

# 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.

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### Research Program Managers








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## Current and proposed projects in Cambodia, 2024–25

| Program   | Project title & code   | Country   | Start    | End      | Total investment |
|---|--|---|----------|----------|------------------|
|    | <b>Agribusiness</b>  |   |          |          |                  |
|   | Food loss in the Pangasius catfish value chain of the Mekong River Basin <b>CS/2020/209</b>  | Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam                                 | 01/04/23 | 30/06/26 | A\$1,441,700     |
|    | <b>Crops</b>   |   |          |          |                  |
|   | Weed management techniques for mechanised and broadcast lowland crop production systems in Cambodia and Laos <b>CROP/2019/145</b>  | Cambodia, Laos  | 01/07/20 | 30/06/25 | A\$2,257,184     |
|   | Disease-resilient and sustainable cassava production systems in the Mekong region <b>CROP/2022/110</b>   | 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 <b>CROP/2023/129</b>       | Cambodia  | 13/05/24 | 30/06/29 | A\$3,229,915     |
|    | <b>Fisheries</b>   |   |          |          |                  |
|   | FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia <b>FIS/2018/153</b>  | 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 <b>FIS/2024/105</b>   | Cambodia, Indonesia                                     | 01/04/24 | 31/12/25 | A\$382,908       |
|   | <b>Forestry</b>  |   |          |          |                  |
|   | Building an effective forest health and biosecurity network in Southeast Asia <b>FST/2020/123</b>  | Cambodia, Laos  | 01/11/21 | 30/06/26 | A\$1,898,717     |
|  | <b>Social Systems</b>  |   |          |          |                  |
|   | Next generation agricultural extension: social relations for practice change <b>SSS/2019/138</b>   | 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 <b>SSS/2020/160</b>                        | 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 <b>SSS/2022/164</b>   | 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 <b>SSS/2023/105</b>  | 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 <b>SSS/2023/191</b>                              | Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines                        | 01/01/24 | 30/06/26 | A\$320,000       |
|  | <b>Soil &amp; Land Management</b>  |   |          |          |                  |
|   | Cambodian soil information system supporting sustainable upland agricultural development <b>SLAM/2022/103</b>  | 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 <b>SLAM/2022/172</b>                                 | 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 <b>SLAM/2023/100</b>                              | Cambodia  | 01/01/25 | 31/12/29 | A\$3,640,333     |
|   | Management practices for profitable crop livestock systems for Cambodia and Laos <b>SMCN/2012/075</b>  | Cambodia, Laos  | 22/03/16 | 31/12/24 | A\$3,142,140     |
|  | <b>Water</b>   |   |          |          |                  |
|   | Water for rice and fish: co-design and piloting of water management interventions for enhanced productivity of rice–fish systems in the Mekong floodplains <b>WAC/2022/153</b> | Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam                                 | 01/12/24 | 30/11/27 | A\$2,100,000     |