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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	01/04/25	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.
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