

Philippines

A\$5.3_{million}
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



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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 ACB/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 ACB/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	31/12/25	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

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.
www.aciar.gov.au