementation of plant health support in Timor-Leste **HORT/2022/127**	Timor-Leste	01/10/23	28/02/25	A$150,688
	An integrated management response to the spread of Fusarium wilt of banana in Southeast Asia (Indonesia phase) **HORT/2022/178**	Indonesia	01/01/23	31/12/25	A$252,944
	Scoping the opportunity for urban and peri-urban agricultural development in Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/147**	Philippines, Vietnam	01/07/23	31/12/25	A$400,858
	Pan genome analysis to support innovative utilisation of coconut germplasm resources in the Pacific and Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/158**	China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	01/01/25	30/06/29	A$3,700,000
	MeloRisk Australasia: reducing the risk of exotic root-knot nematodes in Australasia **HORT/2023/167**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	12/06/23	31/03/25	A$87,500
	Scoping Vietnam's citrus industry priorities to inform the development of a research roadmap **HORT/2023/179**	Vietnam	01/02/24	31/07/25	A$299,999
	Livestock Systems				
	Investigating and developing interventions to mitigate food borne parasitic disease in production animals in Laos **LS/2014/055**	Laos	15/11/20	31/12/24	A$1,600,000
	Evaluating zoonotic malaria transmission and agricultural and forestry land use in Indonesia **LS/2019/116**	Indonesia	01/01/20	30/06/26	A$4,620,467
	Bacteria enteropathy and nutrition in infants and children in Timor-Leste through a One Health approach **LS/2021/126**	Timor-Leste	15/04/23	31/12/27	A$2,100,000
	Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Kenya, Philippines, Vietnam	01/01/24	30/06/27	A$1,400,000
	Developing strategies to reduce brucellosis transmission in Timor-Leste based on One Health collaboration **LS/2022/161**	Timor-Leste	05/12/22	31/12/25	A$999,943
	Country research update and policy support to the Philippines' national surveillance and control programs for African swine fever, avian influenza and antimicrobial resistance: a One Health systems approach to food animal security and public health resilience **LS/2022/162**	Philippines	12/12/22	31/12/25	A$1,000,000
	Livestock enhancement through Ecohealth/One Health assessment in Southeast Asia **LS/2022/163**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	12/12/22	31/12/25	A$997,838
	Detection and characterisation of foot-and-mouth disease in Indonesia **LS/2022/166**	Indonesia	01/02/24	31/05/25	A$155,855

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Social Systems				
	Next generation agricultural extension: social relations for practice change **SSS/2019/138**	Cambodia	11/01/21	31/12/26	A$4,500,002
	Building the evidence base on the impacts of mobile financial services for women and men in farming households in Laos and Cambodia **SSS/2020/160**	Cambodia, Laos	01/09/21	31/05/27	A$2,998,851
	Indigenous food systems knowledge exchange **SSS/2022/118**	Timor-Leste	14/08/23	14/02/25	A$250,000
	Pathways for future farmers in Southeast Asia **SSS/2022/134**	Laos	01/08/24	31/03/26	A$957,210
	Developing co-management options for sustainable peatland livelihoods in Indonesia **SSS/2022/155**	Indonesia	01/07/24	30/06/29	A$2,790,999
	The role of agricultural and forest landscapes on human and environmental health in Cambodia **SSS/2022/164**	Cambodia	14/04/23	31/12/25	A$999,999
	Harnessing the potential of digital agri-market services for inclusive and competitive markets in Cambodia and Laos **SSS/2023/105**	Cambodia, Laos	01/07/25	30/06/30	A$3,500,000
	Assessing the social and economic implications of transitioning to low-input and organic rice production in Laos **SSS/2023/137**	Laos	01/10/23	31/12/25	A$500,000
	Evidence-based policies to support Vietnam's agricultural and rural development **SSS/2023/138**	Vietnam	01/10/23	31/12/25	A$500,000
	Reframing the yield gap: Integrating farmer knowledge, culture and agroecological conditions for sustainable rice yields in the Philippines **SSS/2023/139**	Philippines	01/10/23	31/12/25	A$500,000
	Strengthening the research-policy nexus in the Laos for agricultural and rural development **SSS/2023/160**	Laos	01/03/25	30/07/30	A$3,190,000
	Pathways to build a gender inclusive and climate resilient food sector: country focus Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines **SSS/2023/191**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines	01/01/24	30/06/26	A$320,000
	Support policymakers and farmers in green agriculture reform: rice production in Vietnam **SSS/2024/107**	Vietnam	01/05/24	31/12/24	A$149,546
	Vietnam small holder farmers: challenges and opportunities for a sustainable future **SSS/2024/108**	Vietnam	01/06/24	30/06/25	A$383,775
	Agricultural policy development in Mongolia **SSS/2024/109**	Mongolia	15/08/24	30/06/25	A$202,339
	Extending climate and disaster risk and resilience to community level in the Philippines: a proof-of-concept **CLIM/2023/195**	Philippines	22/07/24	10/10/25	A$500,000

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Soil & Land Management				
	Farmer options for crops under saline conditions (FOCUS) in the Mekong River Delta, Vietnam **SLAM/2018/144**	Vietnam	01/01/20	30/06/25	A$2,313,286
	Crop health and nutrient management of shallot-chilli-rice cropping systems in coastal Indonesia **SLAM/2018/145**	Indonesia	01/08/20	31/12/26	A$2,000,000
	Managing heavy metals and soil contaminants in vegetable production to ensure food safety and environmental health in the Philippines **SLAM/2020/117**	Philippines	01/02/23	31/01/27	A$2,036,586
	Increasing on-farm labour productivity for sustainable production, nutrition and inclusive livelihood gains in Timor-Leste **SLAM/2020/141**	Timor-Leste	01/07/24	30/06/28	A$2,950,000
	Quantifying the impacts of nitrogen use and developing sustainable agricultural nitrogen management strategies in Laos rice-based farming systems **SLAM/2022/102**	Laos	01/01/24	31/12/28	A$3,089,448
	Cambodian soil information system supporting sustainable upland agricultural development **SLAM/2022/103**	Cambodia	23/07/24	30/06/29	A$2,838,392
	Meeting the biophysical information needs of peatland restoration and management stakeholders to support improved and integrated decision-making **SLAM/2022/104**	Indonesia	23/07/24	30/06/29	A$2,500,000
	Assessment of the adoption and adaptation of conservation agriculture and direct seeded rice in South and Southeast Asia **SLAM/2022/172**	Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	19/12/22	31/03/25	A$357,424
	Soil microbial interactions with crop replacement options in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta **SLAM/2022/175**	Vietnam	12/12/22	31/12/24	A$250,000
	Supporting practice change to improve the sustainability of agronomic management in vegetable production systems in Cambodia **SLAM/2023/100**	Cambodia	01/01/25	31/12/29	A$3,640,333
	Assessment of soil condition for coffee, pepper and fruit tree production in the 5 provinces of the Central Highlands of Vietnam **SLAM/2023/142**	Vietnam	03/06/24	30/11/25	A$500,000
	Developing soil knowledge, information and capacity to improve the productivity and sustainability of key cropping systems in Philippines **SLAM/2023/146**	Philippines	01/11/24	30/09/29	A$3,500,000
	Exploring soil hydrological function in degraded and intact tropical peat swamp forest **SLAM/2023/197**	Indonesia	09/02/24	30/09/25	A$150,000
	Carbon flux pathways: from ecosystem to the global carbon market **SLAM/2024/116**	Indonesia	15/07/24	31/01/26	A$500,000
	Management practices for profitable crop livestock systems for Cambodia and Laos **SMCN/2012/075**	Cambodia, Laos	22/03/16	31/12/24	A$3,142,140
	Defining the potential for mangrove-based agribusiness transformation in the coastal Mekong Delta **CLIM/2023/190**	Vietnam	01/03/24	30/09/25	A$471,200
	Water				
	Water for rice and fish: co-design and piloting of water management interventions for enhanced productivity of rice–fish systems in the Mekong floodplains **WAC/2022/153**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/12/24	30/11/27	A$2,100,000
	Understanding the role of remote sensing in supporting agricultural water management in Southeast Asia **WAC/2023/117**	Vietnam	01/10/24	30/09/25	A$370,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

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Cambodia

A$4.6 million
investment in agricultural research for development

17 projects

- **14** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **3** Small projects and research activities

- **5** Projects specific to Cambodia
- **12** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

In 2023, Cambodia exported over 8.8 million tonnes of agricultural products to 78 markets worth approximately US$4.8 billion. Agriculture contributed to approximately 22% of Cambodia's gross domestic product in the same year.

Cambodia's economic recovery continues to gain momentum post-pandemic with agricultural exports making an important contribution to growth and the resilience of the economy. Economic growth has remained resilient despite economic fluctuations in global markets.

In January 2022, the Cambodia–China Free Trade Agreement came into effect. This agreement makes China an important export destination for Cambodia's agricultural commodities. China captured 40% of Cambodia's total agricultural commodity exports with the 3 largest items being bananas, milled rice and cassava.

Rural communities

The Cambodia Agriculture Survey 2020, released in 2022, showed that 57% of households in Cambodia are engaged in agricultural production. Of these households, 94% were cultivating crops, 82% were raising livestock, poultry or insects, and around 27% were involved in capture fishing. Agriculture remains important to livelihoods in Cambodia, with an estimated 31% of agricultural households citing that 40–59% of their income came from agriculture. A further 16% reported that 60–99% of their total household income comes from agriculture.

Political and economic environment

The Pentagonal Strategy released in 2023 outlines the Cambodian Government's commitment to become an upper middle-income economy by 2030 and high-income by 2050. It focuses on sustaining economic growth, reducing poverty and inequality and improving overall development outcomes. One of the 5 strategic outcomes is *resilient, sustainable and inclusive economic development,* where agriculture development will receive considerable support by the government, particularly to attract further investment in the sector. To further demonstrate the commitment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Cambodia recruited more than 800 extension officers between 2023 and 2024 and aims to engage 1600 officers by 2025. The officers have been dispatched to support communities across the country. The intent is to strengthen production capacity, improve agricultural productivity and quality through provision of technical support to the modern agricultural communities.

Climate change

With extensive floodplains, Cambodia is highly vulnerable to floods as well as subject to drought. Cambodia scored 9.5 out of 10 in the 2023 global risk index for humanitarian crises and disasters. Climate change is intensifying flooding and drought events, and worsening saline intrusion. These events impact agricultural production and put at risk Cambodia's aspiration of becoming an upper middle-income country by 2030.

Food insecurity

Cambodia has witnessed significant economic transformation in recent years. However, progress remains fragile, challenged by geographical and gender disparities, as well as vulnerability to shocks – including climate-related disasters that can undo years of developmental gains. According to the UN World Food Program, a substantial portion of the population still faces food insecurity, poverty and economic shocks. Malnutrition rates are high especially in children under 5 years.

Despite these challenges, the Government of Cambodia has set an ambitious goal of increasing income status of the country, which relies on eradicating malnutrition, enabling all people to reach their full potential and being resilient in the face of shocks.

Partnering with Australia

Australia and Cambodia are longstanding bilateral and regional partners, who have a history of cooperation in health, agriculture, infrastructure and education since 1952.

The 2 countries are committed to working together to promote peace and stability across the Indo-Pacific region and continue to work together to as partners in economic growth, trade, security, development and education. The partnership is underpinned by strong and enduring institutional and people-to-people links, that have been built over more than 70 years of diplomatic relations.

As part of Australia's International Development Policy, the Cambodia Development Partnership Plan was developed in close consultation with government and stakeholders to jointly identify where Australia's development cooperation can add value and contribute to the development outcomes of Cambodia. The development partnership plan aims to work on 3 key strategic priorities: stronger institutions and better governance; public services are more inclusive; and a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable economy.

Building on more than 3 decades of research collaboration, ACIAR will contribute to the objectives of the development partnership plan by continuing to support agricultural research with our key national counterparts namely the General Directorate of Agriculture, the Cambodia Agricultural Development and Research Institute and Fisheries Administration under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In addition, collaboration will also continue with educational institutions such as Royal University of Agriculture and the Royal University of Phnom Penh to further strengthen capacity of agricultural researchers in the country. Based on the suggestion of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, ACIAR will consider formal stakeholder consultations in 2025 to review the relevancy of priority areas under the 10-year partnership agreement (2019–29) with the ministry. ACIAR investments align and complement DFAT's flagship program, the Cambodia–Australia Partnership for Resilient Economic Development, of which one of the components aims to enhance agricultural productivity and competitiveness of the sector.

Country priorities

ACIAR and the Royal Government of Cambodia (represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) have an ongoing 10-year agreement on the strategic priorities for research collaboration. From 2019 to 2029, research collaborations will focus on 3 domains to support the development of Cambodian agriculture:

- sustainable intensification and diversification of agriculture, focusing on non-rice crops in traditional crop-rice systems and alternative cropping systems
- sustainable intensification of market-oriented smallholder livestock production systems
- sustainable intensification of freshwater aquaculture production systems for nutrition-rich species.

Research priorities over this time will also take into consideration cross-cutting themes that address challenges across the agriculture sector. These are:

- gender equity, women's empowerment and nutrition – these are particularly important in the context of increasing labour migration that impacts women and children in rural Cambodia, and high rates of stunting and poor nutrition among women and children
- climate variability mitigation and adaptation to climate change, taking into consideration climate variability and enabling climate-resilient farming systems
- food safety and standards.

The Royal Government of Cambodia is committed to pursuing green growth through its National Strategic Plan on Green Growth 2013–2030 and its Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality by 2050. Given the importance of agriculture to Cambodian food security and its potential for commercialisation, investment in climate-smart agriculture and natural capital management, development partners are asking for these to be prioritised by government.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 17 agricultural research-for-development projects in Cambodia, 5 of which are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

Regional Manager, Mainland Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand)
Mr Ounheuan Saiyasith

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Current and proposed projects in Cambodia, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Food loss in the Pangasius catfish value chain of the Mekong River Basin **CS/2020/209**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/04/23	30/06/26	A$1,441,700
	Crops				
	Weed management techniques for mechanised and broadcast lowland crop production systems in Cambodia and Laos **CROP/2019/145**	Cambodia, Laos	01/07/20	30/06/25	A$2,257,184
	Disease-resilient and sustainable cassava production systems in the Mekong region **CROP/2022/110**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/11/23	30/06/28	A$3,500,000
	Integrating the electrification and smart mechanisation of 2-wheel tractors with precision agriculture for improved productivity and sustainability **CROP/2023/129**	Cambodia	13/05/24	30/06/29	A$3,229,915
	Fisheries				
	FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia **FIS/2018/153**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	01/01/20	31/12/25	A$8,509,334
	The value of using a South-South triangular cooperation approach in mariculture for Cambodia and Indonesia **FIS/2024/105**	Cambodia, Indonesia	01/04/24	31/12/25	A$382,908
	Forestry				
	Building an effective forest health and biosecurity network in Southeast Asia **FST/2020/123**	Cambodia, Laos	01/11/21	30/06/26	A$1,898,717
	Social Systems				
	Next generation agricultural extension: social relations for practice change **SSS/2019/138**	Cambodia	11/01/21	31/12/26	A$4,500,002
	Building the evidence base on the impacts of mobile financial services for women and men in farming households in Laos and Cambodia **SSS/2020/160**	Cambodia, Laos	01/09/21	31/05/27	A$2,998,851
	The role of agricultural and forest landscapes on human and environmental health in Cambodia **SSS/2022/164**	Cambodia	14/04/23	31/12/25	A$999,999
	Harnessing the potential of digital agri-market services for inclusive and competitive markets in Cambodia and Laos **SSS/2023/105**	Cambodia, Laos	01/07/25	30/06/30	A$3,500,000
	Pathways to build a gender inclusive and climate resilient food sector: country focus Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines **SSS/2023/191**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines	01/01/24	30/06/26	A$320,000
	Soil & Land Management				
	Cambodian soil information system supporting sustainable upland agricultural development **SLAM/2022/103**	Cambodia	23/07/24	30/06/29	A$2,838,392
	Assessment of the adoption and adaptation of conservation agriculture and direct seeded rice in South and South-East Asia **SLAM/2022/172**	Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	19/12/22	31/03/25	A$357,424
	Supporting practice change to improve the sustainability of agronomic management in vegetable production systems in Cambodia **SLAM/2023/100**	Cambodia	01/01/25	31/12/29	A$3,640,333
	Management practices for profitable crop livestock systems for Cambodia and Laos **SMCN/2012/075**	Cambodia, Laos	22/03/16	31/12/24	A$3,142,140
	Water				
	Water for rice and fish: co-design and piloting of water management interventions for enhanced productivity of rice–fish systems in the Mekong floodplains **WAC/2022/153**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/12/24	30/11/27	A$2,100,000

Indonesia

A$7.6 million
investment in agricultural research for development

27 projects

- **17** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **10** Small projects and research activities
- **13** Projects specific to Indonesia
- **14** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Agriculture, fisheries and forestry are key sectors within the Indonesian economy. The sectors employ approximately one-third of Indonesia's labour force, and is dominated by smallholder farmers. The sectors contributed more than 14% to the country's gross domestic product and accounted for approximately 40% of total employment in 2023.

The Indonesian Government has placed self-sufficiency in specific agricultural products high on the national agenda. At the same time climate change is having a significant impact on Indonesia's agricultural production and there is increasing demand for food traceability. Indonesia is taking action to improve the climate resilience of agricultural systems and to increase productivity through the adoption of technology and practices that reduce long distribution chains from farmers to consumers, reduce the carbon footprint of produce and distribute economic growth evenly.

The key strategies for agricultural development in Indonesia are focused on increasing added value and competitiveness of products, improving infrastructure, increasing diversification, enhancing individual and institutional capacity, and promoting business-oriented smallholder farmers.

Rural communities

Despite strong development across primary production sectors, challenges remain for rural communities and smallholders. About 42% of Indonesia's 283 million people live in rural areas and there is widespread poverty and high levels of malnutrition among farmers in some areas.

The rural sectors face the challenge of a declining workforce and aging workers. Young people are not attracted to working in agriculture and programs are required to involve and incentivise the younger generation to engage. Digital technologies may offer a potential pathway for the participation of youth in agricultural value chains, but this must be complemented by profitable and meaningful livelihoods.

Political and economic environment

Following the legislative and presidential election in 2024, the new President and his administration will commence duty in October 2024. BAPPENAS (National Development Planning Ministry) is developing the RPJMN 2025–29 (Medium-Term Development Plan) to help guide the new government to prioritise key strategic issues. The status and focus on agriculture, fisheries and forestry in this new administration is yet to be revealed.

Climate change

Indonesia is located on the Pacific Ring of Fire, increasing the country's risk of natural disasters, including volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, forest fires and landslides. Additionally, with the impacts of climate change increasing the threat of severe drought and flooding, there are frequent and often severe impacts on infrastructure and ecosystems. These natural disasters can have a serious impact on food production, significantly limiting the quality, availability and accessibility of resources and compromising the stability of food systems in country.

About 180 million Indonesians live in coastal areas. Their lives, property and livelihoods are vulnerable to rising sea levels and an increasing incidence of weather-related disasters. Climate change and natural disasters also lead to environmental degradation in coastal areas, which in turn affects community stability and livelihoods.

Food insecurity

In 2022, Indonesia was ranked 63 of 133 countries in the global food security index. The challenges to food security in Indonesia include unsustainable agriculture practices, extreme weather events, natural disasters and economic disruption. In addition, income reduction and disruptions to food distribution logistics also impact food and nutrition security.

Reducing food waste and food loss, improving infrastructure in supply chains, combating climate change, strengthening biosecurity for both plants and animal, increasing production and food diversification will be crucial to reducing the impact and risk of food insecurity.

Partnering with Australia

As well as being geographical neighbours, Indonesia and Australia share common interests and challenges in social, political and economic aspects.

The year of 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Australia. This milestone highlights the commitment between the 2 countries to strengthen strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, where the future and responsibilities to maintain stability are collectively shared.

Through ACIAR, Australia works with partners in Indonesia to support agricultural research for development. In 2023, ACIAR expanded its research partnership with the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) and 9 of Indonesia's leading universities such as IPB, University of Gadjah Mada, University of Mataram and University of Diponegoro. At the same time, the ACIAR partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture was refreshed to ensure that research outcomes support the Ministry with science-based inputs for its policy recommendation processes.

Consistent with Australia's International Development Policy to enhance support for gender equality and support all people to fulfill their potential, the ACIAR program in Indonesia recognises the importance and increasing role of women in the agriculture sector, and the importance of maintaining young people in agriculture. The involvement of young farmers is promoted and facilitated by the government's Millennial Farmers Program, which operates in 15 provinces to support a process of farmer regeneration in anticipation of a future modern, adaptive and digitalised agriculture environment.

Country priorities

ACIAR works with Australian and in-country partners in Indonesia to support Indonesia's efforts to address the challenges that a growing population and an increasingly variable climate imposes on rural livelihoods, resource management and food production systems.

Through a series of Memorandums of Understanding, ACIAR is committed to partnering with BRIN, the Ministry of Agriculture and 9 of Indonesia's leading universities to continue existing collaborations as well as explore potential areas for future partnership. During 2024–25, ACIAR is in consultation with BAPPENAS to explore new partnership models focused on upscaling the results and outcomes of concluded and mature projects, to meet the goals of the RPJMN 2025–29 (Medium-Term Development Plan).

In 2024–25, ACIAR will engage with partners to explore areas where Australia's knowledge and innovation could be used to help address Indonesia's challenges in the following areas:

- biosecurity (plant and animal)
- climate change mitigation and adaptation
- improving productivity and sustainability
- restoring peatland, marine and land ecosystem
- reducing food loss and waste
- other issues of comparative benefits for both countries.

The building of individual and institutional capacity in Indonesia is a critical part of Australia's support of agricultural development. Through the John Allwright Fellowship Program, ACIAR provides opportunities to Indonesian partner institutions to strengthen their capacity as well as to empower researchers with specific agricultural competencies and knowledge.

The impact of the transition of Indonesia's R&D ecosystem in recent years has identified a gap in the number of researchers and an immediate need to rebuild numbers and capacity of senior, mid-level and junior personnel. The John Dillon Fellowship and Meryl Williams Fellowship programs will contribute to addressing these requirements and strengthen the leadership capability of the partner researchers.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 27 agricultural research-for-development projects in Indonesia, 13 of which are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

Country Manager, Indonesia
Mr Teddy Kristedi

Research Program Managers
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Current and proposed projects in Indonesia, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Creating resilient communities through smallholder-inclusive tourism markets in Indonesia **AGB/2021/125**	Indonesia	01/07/23	31/12/28	A$2,800,000
	Evidence to underpin Indonesia's agtech transformation **AGB/2023/155**	Indonesia	01/09/24	31/08/27	A$1,497,866
	Crops				
	International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	01/07/20	30/06/25	A$2,257,184
	Fisheries				
	A nutrition-sensitive approach to fisheries management and development in Timor-Leste and Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, Indonesia **FIS/2017/032**	Indonesia, Timor-Leste	01/09/21	31/07/25	A$2,465,139
	FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia **FIS/2018/153**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	01/01/20	31/12/25	A$8,509,334
	Enhancing maritime environmental governance in Indonesia and the Philippines **FIS/2023/185**	Indonesia, Philippines	01/07/24	30/06/27	A$2,272,727
	The value of using a South-South triangular cooperation approach in mariculture for Cambodia and Indonesia **FIS/2024/105**	Cambodia, Indonesia	01/04/24	31/12/25	A$382,908
	Increasing capacity in population biology and harvest strategy implementation for sustainable tuna fishing and food security in Indonesia **FIS/2024/110**	Indonesia	01/06/24	31/03/26	A$499,414
	Forestry				
	Managing risk in Southeast Asian forest biosecurity **FST/2018/179**	Indonesia, Vietnam	24/09/21	31/12/25	A$1,900,220
	Retaining the jewels in the crown: Kalimantan peat forest remnants **FST/2021/145**	Indonesia	13/06/22	31/05/25	A$250,000
	Scoping new co-governance research in Indonesian peatlands **CLIM/2022/138**	Indonesia	01/07/23	31/03/25	A$294,283
	Horticulture				
	Development of area-wide management approaches for fruit flies in mango for Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and the Asia-Pacific region **HORT/2015/042**	Indonesia, Philippines	01/11/18	30/11/24	A$2,908,088
	An integrated management response to the spread of Fusarium wilt of banana in Southeast Asia **HORT/2018/192**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	01/01/20	31/12/25	A$3,037,493
	Preparedness and management of huánglóngbìng (citrus greening disease) to safeguard the future of citrus industry in Australia, China and Indonesia (Phase 2) **HORT/2019/164**	China, Indonesia	01/01/21	30/06/26	A$1,789,999
	Smarter use of pesticides in tree crop systems in the Philippines and Indonesia for reduced fruit loss and improved safety **HORT/2022/125**	Indonesia, Philippines	01/07/24	31/12/28	A$3,150,000
	An integrated management response to the spread of Fusarium wilt of banana in Southeast Asia (Indonesia phase) **HORT/2022/178**	Indonesia	01/01/23	31/12/25	A$252,944
	Pan genome analysis to support innovative utilisation of coconut germplasm resources in the Pacific and Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/158**	China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	01/01/25	30/06/29	A$3,700,000
	MeloRisk Australasia: reducing the risk of exotic root-knot nematodes in Australasia **HORT/2023/167**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	12/06/23	31/03/25	A$87,500

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Livestock Systems				
	Evaluating zoonotic malaria transmission and agricultural and forestry land use in Indonesia **LS/2019/116**	Indonesia	01/01/20	30/06/26	A$4,620,467
	Livestock enhancement through Ecohealth/One Health assessment in Southeast Asia **LS/2022/163**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	12/12/22	31/12/25	A$997,838
	Detection and characterisation of foot-and-mouth disease in Indonesia **LS/2022/166**	Indonesia	01/02/24	31/05/25	A$155,855
	Social Systems				
	Developing co-management options for sustainable peatland livelihoods in Indonesia **SSS/2022/155**	Indonesia	01/07/24	30/06/29	A$2,790,999
	Pathways to build a gender inclusive and climate resilient food sector: country focus Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines **SSS/2023/191**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines	01/01/24	30/06/26	A$320,000
	Soil & Land Management				
	Crop health and nutrient management of shallot-chilli-rice cropping systems in coastal Indonesia **SLAM/2018/145**	Indonesia	01/08/20	31/12/26	A$2,000,000
	Meeting the biophysical information needs of peatland restoration and management stakeholders to support improved and integrated decision-making **SLAM/2022/104**	Indonesia	23/07/24	30/06/29	A$2,500,000
	Exploring soil hydrological function in degraded and intact tropical peat swamp forest S**LAM/2023/197**	Indonesia	09/02/24	30/09/25	A$150,000
	Carbon flux pathways: from ecosystem to the global carbon market **SLAM/2024/116**	Indonesia	15/07/24	31/01/26	A$500,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

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Laos

A$6.8million
investment in agricultural research for development

20 projects

- **17** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **3** Small projects and research activities
- **7** Projects specific to Laos
- **13** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Agriculture plays a significant role in the Lao economy, however the sector's share of gross domestic product has decreased from 51% in 2000 to below 16% in 2023. Although export opportunities are increasing for agricultural products, most production is consumed domestically.

The Lao economy had a growth rate of 3.7% in 2023, an increase from 2.7% in 2022. Improved performance in tourism, transport, logistic service and foreign investment has contributed to continuing economic recovery. However, the growth was lower than expected due to a sharp decline in the value of the Lao kip, inflation, labour shortages and unfavourable weather. Ongoing high inflation continues to have impacts on the economy, especially in labour-intensive sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing and the service sector.

Despite recent growth and policy support, the development of the export sector is constrained by many challenges. Biosecurity issues are impacting the production of cassava and banana, although they continue to remain important export commodities, as does rubber. However, the production of livestock for export remains well below the country's targets.

Rural communities

Subsistence agriculture is still the primary economic activity of approximately 61% of the national labour force. The 2019–20 agriculture census nationwide indicated that smallholder farmers accounted for 52% of total agricultural households, the majority of whom were poor and face a wide range of supply-side challenges that affect productivity and market participation. Inflationary pressures continue to impact the prices of fuel, fertiliser and feed constraining the ability of Lao farmers to produce crops and limiting the country's food production and household incomes.

Political and economic environment

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has a vision to move the country from a landlocked country to one that is linked to the Asia region through infrastructure (roads, railways and airports) that fosters trade and integration. To this end, it has made significant investments to improve regional connectivity. The northern corridors connect with China, the western corridors connect with Thailand, and the eastern corridors connect with Vietnam.

While the Laos–China railway and the Thanaleng Dry Port have increased export capacity from the country, the Lao kip continues to weaken against the US dollar, impacting the speed of economic recovery. According to World Bank, Lao public and public guarantee debt was estimated at 110% of GDP and consumer price inflation was above 31% in 2023. Growth of GDP was estimated at 3.7% in 2023, and is projected to increase to 4% in 2024.

Climate change

Laos is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Its communities face significant climate-related hazards and livelihood vulnerability. Around 80% of Lao land area is mountainous and 20% is low-lying plains along the Mekong River and key tributaries. This topography makes Laos vulnerable to increasingly heavy rainfalls, flooding and landslides, which are projected to significantly increase by 2030. With 61% of the population engaged in agriculture, climate change and extreme events are expected to exacerbate food and economic insecurity. According to the preliminary assessment by the Lao National Disaster Management Committee, tropical typhoon Yagi which hit the country in September 2023 destroyed almost 30,000 hectares of agricultural land, 125 irrigation schemes and more than 12,000 head of livestock – impacting the lives of more than 200,000 people.

Food insecurity

According to FAO and the UN World Food Program, Laos continues to face the risk of food insecurity. Key factors include vulnerability to drought, floods and typhoons, declining arable land, volatile prices, low productivity and lack of diversified livelihood options. High inflation and escalating costs of living have reduced spending on essentials such as food, education and healthcare. The price of rice, eggs, meat and cooking oils have steadily increased since 2021, reaching high records in May 2024. The latest World Bank survey showed that 63% of low-income households and nearly all of the surveyed households are cutting back on meat and fish consumption. This reduction of protein intake will likely further hinder nutrition progress and child development across Laos. There have been strong government efforts and policy to boost domestic production to reduce imports, however this is a very complex issue and requires coordinated structural reforms and monetary policy interventions.

Partnering with Australia

Australia and Laos are longstanding bilateral and regional partners. The relationship, Laos' longest unbroken diplomatic partnership, is underpinned by development cooperation, business ties and people-to-people links. Australia and Laos cooperate through regional organisations and programs, including supporting Laos as ASEAN Chair in 2024.

Building on 72 years of diplomatic relations, the leaders of the 2 countries signed an agreement to elevate relations to a Comprehensive Partnership at the Australia–ASEAN Special Summit in March 2024. The partnership focuses on 4 key pillars:

- people, education and human resource development
- economics, trade and investment
- climate, environment and energy
- defence and law enforcement.

In addition, the recent whole-of-government 5-year Laos–Australia Development Partnership Plan 2024–2029 outlines 4 outcome areas:

- build effective, accountable states that drive their own development
- enhance state and community resilience to external pressures and shocks
- connect with Australia and regional architecture
- generate collective action on global challenges that affect us and our region.

ACIAR has been brokering and funding agricultural research for development partnerships in Laos since 1990. Given the significance of agriculture to the Lao economy and the increased interests of Australia to invest in the sector in the region through the Southeast Asia Economic Development Strategy to 2040, ACIAR will continue to work in partnership with Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry through research collaborations with National Agricultural and Rural Development Research Institute, National University of Laos, and with regional universities on the 6 program areas that were mutually agreed with the Lao government. In addition to this, DFAT through its Climate Resilience Community Initiative has undertaken a scoping study to explore the opportunity to invest in climate-resilient agriculture. ACIAR is working closely with DFAT to ensure the investment builds on and complements previous work supported by ACIAR.

Country priorities

The Government of the Lao PDR is committed to transforming its agrifood system to be more sustainable and modernised, and while contributing to the national economic base maintaining a strong focus on support for smallholder farmers. The government's Agricultural Development Strategy provides the framework, vision and long-term development goals for ensuring national food security and sustainable development of the agriculture, forestry and natural resources sectors.

The partnerships that ACIAR brokers and supports between its partners in Laos, Australia and international research, strives to support and advance this vision. The Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has the Agricultural Development Plan 2021–2025, which focuses on improving food security and encourages commercial agriculture for domestic and export purposes, increasing agricultural productivity, providing employment opportunities in rural areas, and improving production systems and practices.

In 2024–25, ACIAR will continue to evolve the long-term strategic program priorities based on consultation with Lao stakeholders. The strategic priority outcomes that currently guide our investments in Laos are:

- innovative livestock systems that allow for intensification and land-use requirements, while raising animal health and biosecurity levels, for domestic and international markets.
- sustainable crop production systems (including improved genetics and seed production and distribution) and improved value chains for coffee, vegetables, citrus and rice
- efficient and sustainable forestry industries, including non-timber products, with suitable climate-change resilience
- increased fish habitat restoration and protection of fish migration routes
- cost-effective and sustainable rice-based farming systems, through mechanisation, diversification and intensification, along with better crop quality, quarantine standards and value-adding for domestic and export markets
- improved natural resource management that benefits livelihoods and food security by delivering land-use options to smallholders, with attention to both water and nutrient management within climate-change adaptation
- improved institutional training and communication frameworks that enable smallholders to adopt and adapt new technologies, and increase the capacity development of researchers and educators.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 20 agricultural research-for-development projects in Laos, 7 of which are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of also contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

Regional Manager, Mainland Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand)
Mr Ounheuan Saiyasith

Research Program Managers
Visit **aciar.gov.au** for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Laos, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Food loss in the Pangasius catfish value chain of the Mekong River Basin **CS/2020/209**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/04/23	30/06/26	A$1,441,700
	Crops				
	Weed management techniques for mechanised and broadcast lowland crop production systems in Cambodia and Laos **CROP/2019/145**	Cambodia, Laos	01/07/20	30/06/25	A$2,257,184
	Disease-resilient and sustainable cassava production systems in the Mekong region **CROP/2022/110**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/11/23	30/06/28	A$3,500,000
	Fisheries				
	FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia **FIS/2018/153**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	01/01/20	31/12/25	A$8,509,334
	Forestry				
	Building an effective forest health and biosecurity network in Southeast Asia **FST/2020/123**	Cambodia, Laos	01/11/21	30/06/26	A$1,898,717
	Forest restoration for economic outcomes **FST/2020/137**	Laos	01/07/23	30/06/28	A$4,306,332
	Sustainable expansion of forestry and wood processing in Laos and Australia **FST/2023/153**	Laos	15/11/24	14/11/29	A$3,100,000
	Horticulture				
	An integrated management response to the spread of Fusarium wilt of banana in Southeast Asia **HORT/2018/192**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	01/01/20	31/12/25	A$3,037,493
	MeloRisk Australasia: reducing the risk of exotic root-knot nematodes in Australasia **HORT/2023/167**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	12/06/23	31/03/25	A$87,500
	Livestock Systems				
	Investigating and developing interventions to mitigate food borne parasitic disease in production animals in Laos **LS/2014/055**	Laos	15/11/20	31/12/24	A$1,600,000
	Livestock enhancement through Ecohealth/One Health assessment in Southeast Asia **LS/2022/163**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	12/12/22	31/12/25	A$997,838
	Social Systems				
	Building the evidence base on the impacts of mobile financial services for women and men in farming households in Laos and Cambodia **SSS/2020/160**	Cambodia, Laos	01/09/21	31/05/27	A$2,998,851
	Pathways for future farmers in Southeast Asia **SSS/2022/134**	Laos	01/08/24	31/03/26	A$957,210
	Harnessing the potential of digital agri-market services for inclusive and competitive markets in Cambodia and Laos **SSS/2023/105**	Cambodia, Laos	01/07/25	30/06/30	A$3,500,000
	Assessing the social and economic implications of transitioning to low-input and organic rice production in Laos **SSS/2023/137**	Laos	01/10/23	31/12/25	A$500,000
	Strengthening the research-policy nexus in the Laos for agricultural and rural development **SSS/2023/160**	Laos	01/03/25	30/07/30	A$3,190,000

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Soil & Land Management				
	Quantifying the impacts of nitrogen use and developing sustainable agricultural nitrogen management strategies in Laos rice-based farming systems **SLAM/2022/102**	Laos	01/01/24	31/12/28	A$3,089,448
	Assessment of the adoption and adaptation of conservation agriculture and direct seeded rice in South and SouthSouth-East Asia **SLAM/2022/172**	Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	19/12/22	31/03/25	A$357,424
	Management practices for profitable crop livestock systems for Cambodia and Laos **SMCN/2012/075**	Cambodia, Laos	22/03/16	31/12/2024	A$3,142,140
	Water				
	Water for rice and fish: co-design and piloting of water management interventions for enhanced productivity of rice–fish systems in the Mekong floodplains **WAC/2022/153**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/12/24	30/11/27	A$2,100,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

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Philippines

A$5.3million
investment in agricultural research for development

21 projects

- **14** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **7** Small projects and research activities
- **9** Projects specific to the Philippines
- **12** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

The agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sectors are the source of livelihoods for about a quarter of the Philippine population but contribute to less than 10% of GDP.

There has been stagnant growth in the sectors and continuing decline in agricultural productivity, in part, due to land reform policies that have reduced average farm size by 34% and agricultural productivity by 17%. Transboundary animal diseases, plant pests and diseases, low farm productivity, market access issues, disasters and climate change impacts are key issues.

Rural communities

More than half of the Philippine population lives in rural areas, with most engaged in the agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sectors for their livelihoods. The average farmer's age is in the range of 57 to 59 years. There are observed trends where the children of farming families increasingly shift to urban jobs or overseas work, as there are unclear incentives for young people to engage in the agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sectors. This demographic trend of losing young people from rural communities is a significant policy challenge for the Philippine government.

Political and economic environment

Recognising the important role of the agriculture sector in the economy, the government through the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028 focuses on transformative strategies and reforms to increase productivity and farm incomes. Development partners are requested to support this plan, and these requirements align well with the objectives of ACIAR and the capabilities and comparative advantage of the Australian innovation system. To maximise the impact of ACIAR programs in the Philippines, the strategy is to engage all levels of government (national government agencies, legislative branch and local and provincial government units), broker partnerships with government, academic, non-government and business organisations as appropriate and consider convergence of research projects in provinces where there is strong political support and willingness to co-design and co-invest with ACIAR.

Climate change

The Philippines is an archipelagic country and is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, rising temperatures and extreme weather events. The Philippines suffers constant exposure to cyclones, landslides, floods and droughts, and the occurrence of these is anticipated to be more frequent as a more variable climate evolves. Extreme weather events impact farming activities, coastline communities, and those whose livelihoods depend on climate-sensitive natural resources. While bearing significant impacts from climate change, the agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sectors are the second largest source of greenhouse emissions.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity is a significant issue for the poorest and most vulnerable people of the Philippines. According to the FAO's State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023 report, 44.7% of the Philippines population experiences moderate to severe food insecurity. Studies show that households that rely on agricultural livelihoods are significantly more food insecure than urban households, as their incomes are insufficient to support their daily needs.

Partnering with Australia

The Philippines is one of Australia's long-standing bilateral partners, commemorating 78 years of diplomatic relations in 2024. Bilateral cooperation is underpinned by the Philippines–Australia General Agreement on Development Cooperation Treaty and guided by the Memorandum of Understanding on Scientific and Technical Cooperation (2009) and Record of Partnering Arrangements (2018).

In September 2023, Australia and the Philippines' relationship was elevated, with the signing of the Joint Declaration on a Strategic Partnership by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. It has 4 priority areas:

- Trade and Investment
- Defence and Security
- Development Cooperation
- People Connections

ACIAR contributes to these priorities through its research and capacity development programs in partnership with government, academe, business and non-government institutions.

The Department of Science and Technology–Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (DOST–PCAARRD) is the bilateral partner of ACIAR. The partnership between DOST–PCAARRD and ACIAR is comprehensive and strategic, characterised by joint decision-making on priorities, co-development and co-investments in research and capacity development projects, joint monitoring, evaluation and learning and knowledge exchange.

The Philippines takes a whole-of-government approach to research and development through its Harmonised National Research and Development Agenda in Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Sector, for which DOST–PCAARRD has the mandate for leading national consultation, allocation of resources and oversight for projects. Together, ACIAR and DOST–PCAARRD prioritise research areas where Australia's expertise complements and adds value to existing in-country expertise. ACIAR and DOST-PCAARRD's partnership continue to deepen and expand and is reviewed annually through a Partnership health check.

Country priorities

In 2024, ACIAR and DOST-PCAARRD co-developed a collaboration strategy which identifies the joint strategic goal and objectives and priority research and capacity development agenda for the next 5 years. This is anchored on the Philippines Harmonised National Research and Development Agenda for agriculture, aquatic and natural resources and aligned with the Australian Development Partnership Plan in the Philippines.

The goal of the strategy is to contribute to improvements in productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of agrifood systems for human, environmental and economic resilience, through collaborative research, capacity development and effective dissemination and uptake of research outcomes.

Through 4 strategic objectives, the strategy aims to:

- boost agricultural productivity through sustained improvements in soil health that will enable farmers to enhance and intensify productivity and quality of produce, by effective management practices for pests, water, soils and nutrients, and enhanced measurement, analysis and interpretation capacity
- improve biosecurity, food safety and on-farm productivity through integrated crop and livestock management, improved post-harvest storage and management, disease and pest management, through improved surveillance, varietal selection and disease control
- promote inclusive agrifood value chains for sustainable livelihood and income generation, with a focus on priority industries and agribusiness initiatives
- improve sustainability and biodiversity of aquatic ecosystems to enable sustainable food production, with a focus on culture systems, biodiversity in freshwater and marine ecosystems, genomics in the study of diseases and resistance to climate change.

The strategic objectives are under-pinned by cross-cutting objectives that is integral to maximising the impact of the ACIAR research program in the Philippines. These objectives aim to:

- enhance resilience of agrifood systems through adaptation to climate variability and climate change
- improve gender equity
- build scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions
- promote R&D results and technology transfer.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 21 agricultural research-for-development projects in the Philippines, 9 of which are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of also contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

Country Manager, Philippines
Ms Hazel Aniceto

Research Program Managers
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Current and proposed projects in the Philippines, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Agribusiness-led inclusive value chain development for smallholder farming systems in the Philippines **AGB/2018/196**	Philippines	01/08/21	31/07/25	A$2,800,000
	Evaluate the opportunities and constraints for growth of smallholder dairy value chains in the Philippines **AGB/2023/192**	Philippines	14/10/24	30/09/26	A$499,940
	Fisheries				
	Increasing technical skills supporting community-based sea cucumber production in Vietnam and the Philippines **FIS/2016/122**	Philippines, Vietnam	01/10/18	31/12/24	A$2,565,000
	Regional coral restoration networks and appropriate technologies for larger-scale coral and fish habitat restoration in the Philippines and Australia **FIS/2019/123**	Philippines	01/12/20	31/10/25	A$2,559,960
	Institutional effectiveness and political economy of coral reef restoration in the Philippines **FIS/2021/112**	Philippines	01/09/21	30/06/25	A$1,783,101
	Enhancing maritime environmental governance in Indonesia and the Philippines **FIS/2023/185**	Indonesia, Philippines	01/07/24	30/06/27	A$2,272,727
	Horticulture				
	Development of area-wide management approaches for fruit flies in mango for Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and the Asia-Pacific region **HORT/2015/042**	Indonesia, Philippines	01/11/18	30/11/24	A$2,908,088
	An integrated management response to the spread of Fusarium wilt of banana in Southeast Asia **HORT/2018/192**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	01/01/20	31/12/25	A$3,037,493
	Smarter use of pesticides in tree crop systems in the Philippines and Indonesia for reduced fruit loss and improved safety **HORT/2022/125**	Indonesia, Philippines	01/07/24	31/12/28	A$3,150,000
	Scoping the opportunity for urban and peri-urban agricultural development in Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/147**	Philippines, Vietnam	01/07/23	31/12/25	A$400,858
	Pan genome analysis to support innovative utilisation of coconut germplasm resources in the Pacific and Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/158**	China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	01/01/25	30/06/29	A$3,700,000
	MeloRisk Australasia: reducing the risk of exotic root-knot nematodes in Australasia **HORT/2023/167**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	12/06/23	31/03/25	A$87,500
	Livestock Systems				
	Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Kenya, Philippines, Vietnam	01/01/24	30/06/27	A$1,400,000
	Country research update and policy support to the Philippines' national surveillance and control programs for African swine fever, avian influenza and antimicrobial resistance: a One Health systems approach to food animal security and public health resilience **LS/2022/162**	Philippines	12/12/22	31/1225	A$1,000,000
	Livestock enhancement through Ecohealth/One Health assessment in Southeast Asia **LS/2022/163**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	12/12/22	31/12/25	A$997,838

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Social Systems				
	Reframing the yield gap: Integrating farmer knowledge, culture and agroecological conditions for sustainable rice yields in the Philippines **SSS/2023/139**	Philippines	01/10/23	31/12/25	A$500,000
	Pathways to build a gender inclusive and climate resilient food sector: country focus Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines **SSS/2023/191**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines	01/01/24	30/06/26	A$320,000
	Extending climate and disaster risk and resilience to community level in the Philippines: a proof-of-concept **CLIM/2023/195**	Philippines	22/07/24	10/10/25	A$500,000
	Soil & Land Management				
	Managing heavy metals and soil contaminants in vegetable production to ensure food safety and environmental health in the Philippines **SLAM/2020/117**	Philippines	01/02/23	31/01/27	A$2,036,586
	Assessment of the adoption and adaptation of conservation agriculture and direct seeded rice in South and SouthSouth-East Asia **SLAM/2022/172**	Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	19/12/22	31/03/25	A$357,424
	Developing soil knowledge, information and capacity to improve the productivity and sustainability of key cropping systems in the Philippines **SLAM/2023/146**	Philippines	01/11/24	30/09/29	A$3,500,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

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Timor-Leste

A$3.4 million
investment in agricultural research for development

9 projects

- **7** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **2** Small projects and research activities
- **6** Projects specific to Timor-Leste
- **3** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

With approximately 70% of its population residing in rural areas, Timor-Leste relies heavily on agriculture for livelihoods.

Despite recent progress, challenges persist in the form of low agricultural productivity and significant food insecurity. The agriculture sector, employing nearly 38% of the workforce, remains underdeveloped, leading to a reliance on imports and constrained domestic revenues. Timor-Leste's National Strategy Plan prioritises the sustainable increase in agricultural productivity, diversity and profitability, aligning closely with ACIAR objectives in the region.

Rural communities

Timor-Leste experiences a significant youth bulge, with around 60% of the population under 24 years old. This demographic presents socio-economic challenges, including the need for employment, education and societal integration, which necessitate targeted interventions. The country is looking for potential opportunities to improve its planning, prioritisation and implementation of research and development to effectively address the challenges in the agriculture sector. Creating an enabling environment that can attract younger farmers to engage will contribute to supporting the challenges.

Political and economic environment

The political and economic environment in Timor-Leste continues to evolve, affecting agricultural and rural development. Stability and development policies remain crucial for fostering a conducive environment for agricultural growth and sustainable development.

Climate change

Weather variability in Timor-Leste, marked by inconsistent rainfall and extreme events, significantly disrupts agricultural production. Compounded by infertile soils, limited access to inputs and pest outbreaks, these factors collectively diminish farm productivity, and the ability of farms to support livelihoods.

The impacts of climate change, such as increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and increasing incidence of heavy rainfall events, further intensify the threats to agricultural productivity.

Food insecurity

Over half of Timor-Leste's population grapples with food and nutrition insecurity, a persistent issue despite improvements in essential services. The prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age is alarmingly high (47% in 2020). The country's food supply is reported to be less than adequate to meet the dietary needs of the population and there is high dependency (60%) on food importation. The country's heavy reliance on cereals and low consumption of animal-sourced foods leads to dietary imbalance.

The Government of Timor-Leste has set a 'vision for food and nutrition security policy that by 2030 Timor-Leste will be free from hunger and malnutrition and Timorese people will enjoy healthy and productive lives'. It is seeking potential opportunities and better strategies to increase its focus on improving food and nutrition security. Last year, the government approved a decree-law for the regulation of the National Council for Food Security, Sovereignty and Nutrition in Timor-Leste (CONSSAN-TL) with the aim of establishing a regulatory framework for the effective implementation of food and nutrition security in the country.

Partnering with Australia

Timor-Leste and Australia enjoy a thriving bilateral relationship built on mutual development objectives and a strong commitment to scientific cooperation. This partnership is particularly evident in the agriculture sector, where collaboration with Australia is fostered between key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in Timor-Leste and various local research institutions.

ACIAR plays a pivotal role in the alliance between Timor-Leste and Australia, emphasising long-term partnerships aimed at bolstering agricultural productivity and sustainability. ACIAR's strategy aligns closely with Timor-Leste's National Strategic Development Plan and other vital national strategies, ensuring a shared vision for promoting sustainable agricultural practices and achieving developmental goals. This collaboration not only facilitates the exchange of knowledge and expertise but also creates opportunities for mutual benefits, reinforcing ties between the two nations through impactful scientific endeavours and developmental initiatives.

Country priorities

The Government of Timor-Leste is focused on modernising its agrifood systems to boost productivity and ensure food security. ACIAR engagement for 2024–25 aligns with these priorities, collaborating closely with key institutions such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry, the National University of Timor-Lorosa'e, the Ministry of Health, and the National Council for Food Security, Sovereignty and Nutrition.

These partnerships aim to enhance agricultural productivity, improve food security and address nutritional needs. ACIAR research initiatives, such as the 'Learning space on food systems' research, support the implementation of the Consolidated National Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Security. These efforts promote sustainable agricultural practices, crop diversification, and advancements in the livestock and fisheries sectors, fostering productivity, dietary diversity, climate change resilience and soil fertility.

There are 5 key goals for agricultural research for development in Timor-Leste:

- **Improving crop productivity and profitability** to address the challenges of significant food insecurity and a reliance on imported products, finding solutions for safe effective use of inputs – seed, fertiliser and herbicides, and introducing innovations, such as mechanisation, new crop options, horticultural seed development techniques, and better conservation agriculture practices
- **Improving livestock systems** to combat nutritional insecurity and increase return
- **Biosecurity and disease management** to improve smallholder productivity through sustainable farming practices and enhanced crop and livestock management
- **Effective land and water resource management** for sustainable agricultural and water security
- **Supporting rural youth** to develop skills and entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture sectors to address demographic challenges.

To address Timor-Leste's development needs, ACIAR research and capacity development will focus on improving the productivity, sustainability and resilience of smallholder agrifood systems, enhancing biosecurity and food safety, supporting sustainable fisheries, building climate resilience, and engaging rural youth through education and entrepreneurship in agriculture.

The objectives of the 2024–25 ACIAR research program include:

- enhancing soil health and fertility to boost agricultural productivity and sustainability.
- integrating crop and livestock management to improve biosecurity and on-farm productivity.
- developing inclusive agrifood value chains to promote sustainable livelihoods and income generation.
- improving aquatic ecosystem sustainability for continued food production and biodiversity conservation.

Recognising the significant youth demographic in Timor-Leste, ACIAR-led capacity development programs aim to engage young people in agriculture through targeted education, vocational training and entrepreneurship initiatives. These programs promote innovation, technology adoption and agribusiness, supporting the development of a skilled and resilient agricultural workforce.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 9 agricultural research-for-development projects in Timor-Leste, 6 of which are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

Country Manager, Timor-Leste
Mr Luis de Almeida

Research Program Managers
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Current and proposed projects in Timor-Leste, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Agricultural innovations for communities: intensified and diverse farming systems for Timor-Leste **CROP/2021/131**	Timor-Leste	01/11/22	31/10/27	A$3,198,681
	Fisheries				
	A nutrition-sensitive approach to fisheries management and development in Timor-Leste and Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, Indonesia **FIS/2017/032**	Indonesia, Timor-Leste	01/09/21	31/07/25	A$2,465,139
	Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands **FIS/2019/124**	Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste	01/09/21	31/12/25	A$2,444,000
	Extending integrated analysis for improved food system outcomes in Timor-Leste and the Pacific region **FIS/2022/121**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu	01/10/23	30/09/26	A$2,500,000
	Horticulture				
	Scoping for the implementation of plant health support in Timor-Leste **HORT/2022/127**	Timor-Leste	01/10/23	28/02/25	A$150,688
	Livestock Systems				
	Bacteria enteropathy and nutrition in infants and children in Timor-Leste through a One Health approach **LS/2021/126**	Timor-Leste	15/04/23	31/12/27	A$2,100,000
	Developing strategies to reduce brucellosis transmission in Timor-Leste based on One Health collaboration **LS/2022/161**	Timor-Leste	05/12/22	31/12/25	A$999,943
	Social Systems				
	Indigenous food systems knowledge exchange **SSS/2022/118**	Timor-Leste	14/08/23	14/02/25	A$250,000
	Soil & Land Management				
	Increasing on-farm labour productivity for sustainable production, nutrition and inclusive livelihood gains in Timor-Leste **SLAM/2020/141**	Timor-Leste	01/07/24	30/06/28	A$2,950,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

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Vietnam

A$6.9million
investment in agricultural research for development

21 projects

- **14** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **7** Small projects and research activities
- **9** Projects specific to Vietnam
- **12** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Agriculture, fisheries and forestry play crucial roles in Vietnam's economy, contributing to the country's food security, employment, rural development and exports.

Over the past decade, Vietnam's agriculture has made comprehensive and remarkable developments. The country's view towards the agriculture sector has moved from production to economic development. The agricultural industry has been restructured and transformed towards commodity production, with strengthened linkages along value chains and increased application of science and technology. The sector has also expanded connections from domestic to international markets, while promoting regional potential and advantages, sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

In the years to come, it is anticipated that the agriculture sector will undergo modernisation and mechanisation to improve productivity and sustainability. The industry is also adopting high-value crops and organic farming practices, to meet international consumer demands and market standards.

Rural communities

Vietnam set a target of having more than 90% of communes recognised as new-style rural communes by 2030. However, rural communities in Vietnam still face a range of issues that impact their livelihoods and wellbeing. Most of the country's poorer people live in rural areas. Farmers are still vulnerable and subject to many risks in production and life. Farmers are often tied to small-scale, unsustainable production with low value-add opportunities. Social services, including healthcare and education, are less accessible to rural communities, also contributing to poverty and inequality.

Enhancing the resilience of rural communities through sustainable practices, improved infrastructure and inclusive policies is crucial to addressing these challenges and ensuring Vietnam's long-term development.

Political and economic environment

Vietnam's aspirations for development are both national and global. Vietnam is committed to becoming a high-income country by 2045.

Climate change

Climate change exacerbates the challenges faced by rural communities. According to the Global Climate Risk Index 2020, Vietnam ranks 6th globally in climate vulnerability due to climate variability and extreme weather. Events such as droughts and floods with increased frequency are adversely affecting crop production and fisheries. Vietnam is committed to both mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. It is a signatory to international agreements such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and supports research and development to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as enhance the resilience of farming systems.

Food insecurity

Vietnam currently produces sufficient calories for its entire population. However, significant challenges remain in food accessibility and nutritional habits. Issues such as food safety, anaemia and malnutrition continue to impact many, especially pregnant women, children under 5 years old, and people in remote areas.

Partnering with Australia

Australia and Vietnam are strong partners, who are both committed to the centrality of ASEAN and a shared vision for a region that is peaceful, stable and prosperous and where sovereignty is respected. On 7 March 2024, Australia and Vietnam agreed to elevate bilateral relations to the level of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, placing Australia among Vietnam's top-tier partners. The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership will support expanded cooperation on climate, environment and energy, and digital transformation and innovation, and it will build on established collaboration across defence and security, economic engagement, education and development assistance.

Actively contributing to Australia's development engagement in Vietnam, ACIAR marked its 30th anniversary of collaborating with Vietnam in 2023. Over 3 decades, the collaboration has achieved notable success in helping Vietnam enhance food security, farmer incomes, and capacity of Vietnamese researchers and extension workers.

ACIAR operates in Vietnam under a 10-year strategy for research collaboration between Vietnam and ACIAR from 2017 to 2027. The strategy reflects the changing relationship between ACIAR and Vietnam, from donor–recipient to partnership and co-investment. It highlights agreed priorities in research themes, geographic focus, capacity development and social inclusion. In March 2024, ACIAR and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the enhancement of scientific research for development in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. In addition, ACIAR is partnering with the Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Science and Technology, and Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam to provide options for small farmers to develop equally.

Country priorities

Despite remarkable achievements, Vietnam's agriculture sector still faces many challenges, such as land fragmentation, low productivity, environmental degradation, climate change, market volatility and its ability to expand new export markets. Another issue is the development gaps for ethnic minorities and women in rural areas. To address those problems, the Vietnam Government has issued the Sustainable agriculture development strategy for 2021–2030 and vision to 2050.

The strategy aims to transform the sector into a modern, green and inclusive one that can compete globally while ensuring national food security. The strategy has 6 main objectives:

- restructuring the sector based on local advantages, value chains and market demand
- enhancing productivity, quality, efficiency and sustainability of agricultural production
- developing rural areas with improved infrastructure, services and living standards
- strengthening resilience to natural disasters, epidemics and climate change
- protecting the environment and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- promoting innovation, digitalisation and institutional reform in the sector.
- In the medium term, to further detail the strategy, the Vietnamese Government has recently endorsed several action plans, including plans for green growth, One Health and food systems.

The strategy for research collaboration between Vietnam and ACIAR from 2017 to 2027 acknowledges the co-investment nature of the relationship. Increasingly, Vietnamese research managers and researchers play important and active roles in project design and implementation. The strategy confirms the desire of both parties to engage the private sector wherever possible to create opportunities for poorer residents in rural and urban areas through inclusive agribusiness systems. It also focuses on transformational opportunities for women in research and agribusiness systems and on farms.

The key ambitions of the Vietnam–ACIAR research collaboration strategy are to:

- develop long-term, equal and highly efficient partnerships in research and technology development
- improve the agricultural research capacity of Vietnam for sustainable and equitable growth, especially in the Mekong River Delta, the Central Highlands and the Northwest Region of Vietnam
- improve the skills, livelihoods and incomes of smallholder farmers, especially ethnic minorities and women, with a strong emphasis on building deeper knowledge of supply chains and stronger access to premium markets
- enhance human health and nutrition through research on integrated farming systems, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, food safety and One Health
- use natural resources more sustainably and efficiently in agricultural production, improving soil health and environmental outcomes while creating more-profitable production systems
- influence policies on managing climate-change impacts on agriculture.

In May 2024, Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and ACIAR co-hosted a Partnership Dialogue with long-standing research partners in Vietnam, and agreed on the key actions of research collaboration in the next few years, including:

- developing pathways and mechanisms to enhance the co-design and co-investment partnership, securing financial contributions and IP ownership of Vietnamese partners
- aligning research priorities of Vietnam and Australia to maximise mutual benefits
- ensuring the best utilisation of Australian expertise, addressing fragmented agricultural investment and avoiding duplicate efforts in agricultural research.

Capacity development is becoming more crucial to achieving Vietnam's agricultural ambitions. The agriculture sector faces significant human resource challenges, including an aging labour force and rural youth migrating to cities, rural and urban students showing little interest in agricultural careers, and a current brain drain in the research field. Key priorities for scientific and policy capacity development are to:

- address climate change and environmental challenges
- digital transformation
- manage the impacts of urbanisation on agricultural production and rural livelihoods
- ensure international standard compliance of export products.

ACIAR support is vital to advance human resource development, retain talent and foster international collaboration. We will help strengthen the capabilities of Vietnamese individuals and organisations to perform effective agricultural research through specific capacity development activities integrated into research projects, collaborative partnerships, and scholarship programs. Additionally, the ACIAR alumni networks is important in shaping collaborative research and supporting agricultural development in Vietnam. These interventions can significantly improve the skills and sustainability of Vietnam's agricultural workforce, ensuring long-term growth and stability in the sector.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 21 agricultural research-for-development projects in Vietnam, 9 of which are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

Country Manager, Vietnam
Ms Nguyen Thi Thanh An

Research Program Managers
Visit **aciar.gov.au** for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Vietnam, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Increasing the sustainability, productivity and economic value of coffee and black pepper farming systems and value chains in the Central Highlands Region of Vietnam **AGB/2018/175**	Vietnam	01/02/21	30/06/25	A$3,460,000
	Planning and establishing a sustainable smallholder rice chain in the Mekong Delta **AGB/2019/153**	Vietnam	25/02/22	30/12/25	A$2,600,000
	Integrating smallholder households and farm production systems into commercial beef supply chains in Vietnam **AGB/2020/189**	Vietnam	01/07/23	31/12/26	A$2,780,000
	Digital monitoring of VietGAP compliance for high-value domestic markets and potential export in smallholder fruit value chains from the Northwest Region of Vietnam **AGB/2022/114**	Vietnam	01/04/25	31/10/28	A$2,104,039
	Food loss in the Pangasius catfish value chain of the Mekong River Basin **CS/2020/209**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/04/23	30/06/26	A$1,441,700
	Partnering with trading companies to sustainably enhance smallholders' livelihood in the Central Highlands of Vietnam through pilot chain interventions towards high-quality Robusta coffee **CS/2023/181**	Vietnam			
	Crops				
	Disease-resilient and sustainable cassava production systems in the Mekong region **CROP/2022/110**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/11/23	30/06/28	A$3,500,000
	Supporting greenhouse gas inventories and targeted rice mitigation options for Vietnam **CLIM/2019/150**	Vietnam	01/02/23	30/06/25	A$580,370
	Fisheries				
	Increasing technical skills supporting community-based sea cucumber production in Vietnam and the Philippines **FIS/2016/122**	Philippines, Vietnam	01/10/18	31/12/24	A$2,565,000
	Half-pearl industry development in Tonga and Vietnam **FIS/2016/126**	Tonga, Vietnam	01/09/17	31/12/24	A$1,450,515
	Addressing key technical bottlenecks in the grouper supply chain in Vietnam (and Australia) through manufactured feed and hatchery developments that aim to improve small and medium-sized enterprises sector profitability **FIS/2022/148**	Vietnam	01/06/24	01/12/27	A$2,585,434

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Forestry				
	Managing risk in Southeast Asian forest biosecurity **FST/2018/179**	Indonesia, Vietnam	24/09/21	31/12/25	A$1,900,220
	Diversified livelihoods from native tree species in the Northwest Region of Vietnam **FST/2023/150**	Vietnam	20/07/24	30/06/26	A$347,643
	Horticulture				
	Scoping the opportunity for urban and peri-urban agricultural development in Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/147**	Philippines, Vietnam	01/07/23	31/12/25	A$400,858
	MeloRisk Australasia: reducing the risk of exotic root-knot nematodes in Australasia **HORT/2023/167**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	12/06/23	31/03/25	A$87,500
	Scoping Vietnam's citrus industry priorities to inform the development of a research roadmap **HORT/2023/179**	Vietnam	01/02/24	31/07/25	A$299,999
	Livestock Systems				
	Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Kenya, Philippines, Vietnam	01/01/24	30/06/27	A$1,400,000
	Social Systems				
	Evidence-based policies to support Vietnam's agricultural and rural development **SSS/2023/138**	Vietnam	01/10/23	31/12/25	A$500,000
	Support policymakers and farmers in green agriculture reform: rice production in Vietnam **SSS/2024/107**	Vietnam	01/05/24	31/12/24	A$149,546
	Vietnam small holder farmers: challenges and opportunities for a sustainable future **SSS/2024/108**	Vietnam	01/06/24	30/06/25	A$383,775
	Soil & Land Management				
	Farmer options for crops under saline conditions (FOCUS) in the Mekong River Delta, Vietnam **SLAM/2018/144**	Vietnam	01/01/20	30/06/25	A$2,313,286
	Assessment of the adoption and adaptation of conservation agriculture and direct seeded rice in South and South-East Asia **SLAM/2022/172**	Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	19/12/22	31/03/25	A$357,424
	Soil microbial interactions with crop replacement options in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta **SLAM/2022/175**	Vietnam	12/12/22	31/12/24	A$250,000
	Assessment of soil condition for coffee, pepper and fruit tree production in the 5 provinces of the Central Highlands of Vietnam **SLAM/2023/142**	Vietnam	03/06/24	30/11/25	A$500,000
	Defining the potential for mangrove-based agribusiness transformation in the coastal Mekong Delta **CLIM/2023/190**	Vietnam	01/03/24	30/09/25	A$471,200
	Water				
	Water for rice and fish: co-design and piloting of water management interventions for enhanced productivity of rice–fish systems in the Mekong floodplains **WAC/2022/153**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	01/12/24	30/11/27	A$2,100,000
	Understanding the role of remote sensing in supporting agricultural water management in Southeast Asia **WAC/2023/117**	Vietnam	01/10/24	30/09/25	A$370,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

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6

South Asia region program

South Asia is an immensely diverse and densely populated region. It is home to about 2 billion people – one quarter of the world's population. The region has the highest concentration of poor people in the world, with more than 500 million people living in extreme poverty in the region.

Compared with other regions in the world, South Asia has the highest regional Global Hunger Index and a very low Human Development Index. Half of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood. Although the share of agriculture in rural employment remains high, growth of the rural non-farm sector is accelerating and now provides a sizeable share of rural income and employment, primarily in services.

Malnutrition rates are high across South Asia, and poor diet quality is a major contributor to this problem throughout the region. High levels of undernutrition (stunting and wasting) and micronutrient deficiencies persist even as the prevalence of overweight, obesity and related noncommunicable diseases rises.

While the countries of South Asia face common opportunities and challenges in agriculture, there are also fundamental differences between and within these countries in terms of the broad characteristics that influence the nature and success of agriculture. India has 15 distinct agroecological zones. Nepal has 3 distinct topographical zones. Bangladesh has 30 agroecological zones. These zones range from hill regions to coastal regions. Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan all have alluvial and fertile floodplains associated with major rivers flowing from the Himalayas. Sri Lanka's landscape is clearly defined by its dry and wet zones.

The region is prone to natural disasters. Bangladesh, parts of India and Sri Lanka are threatened frequently by storms, coastal floods and cyclones. Nepal is subject to flooding from glacial lake outbursts. Recurring drought is a common feature in the arid and semi-arid parts of India and Pakistan. The impact of natural calamities is most severe on food-insecure households, and it is anticipated that climate change threatens to compound and exacerbate the challenges to food production systems and rural livelihoods in South Asia.

2024–25 program

Partner countries

Bangladesh
India
Nepal
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

27
projects

A$9.77 million

Investment in agricultural research for development

6
small research activities

21
research projects

Drivers of regional collaboration

Countries in South Asia share many opportunities and threats that drive the need for regional cooperation through bilateral and multilateral research and development programs, especially in the Indo-Gangetic Plains.

Rice and wheat are the region's major staple crops, accounting for about two-thirds of total dietary energy. However, food consumption patterns have changed in the region over the past few decades, and the changes are most apparent in rural areas. The consumption of cereals is declining while that of animal-sourced foods, fruits, vegetables and processed foods is increasing.

Pressure to expand food production to meet growing demand is putting stress on natural resources and potentially jeopardising the region's capacity to meet future food demand. The resulting expansion and intensification of agriculture is leading to serious land degradation and deterioration of soil quality. Contributing factors include the removal or burning of crop residue throughout the region, deforestation in Nepal and Sri Lanka, intensive tillage and salinity in Bangladesh, and monoculture and intensive farming practices in Pakistan. Agriculture is also contributing to loss of biodiversity in the region.

Agricultural growth poses risks for water resources. Facing the world's lowest per capita renewable freshwater resources, millions of rural people in South Asia have benefited from the increasing use of groundwater. However, aquifers are being depleted and, across the region, water tables are falling. Water quality is also deteriorating throughout the region due to nutrient overloads and industrial pollution, raising concerns about food safety and drinking water quality.

Climate variability, competing and increasing demands from agriculture and industry (including energy production), and population growth are creating severe demands on water resources. Regional cooperation is essential to manage these shared resources and common issues.

There are significant opportunities for regional cooperation to improve the productivity and diversification of agricultural crops, especially beyond cereals, and to improve the sustainability of farming systems through technical, institutional, value-chain and policy research and development.

Regional ACIAR program

Australian agricultural and resource management expertise is highly regarded in the South Asia region. ACIAR has a long history of research collaboration in improving crop productivity, forestry, water use efficiency and policy reforms. The South Asia regional program of the Australian Government seeks to underpin Australia's economic engagement in the region by addressing some of the key region-wide barriers to sustainable economic growth and connectivity. Gender equality is a focus in all the investments under the regional program.

The ACIAR strategy in South Asia focuses on communities, production systems and resource management in the 3 main ecosystems of the region – highlands, plains and coastal areas – that are common to Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Research in these areas looks to improve productivity and livelihoods in marginalised communities, sustainably improve the productivity and resilience of crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry systems, identify appropriate policy reform and increase adoption of technology (including post-harvest management).

The major pathways of development in the region include modernisation of agrifood systems, technology support, strengthening service providers, developing rural non-farm sector, and governance. Overproduction in some areas and unequal distribution networks due to poorly developed supply-chain management are the major issues in the region. Addressing these could play a major role in achieving food and nutrition security and stability in the region.

The medium to long-term strategy in the region focuses on creating regional collaborations that:

- sustainably intensify and diversify cropping systems using conservation agriculture, farm mechanisation, saline land management and adaptation to climate change
- eradicate extreme poverty through improved productivity of food-grain crops (especially wheat and pulses)
- better manage agricultural water, including rainfed areas in the Indo-Gangetic Plains and coastal zone
- influence policy related to agricultural livelihoods and climate change
- increase the emphasis on meaningful gender inclusion and empowerment.

Current and proposed projects in the South Asia region, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Developing competitive and inclusive value chains of pulses in Pakistan **ADP/2017/004**	Pakistan	01/09/18	30/06/25	A$1,507,570
	Developing food loss reduction pathways through smart business practices in mango and tomato value chains in Pakistan and Sri Lanka **CS/2020/193**	Pakistan, Sri Lanka	01/08/22	31/07/25	A$1,100,000
	Crops				
	International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	01/07/20	30/06/25	A$2,257,184
	Managing wheat blast in Bangladesh: identification and introgression of wheat blast resistance for rapid varietal development and dissemination **CROP/2020/165**	Bangladesh	01/11/21	30/06/26	A$1,500,000
	Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan **CROP/2020/167**	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	01/12/21	30/06/26	A$2,311,970
	Resilient and profitable pulses production in Pakistan **CROP/2024/159**	Pakistan	24/03/25	24/12/25	A$298,403
	Additive intercropping in wide row crops for resilient crop production in Bangladesh, Bhutan and India **CROP/2022/111**	Bangladesh, India	01/06/23	30/06/28	A$2,842,648
	Nitrogen fertiliser use in Bangladesh: scoping research opportunities for higher efficiency **CROP/2024/103**	Bangladesh	15/03/24	15/09/25	A$349,758
	Fisheries				
	Improved productivity, efficiency and sustainability of the culture-based fishery for finfish and giant freshwater prawn in Sri Lankan reservoirs **FIS/2018/157**	Sri Lanka	01/06/20	30/06/25	A$2,250,000
	Forestry				
	Bangladesh Sundarban ecosystem management project **FST/2022/123**	Bangladesh	15/12/24	14/12/29	A$2,933,018
	Resource dependency in the Sundarban Ecologically Critical Area **FST/2023/177**	Bangladesh	26/06/23	14/06/25	A$226,982
	Horticulture				
	Improving smallholder wellbeing through participation in modern value chains: sustaining future growth in the Pakistan citrus industry **HORT/2020/129**	Pakistan	01/01/22	31/12/25	A$1,500,000
	Livestock Systems				
	Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Kenya, Philippines, Vietnam	01/01/24	30/06/27	A$1,400,000
	Moving further towards formalised sheep and goat value chains in Pakistan and Ethiopia through business-oriented breeder and producer groups **LS/2023/132**	Ethiopia, Pakistan	01/09/24	31/12/28	A$2,400,000
	Soil & Land Management				
	Developing and translating soil health information in Bangladesh with farmers and for farmers to build resilient agricultural systems **SLAM/2021/107**	Bangladesh	10/06/24	31/05/29	A$1,200,097
	Change in soil and water dynamics and supporting adoption of conservation agriculture in Bangladesh **SLAM/2022/101**	Bangladesh	26/09/24	30/04/29	A$3,312,252
	Assessment of the adoption and adaptation of conservation agriculture and direct seeded rice in South and Southeast Asia **SLAM/2022/172**	Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	19/12/22	31/03/25	A$357,424

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Water				
	Cropping system intensification in the salt-affected coastal zones of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India **LWR/2014/073**	Bangladesh, India	01/11/15	30/06/26	A$5,556,589
	Transforming smallholder food systems in the Eastern Gangetic Plain **WAC/2020/148**	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	01/10/21	30/09/26	A$4,693,755
	Groundwater management in Pakistan **WAC/2021/134**	Pakistan	01/12/24	31/05/29	A$3,400,000
	Transformation through adoption of trees and shrubs for salinity management in the Southern Indus Basin, Pakistan **WAC/2021/136**	Pakistan	01/03/24	31/08/25	A$250,197
	Current and projected hydrological trends in the Sundarbans mangrove forest and their impacts on ecology and ecosystem services: a scoping study **WAC/2022/129**	Bangladesh	01/01/24	30/06/25	A$250,000
	Spring water management, agriculture and resilient livelihoods in the mid hills of Nepal **WAC/2022/151**	Nepal	01/10/24	30/09/28	A$2,800,000
	Climate resilient and adaptive water allocation in Pakistan **WAC/2022/152**	Pakistan	04/11/24	08/06/29	A$3,000,001
	Transitioning to climate resilient water allocation planning in Pakistan **WAC/2023/182**	Pakistan	01/10/23	11/11/24	A$60,000
	Paribartan: participatory action research on locally led iterative learning and inclusive business models for adaptive transformation in Bangladesh polders **CLIM/2021/137**	Bangladesh	21/08/23	31/12/27	A$3,115,808
	Preparing Pakistan for a water scarcity tipping point **CLIM/2022/136**	Pakistan	01/07/24	31/01/29	A$3,200,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

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Bangladesh

A$4.3 million
investment in agricultural research for development

15 projects

- **11** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **4** Small projects and research activities

- **8** Projects specific to Bangladesh
- **7** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Agriculture plays a pivotal role in the Bangladesh economy and in the lives of much of the population. It is an important driver of economic growth and rural development.

Agriculture accounts for almost 11.5% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and provides employment opportunities for about 45% of the workforce. While Bangladesh is transforming from a country of chronic food shortages to one of net food grain self-sufficiency, the country still faces substantial food security challenges, and many people still live below the poverty line.

Rural communities

About 60% of the population of Bangladesh lives in rural areas and rural livelihoods depend on agriculture for food security, nutrition and supply of raw industrial inputs. An estimated 58.5 million people are employed in the primary sector. The livelihoods of about 1.5 million people depend on, at least partially, fisheries and aquaculture and approximately 20% of the population is directly engaged with livestock production and related activities. The total forested area of Bangladesh is 2.6 million hectares, which is nearly 17.4% of the total land area of the country. The forestry sector accounts for about 3% of the GDP and 2% of the labour force.

Political and economic environment

An interim government was formed on 8 August 2024 following the resignation of the former Prime Minister on 5 August. The situation remains volatile leading to many uncertainties for ACIAR research program in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh had maintained a concerted effort towards the overall development of the agriculture sector. There were many strategies, policies and plans developed to guide this effort, including Vision 2041, 8th Five-Year Plan, the Master Plan for Agricultural Development in the South, The Perspective Plan 2021–2041, Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, the Bangladesh Good Agricultural Policy 2020 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan is the de facto policy document that provides strategic direction for work on climate-change related issues. Many elements of climate-change adaptation in the country were being addressed through specific sectoral policies.

Climate change

Climate change is the most pressing issue for Bangladesh, with varying levels of vulnerability and impact across the country. Coastal areas are prone to salinity intrusion and tropical cyclones, the floodplains in the central areas are prone to floods, the north-western region is prone to drought, the north-eastern region is prone to flash floods, and the hilly regions are prone to erosion and landslides. Bangladesh is an active participant in the global effort to combat climate change and must develop adequate adaptive capacity to protect its people and economy. In view of the substantial long-term challenges presented by climate change, the government developed a long-term Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 that focuses on developing approaches to sustainable management of water, environment and land resources. Bangladesh plays a vital and active role in international and regional forums, particularly the United Nations, Commonwealth and South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation.

Food insecurity

Bangladesh has made impressive progress in achieving national food security. Investments in agricultural research have played a pivotal role in driving productivity increases of major crops. The ongoing challenge is to improve the sustainability of agricultural production, productivity of low-lying areas and rainfed cropping systems, and increase rural incomes. This goal is adversely affected by increasing seasonal climate variability, reduced freshwater river flows and seawater intrusion.

While poverty is steadily declining, many people still live below the poverty line. Approximately 40 million people remain food insecure and 11 million suffer from acute hunger. Since 2017, Bangladesh has also seen a large influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar.

Partnering with Australia

ACIAR has supported research collaboration with Bangladesh since the mid-1990s and focused on the productivity of dry winter (rabi) crops like pulses, wheat, maize and watermelon in the rice fallows. The program recently shifted its focus towards a farming systems approach to support food security, improved production and diversification of the rice-based farming systems, and adaptation to climate change. This approach includes research on short duration varieties of pulses to fit specific biophysical challenges of Bangladesh pulse production systems, conservation agriculture technologies and related mechanisation, saline land management and adaptation to climate change. ACIAR-supported programs in Bangladesh have focused in the undulating and sloping lands of the north and north-west and the coastal region (which is the poorest and most vulnerable region in the country).

Bangladesh's ability to maintain food security in light of the country's high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change underpin the priorities for ACIAR support. The ACIAR–Bangladesh Collaboration Strategy 2021–2030 enables the possibility of longer-term and flexible programs that respond to complex challenges and enables a recalibration of the relationship, affirming the changing nature of the partnerships and the role ACIAR plays in catalysing regional collaboration. This strategy acknowledges how the relationship between ACIAR and Bangladesh has evolved to become a strong partnership of co-investment and emphasises the importance of the contribution of ACIAR to regional collaboration.

The Krishi Gobeshona Foundation (KGF) is a strategic partner and co-investor with ACIAR in Bangladesh, which has made major research and capacity building investments in partnership with ACIAR since 2015. In 2015, ACIAR signed an MoU with KGF, and the partnership was renewed in 2021, for another 5 years. The principle underpinning the agreement is that international collaboration is critical to finding solutions to problems related to agricultural productivity in Bangladesh. The agreement strives for partnerships with national agricultural research systems, universities, NGOs (Sushilan and RDRS) and other national and international organisations, including CGIAR. The Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council is nominated as the coordinating body.

Country priorities

Despite recent and significant accomplishments, the agriculture sector in Bangladesh faces many challenges, such as climate vulnerability, elevated food demand, increased high-value crop demand, high yield gap, low input efficiency, degrading natural resource base, poor agroprocessing, and limited climate-resilient and nutrient-dense technologies. These challenges warrant investment in sustainable technological innovation and expansion. The sustainable development of the agriculture sector and the wellbeing of farming communities is of the highest priority for the national government. Key agricultural production challenges are common to many countries of South Asia, and ACIAR plays a role in strengthening regional research linkages between Bangladesh and other countries, particularly India (Bihar and West Bengal states) and Nepal (eastern Terai region).

The key priorities for Bangladesh, based on its National Agriculture Policy 2018, that align with ACIAR objectives are:

- diversification of crops, including production of high-value crops
- development and promotion of stress-tolerant, disease-resistant and nutritious crop varieties
- improvement of crop production systems for market-oriented agriculture
- building national capacity in innovation
- extension of technologies to increase overall productivity growth and reduce the difference between research farm and field-level yields.

In 2019, through a series of in-country consultations between ACIAR and a wide range of key partner agencies and individuals, ACIAR and Bangladesh reaffirmed the ongoing relevance of these research priorities, and established the ACIAR–Bangladesh 10-year Collaboration Strategy 2021–2030. This strategy outlines the agreed priorities for research collaboration between ACIAR and Bangladesh over the period 2020–2029 and reaffirms the importance of building research capacity development through research projects addressing these priorities, including through post-graduate study opportunities.

In Bangladesh, ACIAR works with Australian and in-country partners and focuses on natural resource management (soil and water) in farming systems of north, north-west and coastal Bangladesh with an emphasis on developing climate change adaptation strategies and capacity development.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 15 agricultural research-for-development projects in Bangladesh, 8 of which are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

Regional Manager, South Asia
Dr Pratibha Singh

Research Program Managers
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Current and proposed projects in Bangladesh, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Crops				
	International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	01/07/20	30/06/25	A$2,257,184
	Managing wheat blast in Bangladesh: identification and introgression of wheat blast resistance for rapid varietal development and dissemination **CROP/2020/165**	Bangladesh	01/11/21	30/06/26	A$1,500,000
	Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan **CROP/2020/167**	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	01/12/21	30/06/26	A$2,311,970
	Additive intercropping in wide row crops for resilient crop production in Bangladesh, Bhutan and India **CROP/2022/111**	Bangladesh, India	01/06/23	30/06/28	A$2,842,648
	Nitrogen fertiliser use in Bangladesh: scoping research opportunities for higher efficiency **CROP/2024/103**	Bangladesh	15/03/24	15/09/25	A$349,758
	Forestry				
	Bangladesh Sundarban ecosystem management project **FST/2022/123**	Bangladesh	15/12/24	14/12/29	A$2,933,018
	Resource dependency in the Sundarban Ecologically Critical Area **FST/2023/177**	Bangladesh	26/06/23	14/06/25	A$226,982
	Livestock Systems				
	Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Kenya, Philippines, Vietnam	01/01/24	30/06/27	A$1,400,000
	Soil & Land Management				
	Developing and translating soil health information in Bangladesh with farmers and for farmers to build resilient agricultural systems **SLAM/2021/107**	Bangladesh	10/06/24	31/05/29	A$1,200,097
	Change in soil and water dynamics and supporting adoption of conservation agriculture in Bangladesh **SLAM/2022/101**	Bangladesh	26/09/24	30/04/29	A$3,312,252
	Assessment of the adoption and adaptation of conservation agriculture and direct seeded rice in South and Southeast Asia **SLAM/2022/172**	Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	19/12/22	31/03/25	A$357,424
	Water				
	Cropping system intensification in the salt-affected coastal zones of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India **LWR/2014/073**	Bangladesh, India	01/11/15	30/06/26	A$5,556,589
	Transforming smallholder food systems in the Eastern Gangetic Plain **WAC/2020/148**	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	01/10/21	30/09/26	A$4,693,755
	Current and projected hydrological trends in the Sundarbans mangrove forest and their impacts on ecology and ecosystem services: a scoping study **WAC/2022/129**	Bangladesh	01/01/24	30/06/25	A$250,000
	Paribartan: participatory action research on locally led iterative learning and inclusive business models for adaptive transformation in Bangladesh polders **CLIM/2021/137**	Bangladesh	21/08/23	31/12/27	A$3,115,808

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

www.aciar.gov.au

India

A$0.7 million
investment in agricultural research for development

5 projects

- **4** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **1** Small project and research activity
- **5** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

India accounts for 18% of the world's population and is the world's 5th-largest economy. India is emerging as a major agricultural exporter of several key commodities and globally, is often the largest exporter of rice and the second-largest exporter of cotton.

While the contribution of the agriculture sector to GDP is declining, agriculture is a major source of employment and accounts for 44% of the total national workforce.

Agricultural production has been increasing by an average of 3.6% per year since 2011, due to improved access to inputs such as fertiliser and seed, irrigation and credit facilities. The sector has also diversified from cereal grains to pulses, fruit, vegetables and livestock products, largely driven by evolving demographics, urbanisation and changing consumer demand patterns. However, the sector is still challenged by inefficient market mechanisms, subsidy distortions, lack of storage infrastructure, unsustainable use of natural resources and susceptibility to climate change and extreme weather events.

Rural communities

Agriculture accounts for nearly 50% of the geographical area of India, and approximately half of the agricultural area is irrigated. Two-thirds of India's population lives in rural areas, with landholdings averaging 1.1 hectares. The rural population is highly vulnerable to the impacts of a declining natural resource base, biosecurity threats and climate change.

Political and economic environment

The Government of India advocates mainstreaming the role of women in agriculture as part of all programs in the agricultural development agenda. Although 30% of budgetary allocations under various schemes are directed to women farmers (60% of all farmers), use of these funds has declined. Moreover, due to the complex and varied nature of agriculture in India, there has been a trend of defeminisation in certain pockets of the country. Although policy articulation by the government on the rights of women farmers has shifted, there is still a huge knowledge gap and limited resources to implement gender-inclusive agricultural development strategies.

Climate change

Climate change presents challenges to India's long-term food security. Climate is the most important determinant of crop productivity in India, where about 60% of the cultivated area is rainfed agriculture. Without implementation of adaptation measures, rainfed rice yields in India are projected to reduce by 20% by 2050 and 47% by 2080.

The main adverse impacts of climate change on agriculture are due to increased temperature, changes in rainfall patterns, weather hazards, decline in soil and water quality, intrusion of sea water on land, and biotic and abiotic stresses arising due to climatic extremes. Rural India is extremely susceptible to climate change, with 70% of the population living in rural areas and reliant on climate-dependent agricultural activities for their livelihoods.

Food insecurity

There is a significant change in consumer demand for food in India, with preferences shifting to healthy, safe, trait-based and quality food. These changes indicate that the future of agriculture (and those engaged within) will face profound transformation in the coming decades. There is a need to create an enabling environment for this transition, through appropriate policies and institutions, an enabling regulatory environment, development of frontier technologies, as well as public and private investments in agriculture and agribusiness.

Partnering with Australia

There is strong and sustained demand for partnerships and collaboration between India and Australia for agricultural services, consulting and technologies, in which Australia has expertise. In April 2022, the Australia–India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement was signed. The agreement includes a provision that both countries will cooperate to promote agricultural trade as part of the agreement and will work toward concluding an enhanced agricultural memorandum of understanding.

The present ACIAR engagement in India focuses on regional issues of natural resource management and climate change. In 2024–25, ACIAR will develop a new partnership strategy to guide our research-for-development program in India.

Country priorities

Agricultural research for development in India is not keeping pace with that of other major agricultural countries. This is evident from the rising yield gap, lack of adoption of precision and smart farming techniques, and lower application of innovation such as biotechnology, material sciences and data and digital technologies. With the exception of rice and wheat, India is not keeping pace with the world yield gains in crops cotton, soybean, groundnut and rapeseed mustard.

Modernisation of agriculture requires the introduction and promotion of knowledge and skill intensive practices, private and corporate sector investments in agriculture, new institutions of producers, integrated food system-based mechanisms and new types of linkages between producers and end users.

While Indian cropping systems are markedly different to those in Australia, there are common technical challenges, which Australian technology is well-suited to address. In consultation with research partners in India, ACIAR is supporting research that contributes to national agricultural research-for-development goals addressing:

- management of agricultural water, including rainfed areas
- sustainable intensification and diversification of cropping systems with support of conservation agriculture/zero tillage
- breeding of improved varieties of wheat and mungbean
- policy development for farmers' livelihoods and climate change.
- post-harvest management.

The threat of biosecurity risks to countries such as India and Australia is increasing as a result of globalisation, tourism, migration and increased movement of agricultural commodities. Australia is a world leader in biosecurity, with a mature biosecurity system. There is strong demand from India for Australian experts to contribute to capacity development in biosecurity in India, particularly pest surveillance, monitoring, preparedness and traceability.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 5 agricultural research-for-development projects in India, all of which are part of regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

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Dr Pratibha Singh

Research Program Managers
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Current and proposed projects in India, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Crops				
	International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	01/07/20	30/06/25	A$2,257,184
	Additive intercropping in wide row crops for resilient crop production in Bangladesh, Bhutan and India **CROP/2022/111**	Bangladesh, India	01/06/23	30/06/28	A$2,842,648
	Soil & Land Management				
	Assessment of the adoption and adaptation of conservation agriculture and direct seeded rice in South and Southeast Asia **SLAM/2022/172**	Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam	19/12/22	31/03/25	A$357,424
	Water				
	Cropping system intensification in the salt-affected coastal zones of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India **LWR/2014/073**	Bangladesh, India	01/11/15	30/06/26	A$5,556,589
	Transforming smallholder food systems in the Eastern Gangetic Plain **WAC/2020/148**	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	01/10/21	30/09/26	A$4,693,755

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

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Nepal

A$0.9 million
investment in agricultural research for development

2 projects

2 Bilateral and regional research projects

1 Project specific to Nepal

1 Regional project

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Agriculture is the largest sector of the Nepalese economy, employing more than 60% of the total population and contributing about 24% of GDP.

While agriculture is the main contributor to livelihoods, it has a very low growth rate because of low levels of technology and infrastructure and poor market facilities. With most members of rural households abroad for foreign employment, remittances have become a major part of the national economy – estimated to account for 26.6% of the country's GDP in 2023.

Nepal is susceptible to geological and climate-related disasters. Weaknesses in effective response mechanisms and strategies for dealing with natural hazards has historically exacerbated these vulnerabilities, especially for people living in the higher altitudes who rely on subsistence farming.

The agriculture sector is dominated by subsistence farming resulting in low productivity and production of agricultural commodities. As a result, the country relies heavily on imports of agricultural commodities, mainly from India. The Global Hunger Index classifies Nepal as 'moderately' food insecure.

About one-third of Nepal's total area is forested and most of this area is government owned. In spite of overcutting and poor management, timber is one of the country's most valuable resources and potentially a major source of revenue.

Partnering with Australia

Australia and Nepal will celebrate 65 years of diplomatic relations in 2025. In 2023–24, Australia provided an estimated A$27.2 million in official development assistance, focused on governance, climate and disaster resilience, gender equality and social inclusion.

The Nepal Agriculture Research Council, the apex body for agricultural research in the country has been an ACIAR partner in many projects over the years. Nepal also hosts an important regional research body – the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development. Australia's long-term support for community forestry in Nepal since the 1960s, through AusAid and ACIAR, has contributed to around 45% forest cover in Nepal.

Country priorities

Increased farm and forest productivity remains a core priority of Nepal for collaboration with ACIAR to improve food and nutrition security of the rural poor. In the Middle Hills districts, where the impacts of earthquakes and floods remain, our program focuses on, at the request of the Nepalese Government, research to support increased timber production from community forests.

Given the common agricultural production challenges across the alluvial plains of Nepal, eastern India and Bangladesh, cooperative research linkages with neighbouring countries will be explored further. The focus will be on understanding pathways to crop diversification to reduce inequity, production risk and unsustainable resource use. In addition, the program will also attempt to improve spring water management in the mid-hills of Nepal, which will improve inclusive and resilient rural livelihoods. These priorities address key issues such as climate change, nutrition and declining water availability.

ACIAR supports the development of scientific, leadership and management capacity of research partners in Nepal through fellowships and programs of the ACIAR Capacity Development Program. During 2024–25, ACIAR will engage alumni from Nepal in regional alumni activities to focus on meaningful engagement and knowledge exchange.

Two research-for-development projects in Nepal address high-level objectives of ACIAR and specific issues and opportunities identified by local partners.

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Dr Pratibha Singh

Research Program Managers
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More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

www.aciar.gov.au

Current and proposed projects in Nepal, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Water				
	Transforming smallholder food systems in the Eastern Gangetic Plain **WAC/2020/148**	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	01/10/21	30/09/26	A$4,693,755
	Spring water management, agriculture and resilient livelihoods in the mid hills of Nepal **WAC/2022/151**	Nepal	01/10/24	30/09/28	A$2,800,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Pakistan

A$3.4 million
investment in agricultural research for development

11 projects

- **9** Bilateral and regional research projects
- **2** Small projects and research activities
- **8** Projects specific to Pakistan
- **3** Regional projects

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Agriculture is a significant contributor to the Pakistan economy. It is the largest economic sector in the country, employing more than 42% of the workforce and contributing to about 24% of GDP.

Livestock production is particularly important in Pakistan, contributing approximately 61.9% of agricultural GDP and 14.0% of national GDP. Animal husbandry is the most significant economic activity of the rural dwellers of Pakistan. More than 8 million rural families derive around 35–40% of their income from livestock production.

Pakistan's agricultural exports have grown in recent years, and with more productive and profitable enterprise options, comes the promise of a better future for the country's farmers and exporters. Currently about 70% of the country's exports are directly or indirectly derived from agriculture where cotton, rice, fruit and vegetables are the main commodities. There is huge potential for the Pakistan agriculture sector to gain a prominent role in the global food market and lead the country towards economic growth and stability.

Rural communities

Pakistan is an agrarian economy, with more than 60% of its 119 million people living in rural areas where arable land is scarce, and the productive potential of agriculture potential is low. Rural areas are frequently subjected to drought and natural disasters, and combined with population pressure and resource development, these areas are becoming environmentally degraded. Extreme variations in weather makes for a challenging farming environment, creating uncertainty for farmers, depleting groundwater levels, degrading soil quality and organic matter content, reducing food availability, leading to poor public health conditions and increased poverty rates.

Political and economic environment

Pakistan is likely to avoid an acute economic crisis in 2024, as the economy has stabilised recently, foreign exchange reserves have grown and inflation has slowed, mainly due to International Monetary Fund assistance. The Pakistan Government is also trying to rationalise imports and restrict capital flows. The announcement of termination of support price mechanisms and market-led pricing schemes has caused panic among grain growers. In response to widespread flooding in 2022, wheat grain was imported to overcome food shortages. However, wheat stores are now in surplus and there are indications that domestic wheat production will decrease in 2024–25. For many people, economic conditions will remain difficult, potentially leading to protests and social unrest. The continuing cost-of-living crisis is likely to sustain pressure on the economy and on the government.

Climate change

Climate change significantly affects Pakistan's diverse landscapes of coastal regions, deserts, plains and mountains. Over recent years there have been more extreme weather events, triggering floods from rapid glacier melt and frequent droughts, which in turn are devastating for agriculture, rural communities and rural land. In the past 20 years, Pakistan has faced 152 extreme weather incidents, resulting in 9,989 deaths and US$3.8 billion in economic losses. The government and communities are attempting to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including the introduction of modified agricultural practices. Understanding and incorporating the experiences and recommendations of these communities is crucial for policymakers to develop an inclusive and holistic climate-resilience framework for the future.

Food insecurity

According to the World Food Program, approximately 37% of the population faces food insecurity. Primarily, the poorest and most vulnerable groups of the population, and particularly women, have limited access to an adequate and diverse diet. Chronic poverty, recurring disasters and political and economic volatility are the key drivers of undernutrition and food insecurity throughout Pakistan. In parts of Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, significant portions of the population face high levels of acute food insecurity, however there is seasonal alleviation after the summer cropping season.

Partnering with Australia

Australia has a longstanding diplomatic association with Pakistan, and for 40 years, ACIAR has supported research and programs to extend Australia's significant expertise in agriculture, livestock production and water management to support Pakistan's long-term economic growth, stability and resilience.

ACIAR is an important international partner in Pakistan, and its work has influenced policymakers at both national and provincial levels. Collaborative research efforts in Pakistan have enhanced livelihood opportunities for impoverished men and women by boosting agricultural productivity and increasing income sources for farmers, through improved water management techniques, value-adding to raw agricultural products and better market access. ACIAR programs leverage Australia's global expertise in areas that are critical for Pakistan – water and food security, which are vital for the country's long-term stability. Enhancing the inclusion of women and girls at all stages and levels of agricultural research is a primary focus.

Country priorities

To boost the agriculture sector, the Pakistan Government has launched the Green Pakistan Initiative, broadly to support modern corporate farming as well as small farmers, who constitute 95% of Pakistan's agriculture sector. The main objectives are:

- end malnutrition in Pakistan
- reduce imports of food grains
- increase exports.

This will be achieved through:

- preparing farming communities for climate change challenges
- improving crop yields to transition from being a net food importer to a food exporter
- developing a legal and regulatory regime for seed production to encourage private sector investment
- scaling up local production of hybrid seed
- development of fruits and vegetables for export, significant investment across the value chains like development of cold chain infrastructure, branding and traceability
- promotion of agribusiness with backward and forward integration.

ACIAR recognises the strong research capabilities of Pakistan. Researchers from both countries have been working together since 1984 and this collaboration is highly valued.

Working across the value chain has been prime focus for collaboration. ACIAR is supporting work on:

- value chain development for horticultural industries
- improving water efficiency and developing innovative plant breeding techniques to advance crop production
- trialling irrigation options for enhancing water use efficiency and crop production
- understanding the effectiveness of water infrastructure investments and improved water allocation and management systems, to inform policy development
- understanding climate resilient communities and future trends of climate change
- estimation and mitigation of food losses across horticultural value chains.

ACIAR is an important capacity development partner the national agricultural research system in Pakistan, particularly in the areas of:

- policy development and analysis for understanding climate change, its future scenarios, impacts and mitigation
- gender inclusion and the creation of opportunities for women and girls across value chains
- building linkages between value chain actors to help the private sector in value-adding, product development, branding and traceability systems
- training researchers to build research for development systems that can support smallholder farmers.

2024–25 research program

In 2024–25, ACIAR supports 11 agricultural research-for-development projects in Pakistan, 8 of which are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address the high-level objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

All research investments have the underlying goal of contributing to:

- agrifood systems and rural communities resilient to the impacts to climate change
- equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

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Current and proposed projects in Pakistan, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Improved productivity, efficiency and sustainability of the culture-based fishery for finfish and giant freshwater prawn in Sri Lankan reservoirs **FIS/2018/157**	Sri Lanka	01/06/20	30/06/25	A$2,250,000
	Developing competitive and inclusive value chains of pulses in Pakistan **ADP/2017/004**	Pakistan	01/09/18	30/06/25	A$1,507,570
	Developing food loss reduction pathways through smart business practices in mango and tomato value chains in Pakistan and Sri Lanka **CS/2020/193**	Pakistan, Sri Lanka	01/08/22	31/07/25	A$1,100,000
	Crops				
	Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan **CROP/2020/167**	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	01/12/21	30/06/26	A$2,311,970
	Resilient and profitable pulses production in Pakistan **CROP/2021/132**	Pakistan	24/03/25	24/12/25	A$298,403
	Horticulture				
	Improving smallholder wellbeing through participation in modern value chains: sustaining future growth in the Pakistan citrus industry **HORT/2020/129**	Pakistan	01/01/22	31/12/25	A$1,500,000
	Livestock Systems				
	Moving further towards formalised sheep and goat value chains in Pakistan and Ethiopia through business-oriented breeder and producer groups **LS/2023/132**	Ethiopia, Pakistan	01/09/24	31/12/28	A$2,400,000
	Water				
	Groundwater management in Pakistan **WAC/2021/134**	Pakistan	01/12/24	31/05/29	A$3,400,000
	Transformation through adoption of trees and shrubs for salinity management in the Southern Indus Basin, Pakistan **WAC/2021/136**	Pakistan	01/03/24	31/08/25	A$250,197
	Climate resilient and adaptive water allocation in Pakistan **WAC/2022/152**	Pakistan	04/11/24	08/06/29	A$3,000,001

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

www.aciar.gov.au

Sri Lanka

A$0.6 million
investment in agricultural research for development

2 projects

2 Bilateral and regional research projects

1 Project specific to Sri Lanka

1 Regional project

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

Australia has a strong interest in ensuring Sri Lanka can be a secure, stable and prosperous partner of Australia in the Indian Ocean region.

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. Two projects are active in Sri Lanka in 2024–25 but the recent economic and political environment has limited opportunities for further re-engagement.

The research program addresses our high-level objectives, as outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, as well as specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR.

Two ACIAR-supported projects are active in Sri Lanka during 2024–25.

Regional Manager, South Asia
Dr Pratibha Singh

Research Program Managers
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Current and proposed projects in Sri Lanka, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Developing food loss reduction pathways through smart business practices in mango and tomato value chains in Pakistan and Sri Lanka **CS/2020/193**	Pakistan, Sri Lanka	01/08/22	31/07/25	A$1,100,000
	Fisheries				
	Improved productivity, efficiency and sustainability of the culture-based fishery for finfish and giant freshwater prawn in Sri Lankan reservoirs **FIS/2018/157**	Sri Lanka	01/06/20	30/06/25	A$2,250,000

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

www.aciar.gov.au

7

Eastern and Southern Africa region program

Despite facing multiple and overlapping shocks, the economies of African countries remain resilient and average growth is projected to stabilise at 4.0% in 2024–25, a percentage point higher than 3.1% in 2023.

African countries have suffered 4 turbulent years dealing with multiple shocks, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and disruptions to global supply chains due to Russia's prolonged invasion of Ukraine, as well as other geopolitical tensions and persistent factors affecting supply chains. Climate change and extreme weather conditions are having a serious impact on agricultural productivity and food security.

However, Africa's economic growth remains resilient and the outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa is gradually improving with nearly two thirds of countries anticipating higher growth in coming years.

Population growth and economic transformation are increasing the pressure on the agricultural ecosystem, and climate change continues to exacerbate these challenges. To achieve true transformation of food systems in Africa, there is growing recognition that the whole food production system needs to be considered differently to account for the true value and full cost involved in growing, distributing and consuming food.

This is vital not only for the food security of hundreds of millions of Africans but also for African economies and sustainable development on the continent.

The countries of Sub-Saharan Africa have the largest proportion of their populations, of any countries in the world, living in extreme poverty-. The region is characterised by high levels of food insecurity and very low Human Development Index rankings. If the current trend continues, Africa is unlikely to meet the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goal 1 of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030.

2024–25 program

Partner countries

Ethiopia
Kenya
Malawi
Mozambique
Rwanda
South Africa
Tanzania
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe

17
projects

A$6.78 million

Investment in agricultural research for development

3
small research activities

14
research projects

Africa's urban population has been growing at a very high rate and is projected to reach 56% of the total population (currently 44% of 1.34 billion) by 2050. Africa's demand for food is expected to more than double by that time, driven by population growth, rising incomes, rapid urbanisation, changes in national diets towards greater consumption of higher-value fresh and processed foods, and more open intra-regional trade policies.

The pressure of rising food demand is compounded by impacts associated with climate change, which continue to hamper agricultural production, productivity and reliability and increase the demand for land and water.

In addition, rural demographics continue to change. Rural populations are aging, many farms are getting smaller, and rural youth are looking for more lucrative livelihoods in urban areas rather than in traditional farming.

However, these changes are helping to create new opportunities for Africa's smallholder farmers. Their small farms are transforming from subsistence farming into business operations, which in turn bring new challenges to the agricultural systems.

Agriculture typically accounts for 30–40% of GDP of African countries and more than 70% of the continent's poor live in rural areas. While agriculture remains a key driver of the economic growth that is required to deliver economic transformation for the rural poor, growth in productivity and production have broadly stagnated in the past decade. Unlocking the potential of Africa's agricultural and food systems requires substantial investment in the agriculture sector and in research to provide the knowledge that underpins growth in agricultural productivity, especially for commercialising smallholder farming.

Drivers of regional collaboration

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of the African Union, in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities, has been at the helm of mobilising the interest and commitment of African member states and their stakeholders for the transformation of the African agriculture sector.

A major milestone was the adoption of the 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated African Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, in which the heads of states agreed to spend a minimum of 10% of their total expenditure on agriculture and pursue a target of 6% annual growth.

The African Union introduced a biannual review, the Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard, which tracks and reports each country's progress towards achieving the goals and targets of the Malabo Declaration. This important mechanism ensures that there is political will, backed by appropriate actions, to achieve agricultural growth and transformation.

The scorecard is presented at the African Green Revolution Forum, a key annual pan-African forum with the goal of accelerating progress on agriculture's contribution to economic growth and transformation, in line with the Malabo commitments. The forum is a premier platform for leaders from across Africa and around the world to advance action plans and share knowledge to drive equitable and sustainable economic growth across the continent. The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, in collaboration with several investors, coordinates the forum and produces a report on the forum, the Africa Agriculture Status Report.

Regional collaboration is crucial to achieving economic development in Africa, and the role of regional and sub-regional organisations is key, including the promotion and protection of foreign investment. ACIAR is closely linked to the main regional agencies, including the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, the African Union Development Agency–New partnership for Africa Development, and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, which are important knowledge brokers and sources of priorities for the region.

ACIAR also liaises with sub-regional organisations, which are important strategic partners and play a key role in enhancing our impact to a regional scale, especially the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa and the Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network.

A good source for calibrating our regional priorities comes from the annual African Green Revolution Forum, which aims to advance concrete action plans and share knowledge to tap into the enormous potential of agriculture in driving equitable and sustainable economic growth across the continent.

Regional ACIAR program

The agricultural environments of eastern and southern Africa and northern Australia have much in common – the wet tropics of Rwanda with northern Queensland, the semi-arid tropics of eastern Africa with central Queensland, and the arid rangelands of Ethiopia and southern Africa with the Northern Territory.

Australian agricultural science has expertise that is directly relevant to the African context. For more than 3 decades, ACIAR has supported projects that mobilised this expertise to deliver sustainable development outcomes in the region. The free-market orientation and effective architecture of agricultural research in Australia are also relevant to African agricultural transformation.

The ACIAR program with eastern and southern Africa fills a niche not addressed by many donors: agricultural research for development. Our work is highly regarded and remains as relevant now as it was 30 years ago because of our research-for-development focus, ability to enable projects with a trans-disciplinary and cross institutional approach, the similarities of the agricultural environments between Australia and eastern and southern Africa, synergies built with Australia's world-class teaching and research institutions that advance African agriculture and our long-term commitment to address specific constraints in agricultural production, with multi-year projects.

ACIAR invests approximately 10% of its annual research budget in the Eastern and Southern Africa regional program and directly funds projects in partnership with 10 African countries. However, our footprint is much broader because of our contribution to CGIAR, which has 4 centres located in Africa and, until recently, spent half of its total budget in Africa. ACIAR also provides funding for other international agricultural research centres working in Africa, such as CABI, WorldVeg and *icipe*.

Our program is delivered primarily through bilateral country research partnerships (linked to regional impact pathways) and regional collaborations coordinated with sub-regional organisations.

We also have a strong element of engagement through CGIAR. The portfolio of projects covers a diverse range of priorities, guided by the recommendations of the regional research coordination bodies that we collaborate with.

We also have a substantial collaboration with Canada's International Development Research Centre through the Food Loss Research Program that has a global reach and has 2 of its projects being implemented in Africa. The more substantive program, Cultivate Africa's Future (CultiAF) focusing on Africa ended in 2023 and the 2 agencies are discussing options for the future. CultiAF supported 9 projects across 7 countries and was a highly regarded and unique program within Africa.

The CultiAF program led to new and further opportunities for smallholder farmers in eastern Africa, such as the ACIAR-supported and icipe-led project, 'Upscaling the benefits of insect-based animal feed technologies for sustainable agricultural intensification in Africa (LS/2020/154)'. The project is enhancing the development and adoption of insect farming businesses in East Africa through commercialisation of safe and culturally acceptable insect-based products for animal feed.

During 2025, ACIAR and the Australia Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will support the implementation of the Africa-Australia Partner for Climate Responsive Agriculture (AAPCRA). Through agricultural research and capacity development, the program will work with smallholder farmers to improve access to climate-smart innovations and safeguard food production as the impacts of climate change become more severe. African research organisations will be key partners in the program to undertake individual and institutional capacity development, enhancing capacity to work with policymakers to plan and encourage climate-responsive agriculture into the future. In-country partners are also essential to ensure solutions and innovations developed by the program address local priorities and are locally appropriate.

Regional Manager, Eastern and Southern Africa
Dr Leah Ndungu

Research Program Managers
Visit **aciar.gov.au** for contact details

More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

www.aciar.gov.au

Current and proposed projects in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, 2024–25

Program	Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
	Agribusiness				
	Transitioning mining-based communities through agribusiness approaches **CROP/2022/112**	Kenya	01/05/23	30/06/26	A$1,130,000
	Regreening for the future: integrating climate change adaptation pathways into community-led regreening in eastern Africa **CLIM/2022/140**	Kenya	16/12/24	30/10/28	A$3,449,846
	Crops				
	Faba bean in Ethiopia: mitigating disease constraints to improve productivity and sustainability **CIM/2017/030**	Ethiopia	01/12/18	31/10/24	A$1,972,214
	International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	01/07/20	30/06/25	A$2,257,184
	Protecting Ethiopian lentil crops **CROP/2020/164**	Ethiopia	01/07/21	30/06/26	A$2,140,000
	Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan **CROP/2020/167**	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	01/12/21	30/06/26	A$2,311,970
	Village-based biological control of fall armyworm in Zambia **CROP/2022/112**	Zambia	01/05/23	30/06/26	A$1,130,000
	Shifting agro-ecological zone boundaries under climate change at country scale in Africa **CLIM/2024/104**	Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe	15/04/24	30/06/25	A$425,000
	Forestry				
	Management of pests and diseases of forest crops in Ethiopia **FST/2022/122**	Ethiopia	15/05/24	14/05/29	A$2,900,000
	Horticulture				
	Developing a biosecurity system for small banana growers resilient to Fusarium wilt TR4 in southern and eastern Africa **HORT/2020/128**	Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania	01/01/22	31/12/25	A$726,904
	Livestock Systems				
	Strengthening adaptive capacity of extensive livestock systems for food and nutrition security and low-emissions development in eastern and southern Africa **LS/2020/152**	Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe	22/09/22	31/12/26	A$3,050,000
	Upscaling the benefits of insect-based animal feed technologies for sustainable agricultural intensification in Africa **LS/2020/154**	Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda	23/02/22	30/06/25	A$3,000,000
	Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Kenya, Philippines, Vietnam	01/01/24	30/06/27	A$1,400,000
	Exploring local constructs of 'resilience' in the face of chronic uncertainty in the drylands **LS/2022/144**	Ethiopia, Kenya	01/01/24	30/06/27	A$1,400,000
	Moving further towards formalised sheep and goat value chains in Pakistan and Ethiopia through business-oriented breeder and producer groups **LS/2023/132**	Ethiopia, Pakistan	01/09/24	31/12/28	A$2,400,000
	Water				
	Circular food systems in Africa **WAC/2023/111**	Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe	01/10/23	30/06/26	A$3,270,000
	Food and water security in southern Africa **WAC/2024/100**	Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe	21/10/24	24/10/25	A$349,887

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2024–25.


8
Australian Government

Developing capability

Science and innovation are critical to advancing agriculture and livelihoods in the Indo-Pacific region. However, of equal importance to our partner countries is the development of individual and organisational science and policy capability to implement research outcomes.

Developing capability in partner countries is a key priority for ACIAR to maximise the adoption of new knowledge and technologies to contribute to our strategic objectives. The ACIAR Capacity Development Program identifies and establishes opportunities for individuals and organisations in partner countries to boost technical, policy and management skills in agricultural research for development. To achieve this, we facilitate programs in scientific research, leadership and management, policy influencing and mentorship with our partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

Building on the key recommendations of the mid-term review of the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 and informed by Australia's International Development Policy and in-country partners, in 2024–25 we will continue to work towards a stronger integration of capacity development within the Research Program. We will embed more capacity-development initiatives at the planning stage of selected research projects and facilitate connections between the extensive alumni network and current research projects and opportunities.

John Dillon Fellowship

ACIAR has delivered the John Dillon Fellowship since 2002. The program develops the leadership and management skills of mid-career professionals, particularly scientists, researchers and economists working in agriculture research for development in ACIAR partner countries. To date, there are more than 180 alumni of the program across our partner countries.

In 2024–25, we will be completing the John Dillon Fellowship program for the Eastern and Southern Africa cohort, after successfully delivering cohort-based programs in Vietnam, Philippines, Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Pacific Region. We will also continue to deliver the program in individual priority country cohorts with a strong focus on cross-organisational collaboration and organisational capability. This approach further bolsters Australia's approach to science diplomacy, especially as the program approach features opportunities to strengthen ties with Australian partners.

Meryl Williams Fellowship

ACIAR launched the Meryl Williams Fellowship in 2019. This initiative supports women agricultural researchers to develop their skills and knowledge to take on greater leadership positions in their employing institutions. The fellowship contributes to more secure food systems and our strategic objective of gender equality and women's empowerment by providing women in agricultural science with greater access to leadership resources, facilitating collaborative networks, supporting career advancement and driving institutional progress towards gender equity. The fellowship was delivered by the University of New England from 2019 to 2023, during which time 42 women agricultural professionals participated.

Building on the successes of the first round of the program and feedback from the participants and organisations of partner countries, ACIAR is expanding and extending the program to additional six cohorts comprised of participants from a region or a country. In 2024-25 ACIAR in collaboration with our delivery partner Tetra Tech, will refine the program design, including a stronger focus on mentoring, to deliver the first fellowship in the program for a cohort in the ASEAN region.

John Allwright Fellowship

During 2024–25, we look forward to welcoming 14 scholars to commence their studies under the John Allwright Fellowship program. The cohort includes 5 scholars selected as part of the new 'John Allwright Fellowship Philippines' scheme, a co-funding partnership between ACIAR and the Philippines Department of Science and Technology – Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resource Research and Development (DOST-PCAARRD). These scholars will join our existing 42 JAFs on scholarship across 17 Australian universities. Following two successful reviews of the program in 2023–24, this coming year will see the program enhanced with greater focus on climate change and adaptation and the development of a strengthened monitoring and evaluation framework.

In 2024–25, the John Allwright Support Facility will provide additional pastoral care and opportunities for John Allwright Fellowship scholars to expand their professional networks by connecting with fellows and attending conferences and events. The facility includes regular check-ins with fellows during their higher degree research program.

This includes both academic and welfare support, noting the significant ongoing challenges associated with research following a global pandemic and continued geo-political challenges in the Indo-Pacific. The facility acts as a second layer of support and hands-on assistance to ensure the fellows are best placed to achieve their qualifications.

The John Allwright Fellowship Executive Leadership program continues to be a key mechanism to enhance leadership skills development for fellows in Australia. The program equips the fellows with leadership and management skills designed to support their return to the workplace and bridge the gap between study and further career development. In 2024–25, the fifth cohort of participants will start their program.

Pacific Agricultural Scholarships and Support

Through the Pacific Agricultural Scholarship Support program, ACIAR aims to equip new generations of Pacific agricultural researchers to tackle and address the challenges facing Pacific agriculture now and into the future. We partner with the University of the South Pacific and Fiji National University to deliver the program throughout the Pacific region, and the program will continue to expand in 2024–25. Several scholars graduated from the program in 2023–24, and in 2024-25, 44 students are studying under this program. The number of scholars will increase as the 2025 intake is finalised, based on a revised selection criteria that meets the research and development priorities of all parties in the partnership.

The academic support stream embedded into the program extends beyond awarding scholarships. It also engages with staff of the various Schools and Offices of Research at University of South Pacific and Fiji National University, providing workshops, research training and networking to scholars and their supervisors.

Alumni program

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Alumni Research Support Facility (ARSF) was developed and provided up to A$20,000 for small research activities that strengthened resilience and responded to emerging challenges that COVID-19 placed on agricultural systems in our partner countries. The program will conclude in December 2024. Following the successful outcomes of the ARSF, work will progress this year to review and redevelop a small funding facility for ACIAR alumni to continue their research and extension targeted at improving livelihoods in the Indo-Pacific region.

During 2024–25 we will develop a new Global Alumni Strategy, which aims to engage with ACIAR alumni to strengthen skills, knowledge and networks of agricultural researchers and scientists to contribute to positive development outcomes in the agricultural research-for-development sector. Under the Global Alumni Strategy, ACIAR Country and Regional Offices implement their alumni engagement plans. These plans identify the priorities and interests of each country's alumni and describe a program of activities to be implemented at the country and regional level, including training workshops (both online and in- person), networking events and new opportunities for alumni to respond to these priorities.

ACIAR continues to host a virtual forum for our alumni, Alumni360, to further engage with ACIAR work and expand their professional networks. The platform shares information about events, research collaborations and discussion forums. Alumni360 also includes information on the Capacity Development Program, including calls for applications to our fellowships, funding opportunities, publications and other resources. There are currently around 650 active members on the platform, and we expect this will continue to grow with enhancements to our new alumni strategy.

ACIAR Learn

In 2021, ACIAR partnered with the University of Queensland and Catalpa International to pilot a new mobile-learning platform, ACIAR Learn, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The platform provides bespoke online learning for agricultural researchers demonstrating good practices of Australian agricultural science knowledge. Targeted at our partner researchers and alumni, the program aims to provide knowledge for participants to strengthen their professional capabilities to undertake, manage and lead research for development projects, commissioned by ACIAR, or other institutions.

Since 2021, ACIAR Learn has 395 registered users across 25 courses, with an average completion rate of 72%. For those completing a course, there is a 99% satisfaction rate which indicates the courses have a high degree of relevance, quality and value to participants.

The pilot program ends in late 2024 and the outcomes of online learning as a capability development approach will be reviewed, in the context of the broader ACIAR Capacity Development Program. The review will also identify new ways to strengthen the platform based on feedback from participants. In addition, the ACIAR Capacity Development Program will work more closely with the ACIAR Research Program and alumni to identify key learning pathways and to create engaging content.

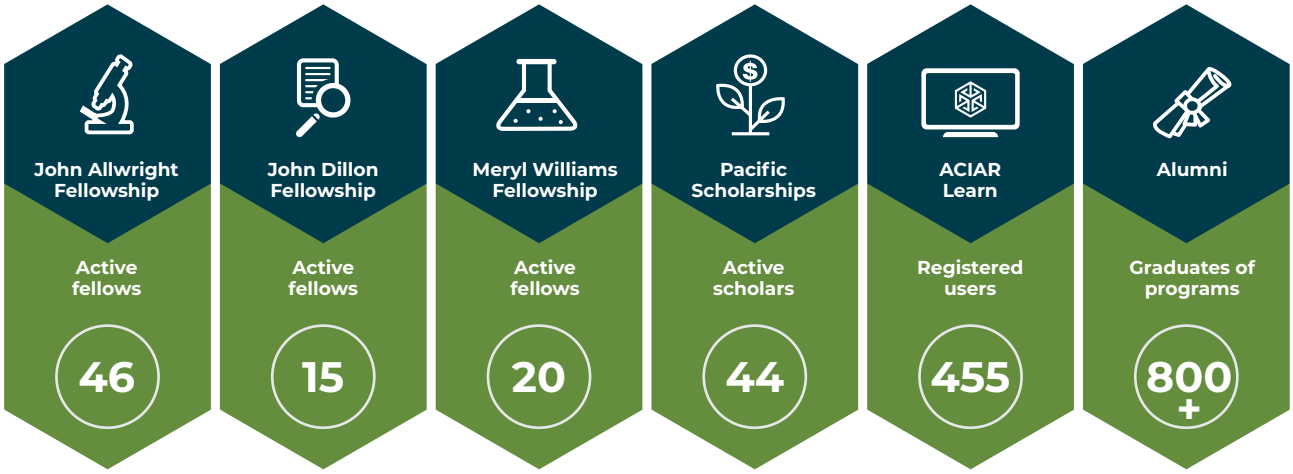
Organisational capacity development

ACIAR has long-term trusted relationships with overseas agricultural research organisations. The ongoing nature of our research partnerships are essential to understanding the enablers, constraints and impacts that capacity development has on strengthening institutions. In 2024–25 we will work on refining our approach and tools to undertake capability assessments in collaboration with partners to identify pathways to strengthen organisational capability to undertake effective agricultural research and implement ACIAR research projects. Other capacity-development activities that ACIAR supports include activities delivered by the Crawford Fund, such as the Master Class and Training Program, mentoring linkages between agricultural researchers from developing countries and mentors in Australia.

Director, Capacity Building
Ms Kate Turner-Mann

Visit **aciar.gov.au** for contact details

Participants in capacity development programs, 2024–25



Note: Participant numbers will change during 2024–25.


9

Increasing influence and impact

Reflecting the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 and its 6 strategic objectives, the Outreach Program is designed to communicate the work of ACIAR to audiences in Australia and overseas.

The objectives of the ACIAR Outreach Program are to:

- communicate the value and impact of our work, and increase our reputation as a trusted and valued partner
- build closer, more-effective working relationships with our partners and other stakeholders
- support the communication needs of our Country Network, with an emphasis on detailing research results and outcomes achieved at a regional and country level.

In 2024–25, comprehensive and coordinated strategies and plans, and programs and projects will be developed and/or implemented to achieve these objectives. This work will include:

- managing and implementing integrated digital and content strategies, including segmenting our messaging to key target audiences
- leading the development and implementation of an organisation-wide customer relationship management system to strengthen stakeholder relationships and improve recordkeeping
- working with partner and commissioned organisations to collaborate in outreach efforts on projects and programs
- identifying opportunities to further engage with stakeholders, including leveraging the profile and networks of the members of the Commission for International Agricultural Research
- leveraging sponsorship and opportunities through events to create awareness among stakeholders and cultivate relationships with partner and commissioned organisations
- continuing to improve the user experience of our website, including a focus on accessibility of website content
- supporting our Country Communication Officers to increase our reach and continue to communicate actively and effectively in-country and in our regions as they become embedded into the Country Network

Stakeholder engagement

Work will continue on implementing domestic and international stakeholder engagement strategies to ensure we take a strategic approach to improving awareness and detailed understanding of ACIAR among specific stakeholder groups.

The introduction of an ACIAR customer relationship management system by the end of 2024 will increase the capacity of ACIAR to engage meaningfully with stakeholders on an ongoing basis, and support ACIAR Outreach to design and conduct targeted campaigns, and monitor the engagement of stakeholders.

In 2024–25, the stakeholder engagement strategy will continue to:

- increase engagement with Australian stakeholders, including their awareness and understanding of the ACIAR value proposition with information specifically targeted to a domestic audience
- leverage opportunities to demonstrate the impact of ACIAR-supported projects to business and government leaders
- collaborate with partner and commissioned organisations to ensure combined outreach approaches
- strengthen relationships with international stakeholder organisations to establish productive partnerships, collaborations and co-delivered initiatives
- identify opportunities to leverage the profile and networks of members of the Commission for International Agricultural Research to raise awareness of and advocate for ACIAR
- continue to position ACIAR to deliver on our 10-year strategy.

We will continue to participate in key sector events both in person and online to share the results of ACIAR-supported research with a highly targeted audience.

Website

The ACIAR website continues to evolve, with improvements made to enhance user experience and increase visibility with our audiences.

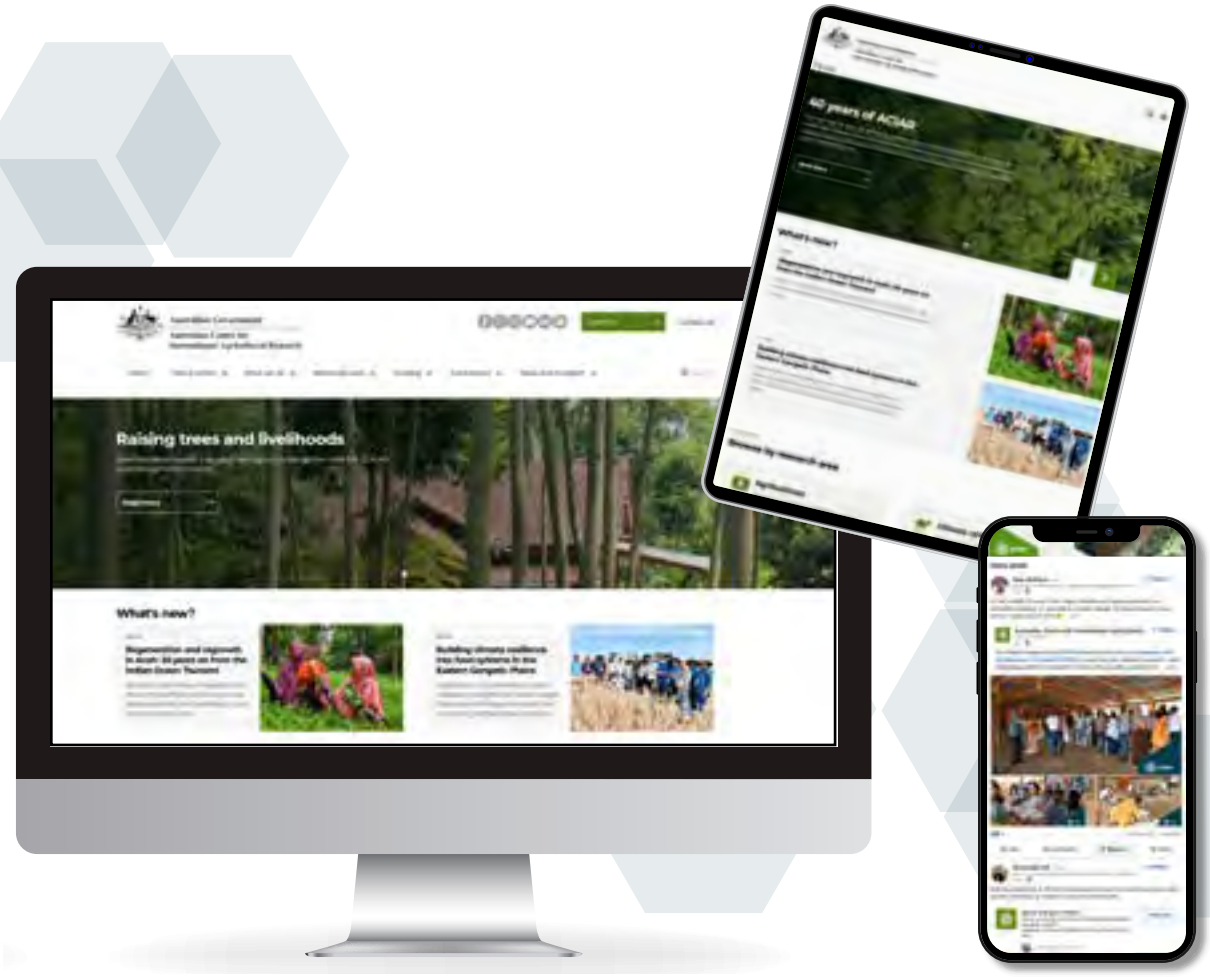
During 2024–25 there will be further development to improve the sharing of project information, including changes to the project pages and search functions, making them more dynamic and functional to meet user needs.

A website accessibility and governance audit will be conducted in 2024–25, with strategy development and training to follow. This will help ensure that the ACIAR website meets accessibility standards.

Social media

With an audience of over 109,000 by end of June 2024, the ACIAR social media channels reinforce the awareness of the impact of ACIAR-supported research to an engaged and relevant audience.

In 2024–25, the focus will be on refreshing our digital and content strategy, incorporating a consistent approach with our country offices and enhancing posts to increase engagement, including visual content and messaging improvements.



Publications

Publications, including annual corporate reports, are an essential part of our outreach and communication work. Publications contribute to ensuring audiences in Australia and our partner countries can access research findings, as well apply knowledge and innovation to farming, fisheries and forestry systems across our region.

The Scientific Publications Committee continues to ensure the quality and relevance of ACIAR scientific publications, so that our scientific and research partners are better served with improved review processes and more timely production of research publications.

During 2024–25, we will continuously improve our publications production and distribution program, strengthening internal production support systems and processes to manage the timely production, distribution and promotion of ACIAR publications.

Corporate publications will be published according to statutory and legislative requirements, and will be available both online and, in limited numbers, as hard copy. The Annual Operational Plan and the Annual Review are published each year, offering snapshots of our plans, activities and impact.

The production of the *Partners in Research for Development* magazine has been paused while a review of content, audiences and delivery modes is underway. *Partners*-style stories have been written, published online and shared through our digital channels, including our e-newsletter of which we have 3700 subscribers.

Country communication

The Country Communication Officers are now embedded in their respective Country or Regional Offices. In 2024–25 ACIAR Outreach will continue to provide support in providing a consistent and proactive approach in communication and stakeholder engagement activities.

There are now communication officer positions in 7 Country/Region Offices: Pacific (Fiji), Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia, East and Southern Africa (Kenya) and Indonesia (supporting Timor-Leste as well).

Media partnerships

ACIAR Outreach will continue to partner with media organisations, both domestically and internationally, to raise the profile of the impact of our funded work to a wider audience. In 2024–25 we will engage with journalists who have expressed keen interest in ACIAR-funded projects and their impact to identify opportunities for site visits or local media/journalism training.

We will work closely with the Crawford Fund to generate positive media coverage, especially in regional and agriculture-based media in Australia.

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Ms Michelle Nakamura

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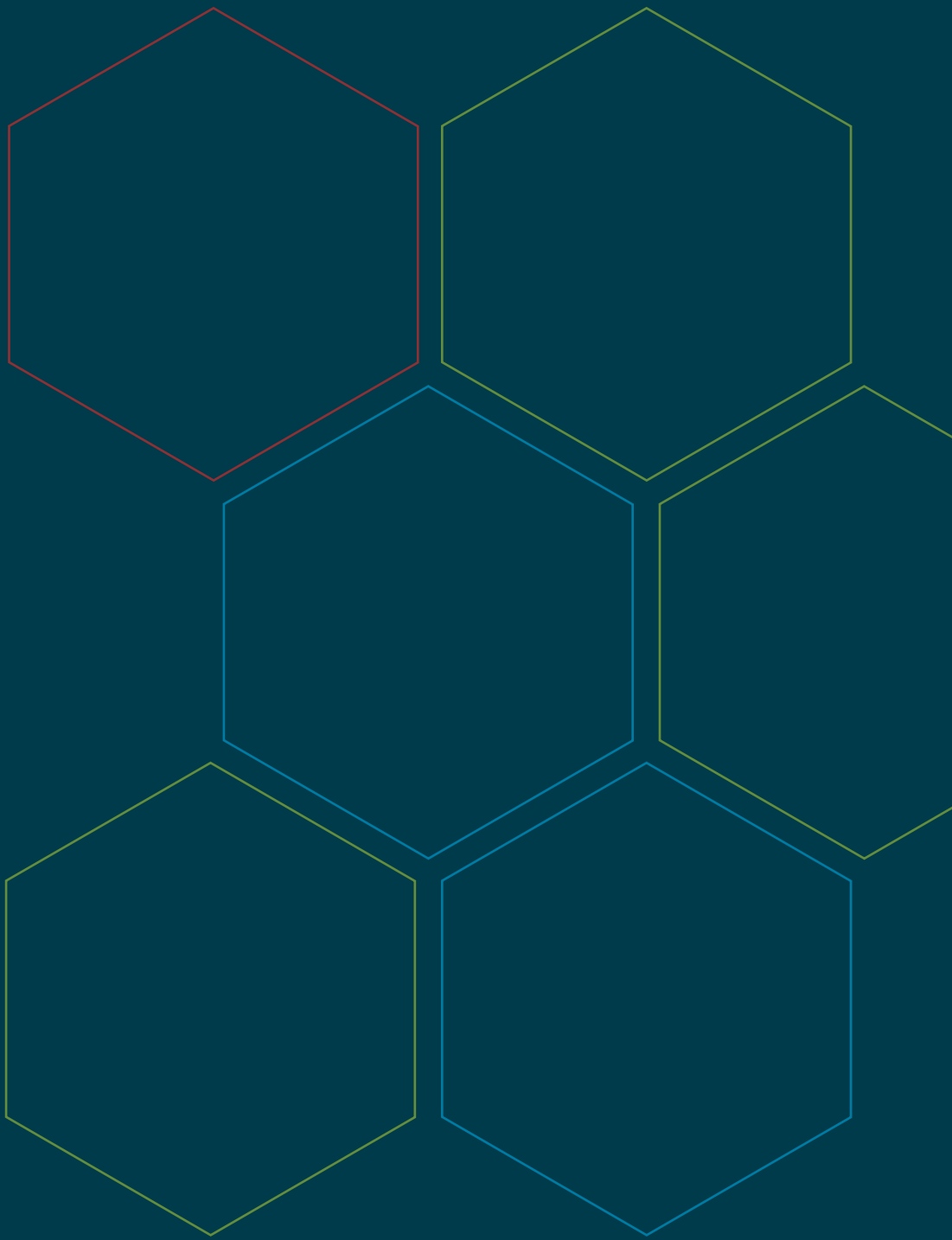

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