Australian Government

Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research

ACIAR

ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN 2025–26

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.

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Cover photo: ACIAR is supporting a 5-year research project in the Philippines to develop knowledge and capacity to increase the productivity, sustainability and resilience of key cropping systems through improved soil management and soil health. The focus is on rubber, rice and vegetable production systems and the outcomes of the project will also contribute to the foundations of a National Soil Strategy. ACIAR project SLAM/2023/146

ACIAR

ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN 2025–26

ACIAR

Science partnerships for development

ACIAR brokers and supports science partnerships between Australian and international researchers to improve livelihoods and community resilience for smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa.

We also build science and policy capacity in partner countries.

Our work is an essential part of Australia's International Development Program

During 2025–26 our work encompasses:

179
research projects and small research activities

36
countries where projects are located

67
commissioned organisations

322
collaborating institutions

A$62
million invested

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 2025–26.

Welcome

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) brokers and invests in scientific research and capacity development partnerships to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters across the Indo-Pacific region and Africa.

Committed to this vision since 1982, ACIAR's work facilitates the generation of knowledge, policy and capacity for partner countries to reduce poverty, use natural resources more sustainably, and enhance human health and nutrition. Australian expertise and involvement in these research projects also advances the capacity of the Australian innovation system and benefits Australian agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

Locally led approaches to science partnerships

The economic, social and environmental parameters of our partner countries change continually, as do the nature and extent of global influences. As a result, ACIAR's areas of focus for research and capacity development change to reflect the priorities of our partners. A locally led strategy for planning and implementing research for development ensures that ACIAR's investments are directed to areas of value and impact, and our efforts are consistent with Australia's International Development Policy.

We engage with partners to develop and foster relationships built on collaboration, inclusiveness and longevity to address shared goals. Many of these relationships have been established for several decades. ACIAR is committed to listening to local voices and co-investing in solutions that are sustainable and scalable.

Striving for a productive and sustainable future

The pillars of our research program are:

- food security and nutrition, through climate-smart agriculture and strengthening resilience in agriculture, fisheries and forestry systems
- climate change adaptation and mitigation in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and land management
- gender equality and social inclusion, by supporting women's economic empowerment and inclusive value chains
- capacity development, through long-term partnerships, fellowships and support for local research institutions.

During 2025–26, we will invest more than A$60 million in bilaterally and regionally focused agricultural research for development. We have partnerships established with more the 300 organisations to provide local, Australian and international expertise to address challenges and identify opportunities facing smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters.

We foster innovations that deliver tangible benefits to communities and address the complex challenges facing our food production systems and sustainable management of natural resources.

Contributing to regional development and security

ACIAR fosters and establishes partnerships to contribute to the global efforts of research for development. In 2025–26, ACIAR will contribute about A$24 million to global organisations and networks. As an influential member of the CGIAR System Council and a partner to other international donors and research-for-development organisations on shared goals, ACIAR plays an important role in scientific diplomacy in our region.

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 consider climate adaptation and mitigation, to align with broader research-for-development objectives and sustainable development goals.

All ACIAR research investments embed principles of gender equality and social inclusion. 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.

Driving prosperity and resilience

This annual operational plan outlines the context, partnerships and programs that influence and guide or work in partner countries across the Indo-Pacific region and Africa for the 2025–26 year. Our work is grounded in the belief that research, when co-designed and locally led with our partners, can be a powerful driver of prosperity and resilience.

I sincerely thank our many partners and dedicated staff whose ongoing collaboration and commitment are vital to delivering impactful programs.

Dr Nick Austin
Acting Chief Executive Officer, ACIAR

ACIAR research-for-development investment 2025–26

ACIAR will invest A$62 million in bilateral and regional agricultural research for development during 2025–26, across 4 regions of the Indo-Pacific and Africa.

In addition to bilateral and regional research projects, ACIAR contributes about A$35 million to global partnerships and collaborations, capacity development, impact evaluation and learning, and communicating the results and impact of our investments.

Pacific

55
projects

32%
research investment

East and Southeast Asia

91
projects

47%
research investment

South Asia

27
projects

13%
research investment

Africa

18
projects

8%
research investment

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26. 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 ii.

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Overview

Australia's International Development Policy clearly articulates Australia's role in building regional resilience through sustainable development.

The *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982* positions ACIAR as a strategic member of Team Australia.

ACIAR contributes to international development by partnering bilaterally and multilaterally with governments and institutions. We work with our partners to find locally led 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 adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change. Our work also aims to develop the capacity of individuals and institutions and identify opportunities for private sector-led development.

Contributing to our region

It is important that our investment in research supports peaceful, prosperous and climate-resilient development in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa. 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 has 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. Most projects, to varying degrees, will encompass and address all of our strategic objectives.

Listening to our partners

We work to ensure that the impacts of our investments in research and capacity development are lasting and empowering. We achieve this by ensuring that our projects and programs are based on genuine partnership, arising from locally led consultations and initiatives and addressing the needs and priorities of partner countries.

The variability of influencing factors in each partner country means that our research and capacity development programs must be informed by partner knowledge and expertise, 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.

Key areas of work

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, population growth and urbanisation. The ACIAR operating environment is concurrently affected by weather extremes, natural disasters, food and energy shortages, and geopolitical tension. The ACIAR operational model of brokering science partnerships between the Australian innovation system and our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific and Africa is as relevant today as it was when ACIAR was established. Our outstanding track record of building and sustaining deep, trusting partnerships since 1982 is a great strategic asset.

Within an ever-evolving operational context, we deliver against our enabling legislation through 3 key areas of work:

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

Bilateral and regional research projects
We generate knowledge and develop capacity to empower partners and stakeholders to take on the intersecting challenges of improving food security and livelihoods while using resources sustainably and addressing and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

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.

6 strategic objectives – guiding our partnerships, programs and projects

Food security and poverty reduction

Improving food security and reducing poverty among smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters, and rural communities, are 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 region.

During 2025–26, ACIAR supports a project in Timor-Leste to develop solutions to challenges faced by smallholder farmers. These solutions include improved knowledge of soils, intensification of cropping cycles and diversification of crop options, including more permanent plantings such as sandalwood. This work will support women and men farmers to participate in growing markets as the urbanised population around Dili grows.

CROP/2021/131

Natural resources and climate change

Managing natural resources and producing food more sustainably are fundamental to the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters. ACIAR strives to broker partnerships and invest in research that generates knowledge, technologies and capacity to transform food systems and livelihoods under pressure to adapt to climate change or reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Growing more nutritious food to feed a growing population is a global challenge. In eastern Africa, ACIAR continues its support of research that is testing how smallholder irrigation schemes that integrate grain crops, vegetables, forage and livestock, and even fish, to become circular food systems that use land and water resources efficiently and reduce the production of greenhouse gases.

WAC/2023/111

Human health and nutrition

Better nutrition, food safety and food security are priority issues for our partner countries, where acute hunger and malnutrition can be prevalent. However, and sometimes concurrently, higher incomes and urbanisation have led to obesity and a rise in diet-related diseases. The operationalisation of One Health to collaborate on regional issues at the intersection of human, animal and environmental health is also a focus.

Antimicrobial resistance is an urgent emerging threat to human and animal health today. A first in the Pacific region is an ACIAR-supported project that aims to enhance the integrated management of antimicrobial resistance through existing national structures, resulting in sustainable surveillance and detection systems, and improved health outcomes in Fiji.

LS/2019/119

Gender equity and women's empowerment

Gender equity is crucial to alleviating poverty in rural communities and as more than half the world's farmers are women. Australia's International Development Policy commits to supporting all people to fulfill their potential. ACIAR contributes to the target of the Australian Government that 80% of all development investments will address gender equality.

In Pakistan, the adoption of improved production and postharvest practices could benefit smallholder families producing citrus and better meet consumer preferences in target markets. An ACIAR-supported project is developing and piloting a chain-wide quality assurance and value distribution model, which benefits all family members – women, men and youth. The project facilitates roles for women in the industry, such as nursery production or community-based value-adding initiatives, for which they can receive equitable financial returns.

HORT/2020/129

Inclusive value chains

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

The commercial beef market in Vietnam is dominated by large, vertically integrated agribusinesses, leaving few opportunities for smallholders to participate. During 2025–26, ACIAR continues its support of a project that investigates and tests best practices and business models for smallholders and commercial stakeholders to work together in mutually beneficial and sustainable ways, helping improve farmers' livelihoods and industry's productivity.

AGB/2020/189

Capacity development

Innovation in agriculture is a key pathway to poverty reduction, increased food security and economic growth. ACIAR supports capacity development of agricultural researchers and policymakers, and their institutions, through formal programs. Capacity development is also an intrinsic element of all research projects ensuring the people we work with have the skills, resources and knowledge to sustain new innovations and initiatives.

Food production systems must sustainably produce healthy food, as well as have the capacity to change in response to external factors. In Solomon Islands and Kiribati, an ACIAR-supported project due for completion in 2026, is working with communities to develop knowledge, skills and tools to build climate and disaster resilience into their food production systems.

CLIM/2020/178

Capability and footprint

The ACIAR operational model of brokering and partnering science partnerships and investing in agricultural research for development has endured since the establishment of the agency in 1982.

The work of ACIAR is organised into 4 regions of operation: Pacific, East and Southeast Asia, South Asia and Africa. 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.

Effective and impactful investment

ACIAR has systematically commissioned independent impact assessment studies of its research since the early 1990s. The results of these studies have been assembled into a database, which is updated periodically.

In 2022, ACIAR released an impact assessment of about 200 research-for-development projects, which represented approximately 10% of total investment over 40 years. The assessment revealed a total benefit of A$64.4 billion from these projects, of which $25.2 billion can be attributed to ACIAR funding and $39.2 billion to partner funding.

The assessment indicated that most projects in the study had a benefit:cost ratio of between 1:1 and 10:1 but some projects had very high benefit:cost ratios, up to 300:1. The median benefit:cost ratio across all projects examined was 22:1 and the average was 42:1.

Consistent with the conclusions of other international donor organisations, investment in agricultural research for development is a very effective way of using public monies to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters.

The impact of ACIAR work in agricultural research for development 1982–2022

The effective investment of funds in agricultural research for development by ACIAR is structured on the following programs of operation and activity:

- Country Network, which fosters and builds in-country relationships, linking Canberra and the countries in which we work and providing a vital conduit for understanding partner priorities.
- Multilateral and Strategic Partnerships Program, which engages with international agricultural research centres and organisations, maintaining Australia's positions as an informed, constructive and valued global participant in agricultural research for development. The program also engages strategically with other Australian Government departments and agencies, as part of Australia's diplomatic efforts and global strategy.
- Research Program, which develops and manages science partnerships between Australian and international partners, to contribute to solving challenges facing farmers, fishers and foresters of the Indo-Pacific and Africa, based on partner priorities
- Capacity Development Program, which manages formal opportunities for capacity development and guides capacity development opportunities in research projects, and facilitates opportunities for alumni to further develop knowledge and networks
- Impact and Learning Program, which reviews and assesses the longer-term outcomes and impacts of our research investments to inform the design and implementation of future projects and maximise impacts across our region.
- Outreach Program, which identifies and facilitates stakeholder engagement, and produces short-form and long-form communication to ensure results, knowledge and impact from our research program is readily available to diverse audiences.

Underpinning our research for development program, is the Corporate Branch of ACIAR, which provides the administrative, governance, finance, procurement and human resources functions to support the agency's operation. Information and communication technologies are also a function of the Corporate Branch, ensuring critical connection and secure systems across the ACIAR network.

Country partnerships

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.

The network comprises 25 locally engaged staff across our operating region and country offices at Australian diplomatic missions at 10 locations (see map on pages 14–15). Our locally based staff are essential to ACIAR's relationships with in-country partner governments and their agricultural research and extension agencies, universities and other stakeholders in agricultural value chains.

The Country Network also supports research partners who undertake activities developed through ACIAR investment in research and capacity development. The network is a vital link between Australian and international researchers and the relevant in-country research agencies.

The Country Network plays a vital role in ACIAR's research investment process leading dialogues with in-country partner governments and stakeholders to determine priorities for future research and development. These country and regional priorities form the basis for planning our research investment strategy in partner countries.

Our relationships with partner countries change 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 local influences and circumstances mean that our Country Network must be nimble and flexible when engaging with partner agencies.

Increasingly, ACIAR partner countries lead the design of research projects and capacity-development programs, with countries now regularly co-investing alongside ACIAR in accordance with their capacity. This approach aligns with the ambition of the Australian Government's International Development Policy, to ensure investments are locally led and ACIAR is contributing to the broader Australian Government development agenda.

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

www.aciar.gov.au
>Where we work

Research investment 2025–26

10%
Agribusiness

10%
Crops

13%
Fisheries

7%
Forestry

7%
Horticulture

8%
Livestock Systems

22%
Social Systems, Policy and Economics

13%
Soil and Land Management

9%
Water

Research for development

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

The program within each partner country and each region is shaped 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, and Australia's International Development Policy. Our research program is also informed by the Australian expertise in our many commissioning organisations and expertise in the international agricultural research centres we work with.

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

During 2025–26, 179 projects will be active across 36 countries. These projects are research collaborations between Australian and international scientists, working together to find solutions, develop new knowledge and foster innovation in partner countries. The research program also builds capability of partner-country and Australian researchers and their organisations.

Research projects are designed and implemented collaboratively 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.

We also work with other Australian government agencies to implement programs and projects with shared goals. Our largest and most important partnership is with our portfolio partner, the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Our partnerships with DFAT facilitate the scaling of new knowledge and technology with partners across the Indo-Pacific and Africa. 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. Country dialogues are scheduled to take place in advance of redevelopment of Country Investment Plans in early 2026.

The ACIAR research investment process includes clear assessment criteria by which concept notes and preliminary proposals are considered. Once a project is underway, we continue to work closely with collaborators to support and manage research partnerships and to monitor the achievement of project milestones (through formal evaluation processes), to optimise impact and return on investment.

There are 9 areas of focus in the research portfolio (see left). ACIAR-supported projects are varied in design, execution and planned outcomes, ranging from multi- to interdisciplinary approaches, and focusing on one or multiple locations, in one or more countries, to develop new knowledge, technology or methodology.

A major program of work for 2025–26 will be the Africa–Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture (AAPCRA). The partnership, a $76.4 million co-investment between ACIAR and DFAT, across 6 years, aims to improve the access of smallholder farmers to climate responsive agricultural practices and knowledge.

Partnerships for impact

The ACIAR Multilateral and Strategic Partnerships Program ensures that ACIAR is positioned to influence and promote global efforts toward more productive and sustainable agricultural systems for the benefit of low-income and lower-middle-income countries.

During 2025–26, 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 funding and support of international agricultural research centres is a role 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.

CGIAR investment

Our largest multilateral partner, based on value of investment, is CGIAR, the world's largest publicly funded agricultural research network. The CGIAR network conducts research into agriculture, forestry and fisheries in collaboration with national agricultural research institutions, private sector research entities and other partners for the purposes of development. The CGIAR comprises 15 agricultural research centres that employs more than 9,000 scientists across 89 countries, and is dedicated to reducing rural poverty, increasing food and nutrition security for human health, and improving natural resource management and ecosystem services.

Australia has invested in CGIAR since its establishment in 1971, and since 1992, ACIAR has managed Australia's investment and representation. As one of the top funders of the CGIAR, having invested A$25 million, on average, over the past 5 years, Australia has a seat on the governing body of CGIAR – the System Council.

Being part of the System Council enables ACIAR, on behalf of Australia, to influence the governance and strategic direction of CGIAR programs by advocating for issues faced by our neighbours in the Pacific and the wider Oceania region. ACIAR's engagement with other System Council members also enables Australia to invest with other donors on mutual priorities across different regions, amplifying our funding impact.

ACIAR supports CGIAR through 3 types of funding (see table at right).

Three types of funding for the CGIAR, 2025–26

Funding type	A$ million	Use of funds
CGIAR core funding	7	Funding to support CGIAR System as a whole
CGIAR Research Portfolio 2025–2030	12	Funding to support CGIAR science programs and research accelerators
Parallel investments	5	Funding with partners on initiatives with CGIAR as a commissioned organisation

Core funding for CGIAR is unrestricted and is spent at the discretion of the CGIAR System. The contribution that Australia makes is reviewed annually and in 2025–26 it is approximately A$7 million.

ACIAR also provides restricted or designated funding, where funding is provided to support the CGIAR's science programs and accelerators. In 2025–26, ACIAR contributes $A 12 million to the CGIAR Research Portfolio 2025–2030, which works increasingly with national agricultural research extension systems, which ACIAR see as a priority. The science programs that ACIAR supports within the portfolio are:

Breeding for Tomorrow – a program to improve crop varieties and breeds that are climate-resilient, market-preferred and nutritious. In 2025–26, ACIAR will provide funding to develop crop breeding resources, within this program.

Food Frontiers and Security – a program to strengthen agrifood systems across fragile, conflicted-affected, urban and island contexts by 2030. In 2025–26, ACIAR will provide funding to support work on island food systems (e.g. food production and distribution, healthy diets, innovation hubs and food system resilience).

Gene banks – an accelerator program to develop crop diversity and availability (450 crops, 3,500 plant species). In 2025–2026, ACIAR provides funding to support biodiversity conservation and germplasm health.

ACIAR also engages with CGIAR centres in parallel research investments and provides funding along with other funders. For example, in 2025–26 ACIAR provided funding to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) for the CGIAR Initiative on Genome Editing with collaborators including The Gates Foundation and the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The program 'Accelerating Crop Improvement Through Genome Editing' aims to overcome technical barriers to conventional rice breeding by making precise changes to the plant genome to increase yields in a timely and cost-effective manner.

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 regional bodies. ACIAR works with these organisations by providing core funding to the organisation, or to specific programs or projects within an organisation that align with ACIAR's objectives at a regional or global level.

During 2025–26, we will support global research collaborations with:

- Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI)
- CABI
- International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (*icipe*)
- The Pacific Community (SPC)
- West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF)
- World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg).

These collaborations include support of the following initiatives:

International Mungbean Improvement Network – as part of ACIAR's partnership arrangement with the WorldVeg, we contribute funds to deliver activities for the long-term sustainability of the International Mungbean Improvement Network. This network aims to connect mungbean researchers from around the world to openly share experiences, knowledge and technologies based on principles of cooperation. ACIAR's support of WorldVeg in hosting and coordinating the network provides sustainable scientific solutions to challenges in global food and nutrition security.

West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF) – ACIAR signed a Partnership Arrangement with the West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development in 2025, as part of the Africa–Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture (AAPCRA).

CORAF will work with Australian partners to guide investment in agricultural research and capacity development programs to strengthen climate resilience and food security in Africa.

The first year of the arrangement aims to enhance the capacity of national and research systems (NARS) to meet current and emerging needs of agricultural development and food security in western and central Africa. This includes activities such as:

- supporting the next generation of agricultural scientists to achieve impact
- facilitating the development of collaborative research design and proposals
- harmonising existing research strategies across member countries
- supporting youth engagement with agricultural value chain development in West and Central Africa.

Building strength through collaboration

ACIAR also develops and manages co-investment alliances and partnerships with organisations and donors who have similar objectives and interests. 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 develop capacity.

ACIAR has a longstanding co-investment relationship with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The value of the ACIAR–IDRC partnership is based on each organisation's operation as a specialist, mission-focused agency within their respective governments and together they contribute to the bilateral relationship between Australia and Canada. The partnership enables leveraging financial resources and builds on a trusted working relationship of more than 10 years, as well as respective experience, expertise, networks, outputs, outcomes and geographic reach. The current ACIAR–IDRC Partnership Framework (II) 2024 to 2030 sets out an agreement to collaborate on a range of initiatives of mutual interest.

Strategic partnerships

ACIAR builds and maintains strategic partnerships to support common goals. For example, ACIAR works with the Crawford Fund, on programs such as the Master Class and Training Program, and to find linkages between agricultural researchers from developing countries and mentors for agriculture students in Australia.

The Crawford Fund will deliver a suite of interconnected activities in support of ACIAR's strategic priorities as part of its Food Security Agreement 2025–26 with ACIAR. These activities build on a longstanding partnership to advocate for, deliver and enhance Australia's investment in agricultural research for development, and include the following activities in 2025–26:

- strategic advocacy for international agricultural research
- capacity building and training initiatives for mid-career researchers and emerging leaders
- alumni engagement and tracer studies
- media, public engagement and outreach collaboration
- support for the Researchers in Agriculture for International Development (RAID) network.

Capacity development

The development of individual and organisational science and policy capability to implement research outcomes ensures that ACIAR investment in science and innovation can advance agriculture and livelihoods in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa.

Developing capability in partner countries is a key activity of ACIAR and a strategic objective. ACIAR has a well-established and highly regarded suite of capacity development programs that offers opportunities for individuals and organisations in partner countries to boost technical, policy and management skills in agricultural research for development.

In 2025–26, we will be focused on strengthening climate capability in our formal Capacity Development Program with dedicated places for climate-focused research in the John Allwright Fellowship and enrichment activities for our fellows and scholars across other programs.

Concurrently, ACIAR identifies and establishes capacity-development initiatives in research projects and facilitates connections between the extensive alumni network and current research projects and opportunities. We also consider partner country priorities to integrate relevant capacity development approaches into our research for development projects.

ACIAR has long-term trusted relationships with overseas agricultural research organisations and many seek support from the Australian innovation system to strengthen their own institutional capacity. In 2025–26 we will work on refining our approach and tools to undertake capability assessments. In collaboration with partners, we will conduct assessments to identify pathways to strengthen organisational capability to undertake effective agricultural research and implement ACIAR research projects.

Participants in capacity development programs, 2025–26

Note: Participant numbers will change during 2025–26.

Impact and learning

An important aspect of our work lies in strategically planning for and measuring the impact of our investments.

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.

Consistent with the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027, the ACIAR Impact and Learning Program has 3 key areas of focus.

Portfolio monitoring, evaluation and reporting

We are developing and implementing a revised monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning (MERL) framework to ensure that our projects are aligned with ACIAR's strategic objectives and deliver against Australian Government priorities and goals for sustainable development in our region.

Improving investment prioritisation and design

Our Impact and Learning Program helps inform improvements in the design and implementation of research investments to ensure that the outcomes of ACIA1-supported research maximises impact and supports the priorities of partner countries.

Commissioning impact evaluation studies

Through its commissioned impact assessments, ACIAR continues to build on and improve methods for evaluating impact to understand the contexts in which multidisciplinary research can be leveraged to achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural development through international agricultural research and training partnership.

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 our impact empowering women and broader sectors of the community. The learnings from our impact assessments will continue to build scientific and policy capabilities within our partner countries and inform the commissioning of future work.

Influence and communication

The ACIAR Outreach Program engages with stakeholders and audiences, in Australia and overseas, through a range of platforms and products, to communicate the work of ACIAR.

The objectives of the program are to communicate the value and impact of the work of ACIAR, and increase our reputation as a trusted and valued science partner.

In 2025–26, the Outreach Program will continue to refine its strategies stakeholder engagement and communication to ensure that key opportunities to engage are identified and key messages are delivered using the most effective tools, platforms and forums.

Stakeholder engagement

We identify, engage and manage relationships with stakeholders to:

- leverage opportunities to demonstrate the impact and outcomes of ACIAR work in the Indo-Pacific and Africa to government, business and civil society leaders
- increase awareness and understanding of the ACIAR value proposition for Australia, with information specifically targeted to a domestic audience
- enhance awareness and understanding of ACIAR among existing and potential research partners and communicate the benefits of research for development for the Australian innovation system
- to share the results of ACIAR-supported research with highly targeted audiences, at key sector events, in person and online, and to promote opportunities for partnerships.

The capacity for effective stakeholder engagement is enhanced by the ongoing implementation of an organisation-wide customer relationship management system (CRM), which will strengthen stakeholder connection, improve recordkeeping and enhance the design and implementation of targeted campaigns.

Website

The ACIAR website is the hub for online outreach and strategic digital communications. A wide range of content is created and housed on the website including news stories and blogs of impact, project information and reports, and scientific publications. The website also serves as a platform for online corporate functions and reporting obligations. The ACIAR website undergoes continual assessment and review to maximise user experience and increase visibility with our audiences, as well as be a valuable long-lived resource of content.

Social media

With an audience of close to 120,000 (June 2025), the ACIAR social media channels raise awareness of the impact of ACIAR-supported research to an engaged and relevant audience and enhance visibility and impact of ACIAR's research, within Australia and internationally. We also use these channels to promote and celebrate achievements of our partners and to amplify content produced by commissioned organisations. Throughout 2025–26, we will analyse the results of our media campaigns and programs to ensure that the best tools are being engaged in the most effective manner.

Publications

ACIAR publishes scientific content in reports, books and manuals publications to ensure audiences in Australia and partner countries can access the results and learnings of our research investments, and apply the knowledge and innovation to farming, fisheries and forestry systems across our region.

Corporate publications are published according to statutory and legislative requirements, and the Annual Operational Plan and the Annual Review are published each year to offer stakeholders snapshots of our plans, activities and impact.

In-country communication

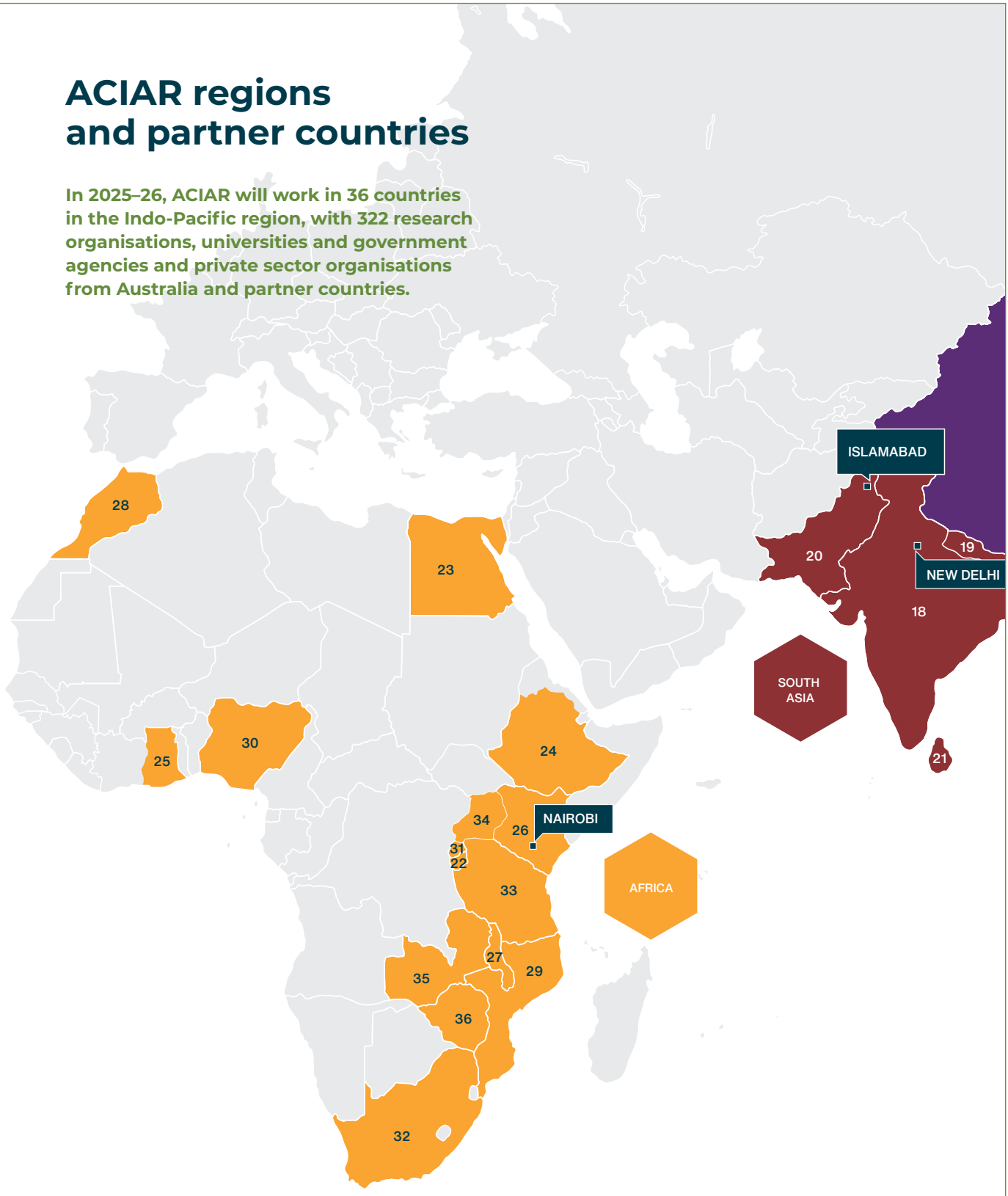
The Outreach Program supports 7 Country Communication Officers, who are based in our Country or Regional Offices to ensure a consistent and proactive approach in communication and stakeholder engagement activities across the organisation. Communication officers are based in Fiji (for the Pacific region), Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia, Kenya (for the Africa region) and Indonesia (supporting Timor-Leste as well). In-country communication enables the production of content that focuses on results and outcomes at a regional and country level.

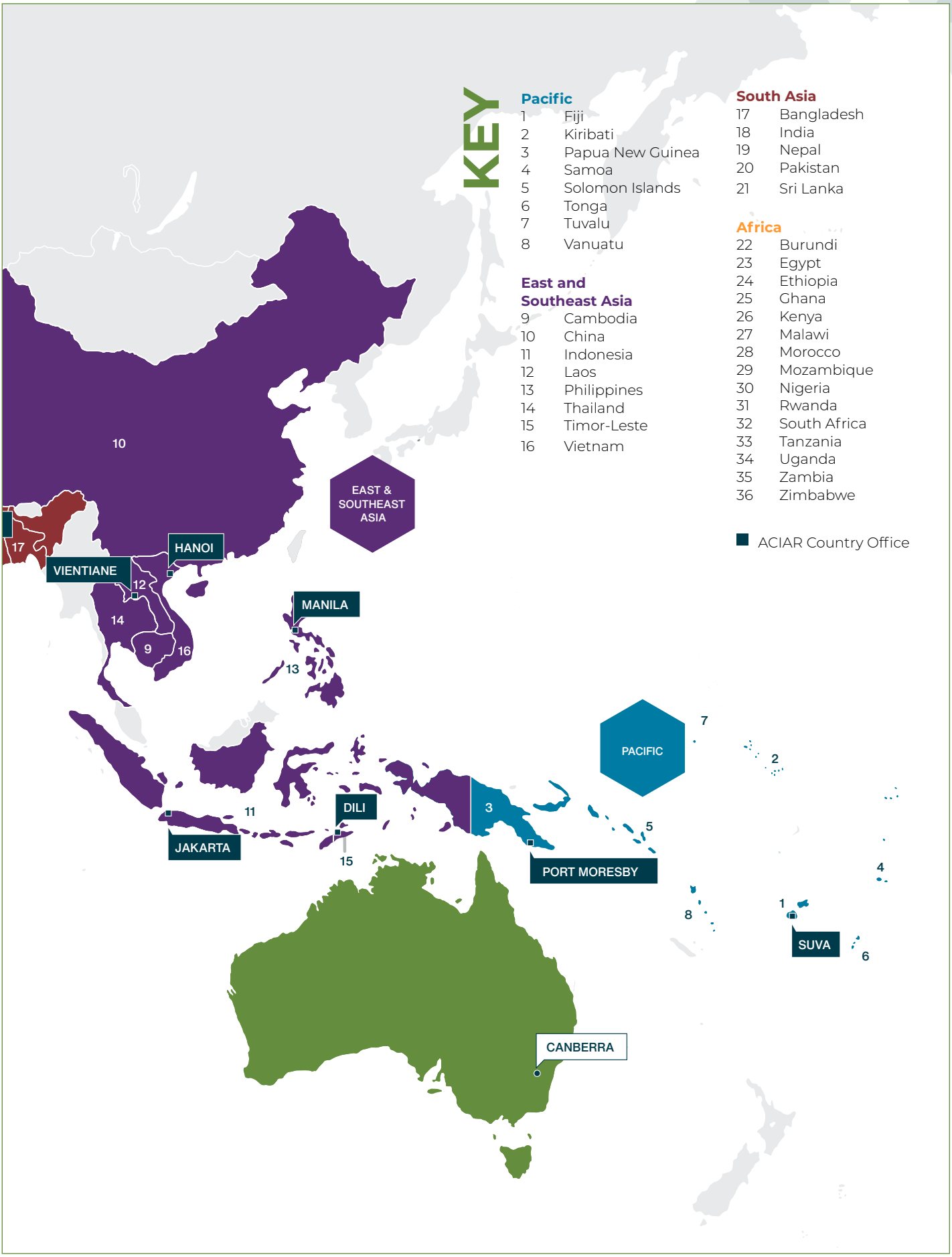
Media partnerships

ACIAR partners with media organisations and professionals, domestically and internationally, to raise awareness of the impact of ACIAR-funded projects and their impact. Effort is ongoing to build closer, more effective working relationships with our partners and other stakeholders. We also work closely with the Crawford Fund to generate positive media coverage, especially in regional and agriculture-based media in Australia.

ACIAR regions and partner countries

In 2025–26, ACIAR will work in 36 countries in the Indo-Pacific region, with 322 research organisations, universities and government agencies and private sector organisations from Australia and partner countries.




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

2

ACIAR in the Pacific

Regional program 2025–26

Partner countries

Fiji
Kiribati
Papua New Guinea
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Tonga
Tuvalu
Vanuatu

A$20.09 million

Investment in agricultural research for development

55 projects

The Pacific region is defined by its extraordinary diversity of cultures, languages, geographies and natural resources.

The region incorporates Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, with cultural and linguistic variety. Population size varies greatly, from Papua New Guinea's 11.78 million people to Tuvalu and Nauru with fewer than 12,000 people.

Many Pacific island countries are geographically remote and highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters, which shape development pathways and amplify reliance on agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

For Pacific island countries, the ocean is at the heart of both livelihoods and national economies. Each year, the region generates around 1.56 million tonnes of fish and aquaculture products, worth an estimated US$ 2.5 billion. The tuna industry is a major employer, supporting more than 25,000 jobs, while offshore fishing licence fees provide up to three-quarters of government income in some nations.

Tourism also plays a vital role in supporting growth and creating jobs across local communities. Yet the sector, along with other parts of the economy, was severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Pacific was the only global region to record back-to-back GDP contractions in 2020 and 2021. Countries most dependent on visitors, overseas investment and export commodities – including Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu – faced the heaviest impacts. A positive economic milestone was achieved in 2023, when all Pacific economies registered growth for the first time since the pandemic began.

Despite these gains, longer-term growth is constrained by geographic isolation, small market size and the rising financial burden of climate change, all of which limit opportunities and increase economic vulnerability.

The World Bank's Pacific Economic Update forecasts a regional growth rate of 2.6% in 2025 and 2.8% in 2026, a decrease from 3.8% in 2024, as post-COVID recovery momentum fades, tourism weakens and global policy uncertainty rises. Inflation is easing but remains above pre-pandemic levels, leaving the cost of living very high. Many Pacific economies remain vulnerable to external shocks, with some countries dependent on foreign grants amounting to nearly 40% of gross national income.

Alongside a weak economy, natural hazards and climate-related shocks continue to place additional strain on Pacific livelihoods and fiscal resilience.

Yet, there are opportunities to strengthen long-term resilience. The World Bank has highlighted that closing gender gaps in labour markets could lift GDP per capita by more than 20% across the region. Currently, only 43% of working-age women are active in Pacific labour markets, more than 15% less than men. Expanding women's participation would boost household incomes, stimulate private sector growth and build fiscal sustainability.

Drivers of regional collaboration

ACIAR's regional collaboration is driven by the shared challenges faced by partner countries, such as climate change, food insecurity and biosecurity threats, which they cannot address individually due to scattered geography and small populations. Enabling factors include a strong focus on regional projects, partnerships with regional organisations like the Pacific Community (SPC), and capacity building to facilitate knowledge exchange and foster common solutions for agricultural and livelihood improvements.

At the Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (PHOAFS) meeting in 2025, leaders endorsed a 5-year Implementation Plan (2025–2030) for its Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Strategy, which reflected agreed priorities for the Pacific region. The strategy recognises the unique contexts of each of island country, ensuring flexibility and alignment with national strategies while signalling collective ambition to donors and investors. The consolidation and progress of activities of various regional technical networks such as the Pacific Heads of Veterinary and Animal Production Services (PHOVAPS), the Pacific Agricultural Plant Genetic Resources Network (PAPGREN) and the Pacific Network of Forestry Professionals further strengthen ACIAR's ability to engage and collaborate on specific research areas.

The PHOAFS and the Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry (PWAF) are valuable platforms for driving regional collaboration, which ACIAR draws upon for research partnerships. The next PWAF will be held in the Solomon Islands in 2027 and will help direct ACIAR's regional priorities for the subsequent 2 years. In addition, ACIAR's research agenda is guided by partnerships with broader regional organisations and policy forums. These include the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), which frames collective priorities under the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent; the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), which provides leadership on biodiversity and climate resilience; and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), which informs shared approaches to sustainable fisheries.

Through these collaborations and ongoing participation in regional dialogue, ACIAR ensures its programs remain responsive to Pacific priorities, contribute to collective action, and strengthen Australia's role as a trusted partner in the region.

Regional ACIAR program

ACIAR continues to support the collective work and leadership of Pacific research leaders on the Regional Research Agenda Framework and strengthening technical networks, such as the Pacific Soils Partnership, Forestry Professional Network and Pasifika NiuNet.

By strengthening collaborative partnerships between Pacific and Australian research and technical organisations, and other development partners, ACIAR is committed to ensuring that research not only addresses immediate needs but also provides the evidence and lays the foundation for long-term, sustainable development. This includes investments in climate-resilient livelihoods, biosecurity, agribusiness development, community-based fisheries management, and integrated food systems and nutrition.

As such, to address challenges facing fragile and conflict-affected food systems, ACIAR has invested in the CGIAR Island Food Systems to work towards developing more resilient food production systems, safer aquatic food distribution practices, and increased access to nutritious and indigenous foods for communities.

ACIAR continues to prioritise empowering local knowledge, fostering regional expertise, and further developing the capacity of those who are at the forefront of implementing these solutions. Through ACIAR's unique capacity-development programs, like the Pacific Agriculture Scholarship and Support Program (PASS), co-designed and co-implemented with our partners, ACIAR will continue to invest in the next generation of Pacific researchers and change champions. These individuals will play a critical leadership role shaping the future of agriculture, food and forestry in the Pacific.

In 2025–26, ACIAR will invest a little more than A$20 million in agricultural research for development across 7 Pacific island countries and Papua New Guinea.

Current and proposed projects in the Pacific region, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Agribusiness				
Evaluating an alternative approach to sector development in Pacific island countries **AGB/2022/113**	Fiji	1/03/2025	1/03/2028	$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, Solomon Islands	1/06/2022	30/06/2027	$755,995
Sustainable agricultural intensification systems for climate resilient development in Pacific island countries **CLIM/2020/186**	Samoa, Tonga	1/02/2023	31/03/2027	$1,633,625
Scoping opportunities and research gaps for developing groundnut in Vanuatu **CROP/2023/186**	Vanuatu	1/11/2023	30/06/2026	$795,420
Enhancing drought tolerance and food security in Papua New Guinea: the potential of new taro germplasm **CROP/2023/194**	Papua New Guinea	15/11/2023	28/02/2026	$455,344
Fisheries				
Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands **FIS/2019/124**	Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste	1/09/2021	31/12/2025	$2,444,001
Coalitions for change in sustainable national community-based fisheries management programs in the Pacific **FIS/2020/172**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, South Pacific general, Vanuatu	1/09/2021	31/12/2025	$7,664,544
Towards more profitable and sustainable mabé pearl and shell-based livelihoods in the western Pacific **FIS/2019/122**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	1/01/2022	30/06/2027	$2,966,249
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	1/10/2022	30/06/2028	$2,682,267
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	1/04/2024	31/03/2030	$3,055,683
Mitigating the incidence of ciguatera poisoning in Kiribati **FIS/2023/161**	Kiribati	1/04/2024	31/03/2026	$491,739
Improving fish handling in Solomon Islands, with extension to other Pacific island countries **FIS/2024/147**	Solomon Islands	1/07/2025	30/06/2030	$3,491,000
Integrating community fisheries and rural development in a changing Pacific region **FIS/2024/140**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/11/2025	30/06/2030	$5,000,000
Forestry				
Coconut and other non-traditional forest resources for the manufacture of engineered wood products **FST/2019/128**	Fiji	1/02/2021	31/01/2026	$2,862,871
Promoting smallholder teak and sandalwood plantations in Papua New Guinea and Australia **FST/2018/178**	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2022	31/12/2025	$2,201,386
Livelihoods in forest ecosystem recovery **FST/2020/135**	Solomon Islands	1/11/2022	31/10/2028	$3,544,264
Developing nut industries in Bougainville **FST/2022/124**	Papua New Guinea	1/07/2023	31/12/2025	$250,000
Forest conservation and sustainable livelihoods through nut processing in the Kokoda Track region **FST/2025/115**	Papua New Guinea	15/05/2025	14/05/2027	$400,000
Horticulture				
Protecting the coffee industry from coffee berry borer in Papua New Guinea and Australia **HORT/2018/194**	Papua New Guinea	1/07/2019	31/12/2026	$2,400,498
Improving root crop resilience and biosecurity in Pacific island countries and Australia **HORT/2018/195**	Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	1/01/2022	31/12/2025	$2,050,001

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Adopting a gender-inclusive participatory approach to reducing horticultural food loss in the Pacific **CS/2020/191**	Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	8/02/2022	31/12/2026	$1,223,378
Evaluating carbon markets as a pathway to establishing climate resilient coffee agroforestry systems in Papua New Guinea **CLIM/2024/101**	Papua New Guinea	8/04/2024	31/12/2025	$436,253
SPC Plant Health Laboratory: a regional public good for the development of effective integrated pest management solutions **HORT/2024/148**	Fiji	15/03/2025	30/06/2026	$363,332
Building mechanisms to respond to and manage emerging pests and diseases of horticultural crops in the Pacific Islands **HORT/2025/100**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	1/04/2025	31/12/2025	$499,956
Exploring carbon opportunities to drive multiple benefits for Papua New Guinea coffee smallholders **CLIM/2022/109**	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2026	31/03/2030	$2,565,000
Sustaining responsive crop health and biosecurity capacity in the Pacific Islands in the face of a changing environment **HORT/2025/108**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	$8,000,000
Resilient commercial vegetable production systems for Fiji **HORT/2023/165**	Fiji	1/04/2026	31/03/2029	$1,200,000
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	1/07/2019	31/12/2027	$3,100,000
Enhancing the management of antimicrobial resistance in Fiji and Samoa **LS/2019/119**	Fiji, Samoa	1/01/2020	30/06/2027	$4,660,746
A farm planning approach to increase productivity and profitability of smallholder cattle systems in Vanuatu **LS/2018/185**	Vanuatu	1/01/2022	31/12/2025	$1,770,000
Supporting greenhouse gas inventories and livestock data development in Fiji CLIM/2021/160	Fiji	6/10/2023	28/11/2025	$735,277
Indo-Pacific initiative for sustainable animal health cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Philippines	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$1,400,001
Smallholder poultry production system in the Pacific: exploring existing practices and identify research and development opportunities – Pacific chicken genetic gain **LS/2024/128**	Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Vanuatu	1/01/2025	30/06/2026	$500,000
Holistic training, baseline surveys and partnership development for black soldier fly farming in Vanuatu **LS/2024/136**	Vanuatu	1/01/2025	30/06/2026	$250,000
Holistic training, baseline surveys and partnership development for black soldier fly farming in Papua New Guinea **LS/2024/144**	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2025	30/06/2026	$250,000
Potential for insect-based livestock feed production in Fiji: an initiative to explore the management and bio conversion of agro by-products to useful protein source using black soldier fly larvae **LS/2024/143**	Fiji	1/08/2025	30/06/2026	$118,000
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Landcare - an agricultural extension and community development model at district and national scale in Fiji **SSS/2019/140**	Fiji	1/03/2021	30/04/2027	$4,236,008
Transformation pathways for Pacific coastal food systems **CLIM/2020/178**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands	1/02/2023	31/03/2026	$1,965,540
Scoping the governance and co-benefits of circular food-energy systems in Pacific island countries **CLIM/2022/174**	Fiji, Kiribati	1/06/2023	31/12/2025	$324,720

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Climate-smart regenerative ridge to reef landscapes for sustaining livelihoods of communities on custom land and food security in Vanuatu **SSS/2021/120**	Vanuatu	14/09/2023	31/08/2027	$1,696,935
Extending integrated analysis for improved food system outcomes in Timor-Leste and the Pacific region **FIS/2022/121**	Kiribati, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu	1/10/2023	30/09/2026	$2,499,998
Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Fiji	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$1,400,000
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	1/02/2024	31/12/2025	$500,000
Regenerative agritourism Vanuatu **SSS/2024/137**	Vanuatu	1/11/2024	30/04/2026	$500,000
'Planim Fiuja fo Yumi' – co-planning risk-informed and equitable livelihood futures with small-scale fishing communities **FIS/2023/122**	Solomon Islands	22/01/2025	21/09/2029	$3,816,085
Developing an inclusive co-design process for strengthening food security in Western Province, Papua New Guinea **SSS/2023/134**	Papua New Guinea	1/10/2025	30/09/2030	$2,500,000
Papua New Guinea Agriculture, Food, and Nutrition Policy Program: agriculture research to inform growth **SSS/2025/103**	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2026	30/06/2028	$5,000,000
Soil & Land Management				
Optimising soil management and health in Papua New Guinea integrated cocoa farming systems (Phase 2) **SLAM/2019/109**	Papua New Guinea	21/06/2021	31/12/2026	$2,600,000
Better soil and land information for improving Papua New Guinea's agricultural production and integrated land use planning – building a revitalised PNGRIS2 **SLAM/2019/106**	Papua New Guinea	1/10/2022	31/08/2026	$2,800,000
Soil management in the Pacific Islands: investigating nutrient dynamics and the utility of soil information for better soil and farming system management **SLAM/2020/139**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/01/2023	31/12/2027	$2,717,222
A review of the soil and agronomic constraints and opportunities in Pacific food garden systems **SLAM/2022/180**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	1/05/2023	31/12/2025	$500,000
Water				
Water security for locally relocated coastal communities in the western Pacific region **WAC/2022/128**	Fiji, Vanuatu	1/04/2024	1/12/2027	$2,250,000
Scoping study for resilient agrifood systems in water constrained environments **WAC/2024/149**	Global	24/02/2025	30/11/2025	$175,000
Healthy watersheds, healthy futures: unlocking co-benefits across agrifood, health and environment leveraging the WISH approach **WAC/2024/133**	Fiji, Vanuatu	20/11/2025	19/05/2027	$500,000
Supporting agri-environmental health outcomes in Honiara catchment **WAC/2025/134**	Solomon Islands	23/01/2026	1/12/2026	$400,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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$13.83 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

41 projects

27 Bilateral and regional research projects

14 Small projects and research activities

33 Projects specific to Pacific island countries

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

Agriculture, fisheries and forestry are the backbone of Pacific economies, societies and cultures.

These sectors provide food security, livelihoods and income for many Pacific islanders, and are central to community wellbeing, resilience and identity. Beyond subsistence, these sectors are vital sources of export earnings, rural employment and women's economic participation. In many countries, the sectors contribute significantly to GDP and government revenue and play a key role in shaping national development priorities.

The sectors are undergoing profound change, influenced by interconnected global and local drivers. These include:

Population growth and urbanisation – growing populations and rapid urbanisation are increasing demand for food, creating both pressures and opportunities. This shift drives greater reliance on imported foods, contributing to poor nutrition and poor health outcomes, while also stimulating interest in more productive, resilient farming and fishing systems.

Market access and trade – agricultural and fisheries exports remain constrained by small scales of production, high transport costs, biosecurity risks and compliance with international standards. At the same time, niche opportunities exist in high-value products, organics, and ethically and sustainably produced commodities, particularly for international markets.

Innovation and technology – new technologies, ranging from digital tools for farm management to advances in biosecurity and crop genetics, are increasingly available to Pacific island smallholders but unevenly adopted. Partnerships and knowledge exchange remain essential to ensure that innovation reaches smallholders, women and youth equitably.

Governance and regional cooperation – strong governance, policy coherence and regional cooperation are critical to managing shared challenges. Fisheries, in particular, demand collaborative management to balance national economic interests with sustainable use of shared resources.

Rural communities

The Pacific region is characterised by its youthful and growing populations, with more than half of citizens under the age of 25. While total population growth rates are slowing in some larger economies, many smaller island states continue to experience high fertility rates, placing pressure on health, education and employment systems. Urbanisation is accelerating, particularly in Melanesia and Polynesia, as people move to cities in search of work, services and connectivity. This is reshaping traditional village-based living and placing strain on infrastructure, housing and natural resources in urban centres.

Despite these shifts, Pacific societies remain strongly grounded in kinship, customary land tenure and community-based governance. Extended families play a central role in social and economic resilience, with remittances from overseas workers forming a significant share of household incomes across many countries. At the same time, labour mobility schemes are changing the social structure, creating opportunities for income and skills but also contributing to the temporary absence of working-age adults from communities.

These demographic and social trends shape agricultural systems, food security and livelihoods. Understanding population pressures, migration patterns and evolving social structures is essential for ACIAR's partnerships in research for development and for supporting more inclusive, sustainable and resilient rural economies.

Political and economic environment

In 2026, the Pacific's political environment will be shaped by the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Palau and a continued focus on climate resilience, while the economic environment faces slow growth from fading post-COVID recovery, climate change impacts, global policy uncertainty and challenges in e-commerce and infrastructure. Regional efforts are underway to boost private sector development and enhance digital trade through initiatives like the Pacific E-commerce Symposium.

The region continues to align its policies under the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. That strategy, adopted by Pacific Leaders Forum, seeks to strengthen an inclusive and sustainable Pacific region amid growing challenges from climate change, economic vulnerability and geopolitical competition.

The Pacific region has high levels of debt risk. Small economic bases mean few Pacific countries can borrow now to invest in the future. As of October 2024, the International Monetary Fund assessed 6 of 9 low-income Pacific countries as being at high risk of debt distress, with the remaining 3 countries at moderate risk. Twelve Pacific countries face unique commercial banking challenges, demonstrated by the withdrawal of banks and corresponding banking services in recent years. Continued withdrawal of these services would effectively sever trade, investment and remittance flow to and from the rest of the world.

Climate change

The Pacific faces rapid change, with agriculture, fisheries and forestry shaped by complex global and local pressures. Climate change is the most significant driver, with rising sea levels, warming oceans, extreme weather events and environmental degradation undermining production and threatening biodiversity. Regional leaders have consistently identified climate change as a top priority through frameworks such as the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific and the Boe Declaration on Regional Security (2018), which named climate change as the greatest threat to Pacific peoples' security, livelihoods and wellbeing.

More recently, the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent has set out the collective vision that Pacific communities remain resilient in the face of climate change and disasters, able to live safe, secure and prosperous lives.

Looking ahead, the Pacific faces both slow-onset changes – such as ocean acidification and sea-level rise that cannot be reversed – and sudden, high-impact events like cyclones and extreme rainfall that are expected to intensify. Together, these changes pose significant risks to societies and economies. For Pacific Small Island Developing States, annual economic losses are projected at around US$ 1.3 billion under moderate climate scenarios, rising to US$ 1.4 billion under worst-case projections.

The implications extend far beyond economic costs. Climate change threatens food and water security, increases the likelihood of displacement, and places growing pressure on infrastructure, health and education systems. Limited land area, geographic isolation and resource constraints amplify these challenges, while biodiversity loss further erodes the resilience of Pacific communities.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity is a growing challenge across the Pacific island countries, driven by a complex mix of climate vulnerability, dependence on food imports, demographic pressures, and changing diets. While Pacific communities have a long history of resilient food systems based on subsistence agriculture, fisheries, and traditional knowledge, these systems are increasingly under stress. The result is a dual burden: widespread undernourishment alongside rising rates of obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases. Agriculture, fisheries and forestry have a key role to play in reversing these trends through increased availability of safe, affordable, nutritious and locally produced food.

Partnering with Australia

ACIAR is part of Australia's enduring partnership with the Pacific, working side by side with governments, research institutions and communities to advance shared goals of sovereignty, stability and prosperity. Through agricultural research for development, ACIAR contributes to the whole-of-Australia approach that supports the region's priorities and responds to the most pressing challenges facing Pacific peoples.

For the period 2024-25, the Australia government provided a record $2.05 billion in development assistance to the Pacific, reflecting its long-term commitment to the region. This investment builds on decades of cooperation and positions Australia as the Pacific's largest and most consistent development partner.

By fostering collaboration, supporting local expertise, and promoting innovation, ACIAR contributes to the broader Australian effort to build a resilient, prosperous and peaceful Pacific. In doing so, ACIAR reaffirms Australia's role as a trusted and long-standing partner, committed to working alongside its Pacific family for a sustainable future.

Regional priorities

Pacific leaders consistently highlight that productive and sustainable food, and land-use systems are essential to stability and prosperity. Strengthening these sectors is also integral to regional strategies on climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation and inclusive economic growth. At the same time, agriculture, fisheries and forestry are among the most vulnerable sectors to climate change, natural disasters, biosecurity risks and market shocks.

In this context, ACIAR works with Pacific partners to deliver research that addresses immediate challenges and builds long-term resilience. Current research priorities include:

- Climate resilience: developing and scaling agricultural, fisheries and forestry practices that adapt to changing weather patterns, rising sea levels and extreme events.
- Food and nutrition security: strengthening sustainable production systems, diversifying crops and fisheries, and improving local supply chains to ensure healthy, accessible diets.
- Biosecurity and plant/animal health: enhancing surveillance, prevention and management of pests and diseases to protect livelihoods and trade.
- Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture: supporting management of coastal fisheries and developing aquaculture systems that reduce pressure on wild stocks while creating income opportunities.
- Forestry and landscape management: promoting sustainable use of forests and trees for livelihoods, ecosystem services and climate mitigation.
- Inclusive development: ensuring that women, youth and vulnerable groups benefit from research, innovation and opportunities in the food system.
- Capacity building and partnerships: strengthening Pacific research institutions and fostering long-term collaboration with Australian expertise.

Through these priorities, ACIAR aligns its investments with Pacific-led goals, ensuring that agricultural research-for-development supports sovereignty, prosperity and resilience across the region.

2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 41 agricultural research-for-development projects in Pacific island countries during 2025–26. Of these, 33 are specific to Pacific nations, not including Papua New Guinea.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

- climate change resilience of agrifood systems and rural communities
- 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, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Agribusiness				
Evaluating an alternative approach to sector development in Pacific island countries **AGB/2022/113**	Fiji	1/03/2025	1/03/2028	$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, Solomon Islands	1/06/2022	30/06/2027	$755,995
Sustainable agricultural intensification systems for climate resilient development in Pacific island countries **CLIM/2020/186**	Samoa, Tonga	1/02/2023	31/03/2027	$1,633,625
Scoping opportunities and research gaps for developing groundnut in Vanuatu **CROP/2023/186**	Vanuatu	1/11/2023	30/06/2026	$795,420
Fisheries				
Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands **FIS/2019/124**	Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste	1/09/2021	31/12/2025	$2,444,001
Coalitions for change in sustainable national community-based fisheries management programs in the Pacific **FIS/2020/172**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, South Pacific general, Vanuatu	1/09/2021	31/12/2025	$7,664,544
Towards more profitable and sustainable mabé pearl and shell-based livelihoods in the western Pacific **FIS/2019/122**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	1/01/2022	30/06/2027	$2,966,249
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	1/04/2024	31/03/2030	$3,055,683
Mitigating the incidence of ciguatera poisoning in Kiribati **FIS/2023/161**	Kiribati	1/04/2024	31/03/2026	$491,739
Improving fish handling in Solomon Islands, with extension to other Pacific island countries **FIS/2024/147**	Solomon Islands	1/07/2025	30/06/2030	$3,491,000
Integrating community fisheries and rural development in a changing Pacific region **FIS/2024/140**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/11/2025	30/06/2030	$5,000,000
Forestry				
Coconut and other non-traditional forest resources for the manufacture of engineered wood products **FST/2019/128**	Fiji	1/02/2021	31/01/2026	$2,862,871
Livelihoods in forest ecosystem recovery **FST/2020/135**	Solomon Islands	1/11/2022	31/10/2028	$3,544,264
Horticulture				
Improving root crop resilience and biosecurity in Pacific island countries and Australia **HORT/2018/195**	Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	1/01/2022	31/12/2025	$2,050,001
Adopting a gender-inclusive participatory approach to reducing horticultural food loss in the Pacific **CS/2020/191**	Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	8/02/2022	31/12/2026	$1,223,378
SPC Plant Health Laboratory: a regional public good for the development of effective integrated pest management solutions **HORT/2024/148**	Fiji	15/03/2025	30/06/2026	$363,332
Building mechanisms to respond to and manage emerging pests and diseases of horticultural crops in the Pacific Islands HORT/2025/100	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	1/04/2025	31/12/2025	$499,956

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Sustaining responsive crop health and biosecurity capacity in the Pacific Islands in the face of a changing environment **HORT/2025/108**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	$8,000,000
Resilient commercial vegetable production systems for Fiji **HORT/2023/165**	Fiji	1/04/2026	31/03/2029	$1,200,000
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	1/07/2019	31/12/2027	$3,100,000
Enhancing the management of antimicrobial resistance in Fiji and Samoa **LS/2019/119**	Fiji, Samoa	1/01/2020	30/06/2027	$4,660,746
A farm planning approach to increase productivity and profitability of smallholder cattle systems in Vanuatu **LS/2018/185**	Vanuatu	1/01/2022	31/12/2025	$1,770,000
Supporting greenhouse gas inventories and livestock data development in Fiji **CLIM/2021/160**	Fiji	6/10/2023	28/11/2025	$735,277
Indo-Pacific initiative for sustainable animal health cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Philippines	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$1,400,001
Smallholder poultry production system in the Pacific: exploring existing practices and identify research and development opportunities – Pacific chicken genetic gain **LS/2024/128**	Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Vanuatu	1/01/2025	30/06/2026	$500,000
Holistic training, baseline surveys and partnership development for black soldier fly farming in Vanuatu **LS/2024/136**	Vanuatu	1/01/2025	30/06/2026	$250,000
Potential for insect-based livestock feed production in Fiji: an initiative to explore the management and bio conversion of agro by-products to useful protein source using black soldier fly larvae **LS/2024/143**	Fiji	1/08/2025	30/06/2026	$118,000
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Landcare - an agricultural extension and community development model at district and national scale in Fiji **SSS/2019/140**	Fiji	1/03/2021	30/04/2027	$4,236,008
Transformation pathways for Pacific coastal food systems **CLIM/2020/178**	Kiribati, Solomon Islands	1/02/2023	31/03/2026	$1,965,540
Scoping the governance and co-benefits of circular food-energy systems in Pacific island countries **CLIM/2022/174**	Fiji, Kiribati	1/06/2023	31/12/2025	$324,720
Climate-smart regenerative ridge to reef landscapes for sustaining livelihoods of communities on custom land and food security in Vanuatu **SSS/2021/120**	Vanuatu	14/09/2023	31/08/2027	$1,696,935
Extending integrated analysis for improved food system outcomes in Timor-Leste and the Pacific region **FIS/2022/121**	Kiribati, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu	1/10/2023	30/09/2026	$2,499,998
Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Fiji	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$1,400,000
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	1/02/2024	31/12/2025	$500,000
Regenerative agritourism Vanuatu **SSS/2024/137**	Vanuatu	1/11/2024	30/04/2026	$500,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
'Planim Fiuja fo Yumi' – co-planning risk-informed and equitable livelihood futures with small-scale fishing communities **FIS/2023/122**	Solomon Islands	22/01/2025	21/09/2029	$3,816,085
Soil & Land Management				
Soil management in the Pacific Islands: investigating nutrient dynamics and the utility of soil information for better soil and farming system management **SLAM/2020/139**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/01/2023	31/12/2027	$2,717,222
A review of the soil and agronomic constraints and opportunities in Pacific food garden systems **SLAM/2022/180**	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	1/05/2023	31/12/2025	$500,000
Water				
Water security for locally relocated coastal communities in the western Pacific region **WAC/2022/128**	Fiji, Vanuatu	1/04/2024	1/12/2027	$2,250,000
Scoping study for resilient agrifood systems in water constrained environments **WAC/2024/149**	Global	24/02/2025	30/11/2025	$175,000
Healthy watersheds, healthy futures: unlocking co-benefits across agrifood, health and environment leveraging the WISH approach **WAC/2024/133**	Fiji, Vanuatu	20/11/2025	19/05/2027	$500,000
Supporting agri-environmental health outcomes in Honiara catchment **WAC/2025/134**	Solomon Islands	23/01/2026	1/12/2026	$400,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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$6.26 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

20 projects

12 Bilateral and regional research projects

8 Small projects and research activities

13 Projects specific to Papua New Guinea

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

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.

Agriculture generates income for more than 80% of the rural population and excluding palm oil, 80% of export commodities are produced by smallholder famers. Agriculture contributes around 26% of the country's gross domestic product.

Economic growth in Papua New Guinea is guided by the government strategy, the Medium-Term Development Plan 4, 2023–2027 (MTDP4). Commercial agriculture, livestock development, forestry and fisheries featured among several broad-based investment strategies to drive economic and social development.

The National Agriculture Sector Plan 2024–2033 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.

In 2025, the overall economy is forecast by the World Bank to grow by 4.7% including the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors. A significant contribution is expected from the agriculture sector, due to increased production, value-adding and export of commodity crops. 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, 86% of the population lives in rural areas. The proportion of young people is increasing, with demographics in 2025 showing 52% of population is less than 24 years of age. 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 less than 25 years of age 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

The political and economic environment of Papua New Guinea continues to be affected by weak governance, political instability, election-related violence, tribal conflicts and violence, gender-based violence, high unemployment and limited access to basic services. These challenges impact the country's development and stability.

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. For example, a 5-month drought in Bougainville was reported in June 2025, affecting food gardens and leaving 11,000 people in dire need of food. Several provinces are also experiencing drought conditions over various periods of the year. Climate variability continues to affect crop seasonality, causing changes to production patterns, such as flowering and fruiting times of crops. Disruptions to planting seasons and late cropping had led to periods of hunger.

Food insecurity

The risks to household food security are influenced by several factors, including population growth coupled with low/unequal access to resources, 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 highlighted this as an important issue, supported by an IFPRI report showing 34% of children under 5 years of age, being stunted. 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 and distribution 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 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, including GrowPNG, International Finance Corporation, Australia–PNG sub-national programs (Bougainville, Western Province and Kokoda) and Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Australia's support through ACIAR plays a significant role in building the resilience of smallholders and the capability of supporting partner organisations in moving to 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 2025–26, 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.

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.

2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 20 agricultural research-for-development projects in Papua New Guinea during 2025–26. Of these, 13 are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

- climate change resilience of agrifood systems and rural communities
- 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, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
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, Solomon Islands	1/06/2022	30/06/2027	$755,995
Enhancing drought tolerance and food security in Papua New Guinea: the potential of new taro germplasm **CROP/2023/194**	Papua New Guinea	15/11/2023	28/02/2026	$455,344
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	1/10/2022	30/06/2028	$2,682,267
Forestry				
Promoting smallholder teak and sandalwood plantations in Papua New Guinea and Australia **FST/2018/178**	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2022	31/12/2025	$2,201,386
Developing nut industries in Bougainville **FST/2022/124**	Papua New Guinea	1/07/2023	31/12/2025	$250,000
Forest conservation and sustainable livelihoods through nut processing in the Kokoda Track region **FST/2025/115**	Papua New Guinea	15/05/2025	14/05/2027	$400,000
Horticulture				
Protecting the coffee industry from coffee berry borer in Papua New Guinea and Australia **HORT/2018/194**	Papua New Guinea	1/07/2019	31/12/2026	$2,400,498
Evaluating carbon markets as a pathway to establishing climate resilient coffee agroforestry systems in Papua New Guinea **CLIM/2024/101**	Papua New Guinea	8/04/2024	31/12/2025	$436,253
Building mechanisms to respond to and manage emerging pests and diseases of horticultural crops in the Pacific Islands **HORT/2025/100**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga	1/04/2025	31/12/2025	$499,956

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Exploring carbon opportunities to drive multiple benefits for Papua New Guinea coffee smallholders **CLIM/2022/109**	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2026	31/03/2030	$2,565,000
Sustaining responsive crop health and biosecurity capacity in the Pacific Islands in the face of a changing environment **HORT/2025/108**	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	$8,000,000
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	1/07/2019	31/12/2027	$3,100,000
Indo-Pacific initiative for sustainable animal health cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Philippines	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$1,400,001
Smallholder poultry production system in the Pacific: exploring existing practices and identify research and development opportunities – Pacific chicken genetic gain **LS/2024/128**	Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Vanuatu	1/01/2025	30/06/2026	$500,000
Holistic training, baseline surveys and partnership development for black soldier fly farming in Papua New Guinea **LS/2024/144**	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2025	30/06/2026	$250,000
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Developing an inclusive co-design process for strengthening food security in Western Province, Papua New Guinea **SSS/2023/134**	Papua New Guinea	1/10/2025	30/09/2030	$2,500,000
Papua New Guinea Agriculture, Food, and Nutrition Policy Program: agriculture research to inform growth **SSS/2025/103**	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2026	30/06/2028	$5,000,000
Soil & Land Management				
Optimising soil management and health in Papua New Guinea integrated cocoa farming systems (Phase 2) **SLAM/2019/109**	Papua New Guinea	21/06/2021	31/12/2026	$2,600,000
Better soil and land information for improving Papua New Guinea's agricultural production and integrated land use planning – building a revitalised PNGRIS2 **SLAM/2019/106**	Papua New Guinea	1/10/2022	31/08/2026	$2,800,000
Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Fiji	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$1,400,000

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

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3


DETERMINATION PLANTING TIME FOR RICE - SHRIMP
CROPPING SYSTEMS AT THOI BINH - CA MAU

ACIAR in East and Southeast Asia

Regional program 2025–26

Partner countries

Cambodia
China
Indonesia
Laos
Malaysia
Philippines
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Vietnam

A$29.28 million

Investment in agricultural research for development

91 projects

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 as an economic powerhouse.

Eleven countries in Southeast Asia are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with Timor-Leste recently being officially welcomed into the Association. ASEAN members 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 however that some economies continue to struggle with high inflation and lower GDP growth.

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the ASEAN economy, with more than 100 million hectares of agricultural land. Collectively, ASEAN countries 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 ensure equitable and inclusive growth in the region.

Women's participation in equitable agriculture value chains is a prominent goal within ASEAN to address 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.

Digital transformation of food systems is gaining momentum in Vietnam, Indonesia and other Southeast Asian nations.

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, supported 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 as a board member 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. Likewise the livestock sector is also facing greater challenges with disease outbreaks impacting cross-border trade, necessitating a greater focus on regional biosecurity. In parallel with these challenges, the region is also seeing strong market demand for animal protein creating opportunities for smallholders.

Regional ACIAR program

ACIAR engagement in 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.

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 East and 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, the Asian Institute of Technology and the FAO regional office. We also include Thai expertise, as well as expertise from Malaysia, on projects of regional significance when opportunities arise.

ACIAR no longer has an in-country presence in China. While we currently have no bilateral projects in China, we continue to partner with China on regional programs in biosecurity, policy reform and rural transformation.

Current and proposed projects in the East and Southeast Asia region, 2025–26

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	1/08/2021	31/10/2025	$2,800,005
Planning and establishing a sustainable smallholder rice chain in the Mekong Delta **AGB/2019/153**	Vietnam	25/02/2022	30/12/2025	$2,600,000
Food loss in the pangasius catfish value chain of the Mekong River Basin **CS/2020/209**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	1/04/2023	30/06/2026	$1,441,701
Integrating smallholder households and farm production systems into commercial beef supply chains in Vietnam **AGB/2020/189**	Vietnam	1/07/2023	31/12/2026	$2,780,003
Creating resilient communities through smallholder-inclusive tourism markets in Indonesia **AGB/2021/125**	Indonesia	1/07/2023	31/12/2028	$2,800,000
Evidence to underpin Indonesia's AgTech transformation **AGB/2023/155**	Indonesia	1/09/2024	31/08/2027	$1,497,866
Digital monitoring of VietGAP compliance for high-value domestic markets and potential export in smallholder fruit value chains from northwest Vietnam **AGB/2022/114**	Vietnam	1/07/2025	31/12/2028	$2,345,559
Understanding markets, value chains and production constraints for medicinal plants in Vietnam **AGB/2025/101**	Vietnam	1/07/2025	31/12/2026	$134,154
Improving the enabling environment to effectively scale Good Agriculture and Aquaculture Practice (GAAP) in the Philippines **AGB/2024/150**	Philippines	1/10/2025	30/09/2028	$3,000,000
Crops				
International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	1/07/2020	30/06/2026	$2,715,207
Weed management techniques for mechanised and broadcast lowland crop production systems in Cambodia and Laos **CROP/2019/145**	Cambodia, Laos	1/01/2021	31/12/2025	$2,228,627
Agricultural innovations for communities - intensified and diverse farming systems for Timor-Leste **CROP/2021/131**	Timor-Leste	1/11/2022	31/10/2027	$3,198,681
Addressing the rapid emergence of cassava witches broom disease in Laos **CROP/2023/157**	Laos	1/06/2023	30/11/2025	$750,000
Disease-resilient and sustainable cassava production systems in the Mekong region **CROP/2022/110**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	1/11/2023	30/06/2028	$3,500,000
Integrating the electrification and smart mechanisation of two-wheel tractors with precision agriculture for improved productivity and sustainability **CROP/2023/129**	Cambodia	13/05/2024	30/06/2029	$3,229,915
Fisheries				
FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia **FIS/2018/153**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	1/01/2020	31/12/2025	$8,509,335
Regional coral restoration networks and appropriate technologies for larger-scale coral and fish habitat restoration in the Philippines and Australia **FIS/2019/123**	Philippines	1/12/2020	31/10/2025	$2,559,960
Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands **FIS/2019/124**	Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste	1/09/2021	31/12/2025	$2,444,001

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Institutional effectiveness and political economy of coral reef restoration in the Philippines **FIS/2021/112**	Philippines	1/09/2021	31/12/2025	$2,023,488
The value of using a south–south triangular cooperation approach in mariculture for Cambodia and Indonesia **FIS/2024/105**	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/04/2024	31/12/2025	$382,907
Addressing key technical bottlenecks in the grouper supply chain in Vietnam (and Australia) through manufactured feed and hatchery developments that aim to improve the small-medium enterprise sector profitability **FIS/2022/148**	Australia, Vietnam	1/06/2024	1/12/2027	$2,585,435
Increasing capacity in population biology and harvest strategy implementation for sustainable tuna fishing and food security in Indonesia **FIS/2024/110**	Indonesia	1/06/2024	31/03/2026	$499,414
Optimising fish passage at hydropower sites in the Mekong **FIS/2023/133**	Laos	1/07/2024	30/06/2029	$5,700,001
Enhancing marine environmental governance in Indonesia and the Philippines **FIS/2023/185**	Indonesia, Philippines	1/07/2024	30/06/2027	$2,272,725
Continued momentum towards a cultured mabé pearl and pearl-based livelihoods sector in Vietnam **FIS/2024/131**	Vietnam	1/01/2025	30/06/2026	$300,010
Southeast Asia coral larval restoration network **FIS/2024/120**	Indonesia, Philippines	1/05/2025	30/04/2027	$600,000
Potential for tropical abalone aquaculture in Vietnam **FIS/2024/125**	Vietnam	1/07/2025	30/12/2026	$280,739
FishEd: growing capacity of the Lower Mekong countries to implement technical fisheries solutions into river development programs **FIS/2024/141**	Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam	1/10/2025	30/06/2029	$5,000,000
InFish: sustainable river development for Indonesian inland fisheries **FIS/2024/124**	Indonesia	1/01/2026	31/12/2029	$3,820,000
Improved nutrition outcomes from safe aquatic foods and sustainable fisheries in Timor-Leste **FIS/2025/118**	Timor-Leste	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	$3,750,000
Forestry				
Managing risk in Southeast Asian forest biosecurity **FST/2018/179**	Indonesia, Vietnam	24/09/2021	31/12/2025	$1,900,220
Building an effective forest health and biosecurity network in Southeast Asia **FST/2020/123**	Cambodia, Laos	1/11/2021	30/06/2026	$1,898,717
Forest restoration for economic outcomes **FST/2020/137**	Laos	1/07/2023	30/06/2028	$4,306,332
Sustainable expansion of forestry and wood processing in Laos and Australia **FST/2023/153**	Laos	1/07/2025	30/06/2030	$3,179,399
Protecting peat forests and livelihoods **FST/2024/145**	Indonesia	1/10/2025	30/09/2030	$3,500,000
Diversified livelihoods from native tree species in northwest Vietnam **FST/2023/150**	Vietnam	1/04/2026	31/03/2028	$347,643
Horticulture				
An integrated management response to the spread of Fusarium wilt of banana in Southeast Asia **HORT/2018/192**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	1/01/2020	31/12/2025	$3,037,501
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	1/01/2021	30/06/2026	$1,789,999

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Scoping the opportunity for urban and peri-urban agricultural development in Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/147**	Philippines, Vietnam	1/07/2023	31/12/2025	$400,856
Scoping Vietnam's citrus industry priorities to inform the development of a research roadmap **HORT/2023/179**	Vietnam	1/02/2024	31/10/2025	$299,999
Safe, fresh, year-round vegetables in Cambodia and Laos through research and development support of smallholder productivity and engagement in collaborative supply chains **HORT/2021/143**	Cambodia, Laos	1/07/2024	31/12/2030	$2,100,006
Benchmarking mango breeding and genomics **HORT/2024/122**	Philippines	1/12/2024	30/11/2026	$482,833
Smarter use of pesticides in tree crop systems in Philippines and Indonesia for reduced fruit loss and improved safety **HORT/2022/125**	Indonesia, Philippines	1/01/2026	30/06/2030	$3,150,000
Livestock Systems				
Evaluating zoonotic malaria transmission and agricultural and forestry land use in Indonesia **LS/2019/116**	Indonesia	1/01/2020	30/06/2026	$4,620,467
Asian chicken genetic gains: a platform for exploring, testing, delivering, and improving chickens for enhanced livelihood outcomes in Southeast Asia **LS/2019/142**	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam	15/09/2020	30/06/2029	$5,500,000
Developing strategies to reduce brucellosis transmission in Timor-Leste based on One Health collaboration **LS/2022/161**	Timor-Leste	5/12/2022	31/12/2025	$999,943
Control programs for African swine fever, avian influenza and antimicrobial resistance: a One Health systems approach **LS/2022/162**	Philippines	12/12/2022	31/12/2025	$1,000,000
Livestock enhancement through Eco Health/ One Health assessment in Southeast Asia **LS/2022/163**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	12/12/2022	31/12/2025	$997,838
Bacteria enteropathy and nutrition in infants and children in Timor–Leste through a One Health approach **LS/2021/126**	Timor-Leste	15/04/2023	31/12/2027	$2,100,000
Indo-Pacific initiative for sustainable animal health cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Philippines	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$1,400,001
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Next generation agricultural extension: social relations for practice change **SSS/2019/138**	Cambodia	11/01/2021	31/12/2026	$4,500,000
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	1/09/2021	31/05/2027	$3,788,853
The role of agricultural and forest landscapes on human and environmental health in Cambodia **SSS/2022/164**	Cambodia	14/04/2023	31/12/2025	$999,999
Extending integrated analysis for improved food system outcomes in Timor-Leste and the Pacific region **FIS/2022/121**	Kiribati, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu	1/10/2023	30/09/2026	$2,499,998
Assessing the social and economic implications of transitioning to low-input and organic rice production in Laos **SSS/2023/137**	Laos	1/10/2023	31/12/2025	$500,000
Evidence-based policies to support Vietnam's agricultural and rural development **SSS/2023/138**	Vietnam	1/10/2023	31/12/2025	$500,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Reframing the yield gap: integrating farmer knowledge, culture and agroecological conditions for sustainable rice yields in the Philippines **SSS/2023/139**	Philippines	1/10/2023	31/12/2025	$500,000
Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Fiji	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$1,400,000
Pathways to build a gender inclusive and climate resilient food sector: country focus Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines **SSS/2023/191**	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/01/2024	30/06/2026	$320,000
Evaluating service provision approaches and value-chain interventions to support milk cooperatives to grow the smallholder dairy sector of Indonesia **AGB/2021/124**	Indonesia	1/05/2024	30/04/2029	$3,799,033
Vietnam smallholder farmers: challenges and opportunities for a sustainable future **SSS/2024/108**	Vietnam	1/06/2024	31/03/2026	$562,790
Developing co-management options for sustainable peatland livelihoods in Indonesia **SSS/2022/155**	Indonesia	1/07/2024	30/06/2029	$2,791,003
Extending climate and disaster risk and resilience to community level in the Philippines – a proof-of-concept **CLIM/2023/195**	Philippines	22/07/2024	10/10/2025	$500,000
Pathways for future farmers in Southeast Asia **SSS/2022/134**	Laos	1/08/2024	31/03/2026	$957,211
Agricultural policy development in Mongolia **SSS/2024/109**	Mongolia	15/08/2024	30/01/2026	$202,339
Evaluate the opportunities and constraints for growth of smallholder dairy value chains in the Philippines **AGB/2023/192**	Philippines	14/10/2024	30/09/2026	$499,939
Evaluating agricultural investment efficiency (2021–25): strategic directions for 2026–30 and vision for 2045 **SSS/2024/132**	Vietnam	1/11/2024	31/12/2025	$499,999
Enhancing food and nutrition security through an improved understanding of farming households and value chains in Timor-Leste **SSS/2024/133**	Timor-Leste	27/01/2025	29/01/2027	$500,000
Strengthening policy and research integration for agricultural and rural development in Laos **SSS/2023/160**	Laos	1/03/2025	30/07/2030	$3,190,000
Agri-inputs and One Health in Cambodia: pathways to enhanced agricultural resilience **SSS/2025/111**	Cambodia	16/06/2025	30/06/2026	$499,090
Towards integrated water management solutions for water and food security in Timor-Leste **SSS/2025/110**	Timor-Leste	18/08/2025	17/02/2027	$462,462
Scoping pathways to improved biosecurity outcomes for Indonesia **SSS/2025/113**	Indonesia	18/08/2025	17/12/2025	$345,442
Understanding Timor-Leste coffee value chains, their enabling environment and the potential benefit for smallholder producers **AGB/2024/129**	Timor-Leste	1/12/2025	30/06/2026	$444,935
Harnessing the potential of digital agri-market services for inclusive and competitive markets in Cambodia and Laos **SSS/2023/105**	Cambodia, Laos	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	$3,500,000
Soil & Land Management				
Farmer options for crops under saline conditions **SLAM/2018/144**	Vietnam	1/01/2020	31/12/2025	$2,313,288
Crop health and nutrient management of shallot-chilli-rice cropping systems in coastal Indonesia **SLAM/2018/145**	Indonesia	1/08/2020	31/12/2026	$2,000,001

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Managing heavy metals and soil contaminants in vegetable production to ensure food safety and environmental health in the Philippines **SLAM/2020/117**	Philippines	1/02/2023	31/01/2027	$2,036,588
Quantifying the impacts of nitrogen use and developing sustainable agricultural nitrogen management strategies in Lao rice-based farming systems **SLAM/2022/102**	Laos	1/01/2024	31/12/2028	$3,089,448
Defining the potential for mangrove-based agribusiness transformation in the coastal Mekong Delta **CLIM/2023/190**	Vietnam	1/03/2024	30/06/2026	$478,304
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	3/06/2024	30/11/2025	$500,000
Increasing on-farm labour productivity for sustainable production, nutrition and inclusive livelihood gains in Timor-Leste **SLAM/2020/141**	Timor-Leste	1/07/2024	30/06/2028	$2,950,000
Carbon flux pathways: from ecosystem to the global carbon market **SLAM/2024/116**	Indonesia	15/07/2024	31/01/2026	$500,000
Cambodian soil information system supporting sustainable upland agricultural development **SLAM/2022/103**	Cambodia	23/07/2024	30/06/2029	$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	23/07/2024	30/06/2029	$2,500,000
Developing soil knowledge, information and capacity to improve the productivity and sustainability of key cropping systems in Philippines **SLAM/2023/146**	Philippines	1/11/2024	30/09/2029	$3,500,000
Supporting practice change to improve the sustainability of agronomic management in vegetable production systems in Cambodia **SLAM/2023/100**	Cambodia	1/06/2025	31/05/2030	$3,692,692
Meeting community needs through carbon markets, governance and recognition of natural capital **SLAM/2025/104**	Indonesia	1/09/2025	31/12/2026	$500,000
Expanding climate resilient farming systems in Vietnam's Mekong River Delta region **SLAM/2025/114**	Vietnam	1/09/2025	31/08/2027	$500,000
Water				
Understanding the role of remote sensing in supporting agricultural water management in Southeast Asia **WAC/2023/117**	Vietnam	1/10/2024	28/02/2026	$370,000
Towards Indonesian sustainable lake management **WAC/2024/119**	Indonesia	1/02/2025	30/06/2026	$500,000
Scoping study for resilient agrifood systems in water constrained environments **WAC/2024/149**	Global	24/02/2025	30/11/2025	$175,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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$4.17 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

18 projects

15 Bilateral and regional research projects

3 Small projects and research activities

6 Projects specific to Cambodia

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

Agriculture contributed to approximately 17% of Cambodia's gross domestic product in 2024, third in size following the industry and service sectors.

Cambodia's economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic continues to gain momentum with agricultural exports making an important contribution to resilience and growth of the economy. Economic growth has remained resilient despite economic fluctuations in global markets. In 2024, Cambodia exported 11.7 million tonnes of agricultural products (a 34% increase from 2023) to 78 markets, worth approximately US$4.8 billion.

More than 80% of agricultural production is exported as raw commodity. China receives 40% of total agricultural commodity exports, with the top 3 items being bananas, milled rice and cassava. While agricultural exports to the USA are limited, recently imposed US tariffs for Cambodia and Vietnam will likely impact cashews, rice and rubber exports. The government recognises this potential risk and is actively promoting domestic investment in processing, packaging, value adding and logistics management.

Recognising the importance of the sector, agriculture remains one of the key areas of cooperation between Australia and Cambodia with the flagship program, Cambodia–Australia Partnership for Resilient Economic Development (CAPRED). ACIAR has strong and established partnerships with Cambodia's research institutes and researchers in 8 programs since 1990. Our current portfolio focuses on soil and land management, crops, aquaculture, fisheries, livestock, horticulture, value chain and market access improvement. All of which align with the priorities of Cambodia and CAPRED.

Rural communities

The Census of Agriculture Cambodia 2023, released in May 2025, showed that 54.2% of Cambodian households were engaged in agricultural production, with 94% cultivating crops (mainly rice and cassava), and 58% raising livestock and poultry. The report showed that youth between 10 and 19 years old represent the largest group within agricultural households and play a crucial workforce for the sector, however, increasing numbers of youth are migrating to cities to seek work in the manufacturing and services sectors. The average landholding size is 1.7 hectares and 44% of holdings operate on less than 1 hectare. The census revealed that 77.9 % of the households used inorganic fertilisers, while only 37.6% use organic and only 20.6% had access to irrigation, highlighting a key challenge to build climate resilience.

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 1200 Commune Agricultural Officers between 2023 and 2025 and aims to engage 1600 officers by the of 2025. The officers have been dispatched to support communities across the country. The intent is to strengthen production capacity, improve agricultural productivity particularly on processing, value-adding and improving quality through provision of technical support to the modern agricultural communities.

Climate change

The geography of Cambodia places the country at high risk of natural disasters. Its extensive floodplains make farmland and communities highly vulnerable to floods, while cyclical wet and dry seasons also subject the country to frequent drought. In the 2023 global risk index for humanitarian crises and disasters, Cambodia scored 9.5 out of 10.

Climate change is intensifying flooding and drought, and worsening saline intrusion. These events impact agricultural production, livelihoods, food security and nutrition of vulnerable rural communities. Building resilience to climate change through adaptation and mitigation is crucial for Cambodia to continue to maintain and develop the agriculture sector, one of the key contributors to the country's GDP contributing to its 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 of age. Despite these challenges, the Royal 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 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. ACIAR and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries agreed to review the relevancy of priority areas under the 10-year partnership agreement (2019–29) following the establishment of the Cambodian Agricultural Science Academy, currently being considered by the Cambodian Government.

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

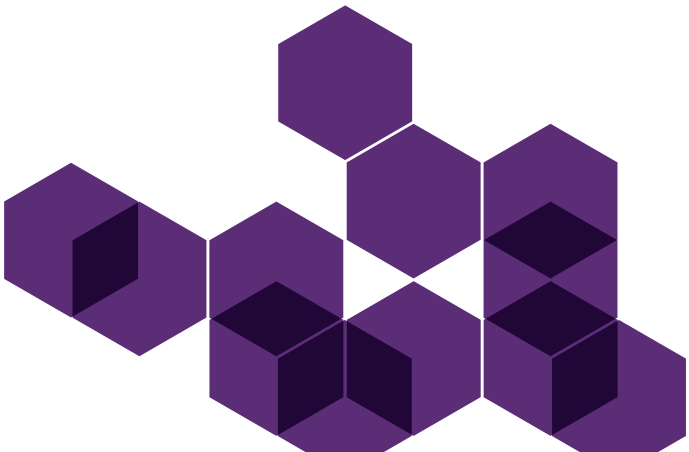
ACIAR and the Royal Government of Cambodia (represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) have an ongoing 10-year agreement on the strategic priorities for research collaboration. From 2019 to 2029, research collaborations will focus on 3 domains to support the development of Cambodian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



2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 18 agricultural research-for-development projects in Cambodia during 2025–26. Of these, 6 are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

- climate change resilience of agrifood systems and rural communities
- 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 Cambodia, 2025–26

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	1/04/2023	30/06/2026	$1,441,701
Crops				
Weed management techniques for mechanised and broadcast lowland crop production systems in Cambodia and Laos **CROP/2019/145**	Cambodia, Laos	1/01/2021	31/12/2025	$2,228,627
Disease-resilient and sustainable cassava production systems in the Mekong region **CROP/2022/110**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	1/11/2023	30/06/2028	$3,500,000
Integrating the electrification and smart mechanisation of two-wheel tractors with precision agriculture for improved productivity and sustainability **CROP/2023/129**	Cambodia	13/05/2024	30/06/2029	$3,229,915
Fisheries				
FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia **FIS/2018/153**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	1/01/2020	31/12/2025	$8,509,335
The value of using a south–south triangular cooperation approach in mariculture for Cambodia and Indonesia **FIS/2024/105**	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/04/2024	31/12/2025	$382,907
FishEd: growing capacity of the Lower Mekong countries to implement technical fisheries solutions into river development programs **FIS/2024/141**	Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam	1/10/2025	30/06/2029	$5,000,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Forestry				
Building an effective forest health and biosecurity network in Southeast Asia **FST/2020/123**	Cambodia, Laos	1/11/2021	30/06/2026	$1,898,717
Horticulture				
Safe, fresh, year-round vegetables in Cambodia and Laos through research and development support of smallholder productivity and engagement in collaborative supply chains **HORT/2021/143**	Cambodia, Laos	1/07/2024	31/12/2030	$2,100,006
Livestock Systems				
Asian chicken genetic gains: a platform for exploring, testing, delivering, and improving chickens for enhanced livelihood outcomes in Southeast Asia **LS/2019/142**	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam	15/09/2020	30/06/2029	$5,500,000
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Next generation agricultural extension: social relations for practice change **SSS/2019/138**	Cambodia	11/01/2021	31/12/2026	$4,500,000
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	1/09/2021	31/05/2027	$3,788,853
The role of agricultural and forest landscapes on human and environmental health in Cambodia **SSS/2022/164**	Cambodia	14/04/2023	31/12/2025	$999,999
Pathways to build a gender inclusive and climate resilient food sector: country focus Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines **SSS/2023/191**	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/01/2024	30/06/2026	$320,000
Agri-inputs and One Health in Cambodia: pathways to enhanced agricultural resilience **SSS/2025/111**	Cambodia	16/06/2025	30/06/2026	$499,090
Harnessing the potential of digital agri-market services for inclusive and competitive markets in Cambodia and Laos **SSS/2023/105**	Cambodia, Laos	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	$3,500,000
Soil & Land Management				
Cambodian soil information system supporting sustainable upland agricultural development **SLAM/2022/103**	Cambodia	23/07/2024	30/06/2029	$2,838,392
Supporting practice change to improve the sustainability of agronomic management in vegetable production systems in Cambodia **SLAM/2023/100**	Cambodia	1/06/2025	31/05/2030	$3,692,692

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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

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Indonesia

A$6.40 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

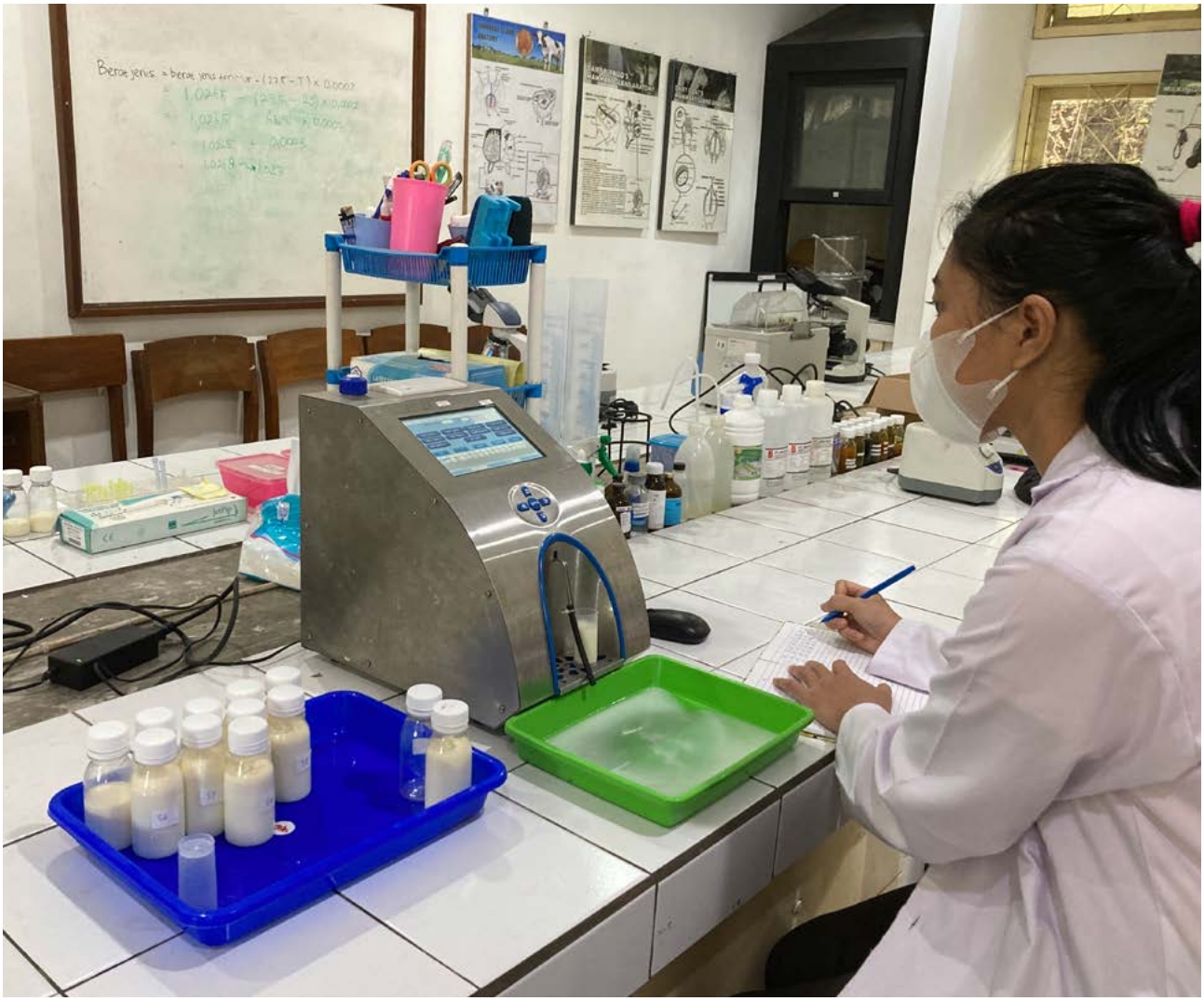
25 projects

17 Bilateral and regional research projects

8 Small projects and research activities

14 Projects specific to Indonesia

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.



The agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors of Indonesia underpin national food security, rural livelihoods and economic resilience.

As of 2024, the sectors employed nearly 29% of the national workforce and contributed to 12.4% of Indonesia's GDP. Indonesia's vast and diverse geography enables the production of a wide range of agricultural commodities, positioning the country as a major player in regional and global food systems.

According to BPS (Statistics Indonesia), the country's leading agricultural products include rice, maize, cassava, shallots, chilies and soybeans in the food crops subsector; mangoes, bananas and oranges in horticulture; and palm oil, rubber, coffee and cocoa in estate crops. In the fisheries sector, Indonesia produces over 7.5 million tonnes annually from marine and inland sources, while forestry contributes through timber, rattan and non-timber forest products.

Indonesia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors are increasingly influenced by climate variability, digital innovation and evolving market demands. The FAO emphasises the importance of climate-smart agriculture and sustainable fisheries to ensure long-term resilience. Meanwhile, the World Bank highlights the need for rural infrastructure investment and inclusive policies to boost productivity and sustainability.

As Indonesia continues to modernise its agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector, its role in supporting inclusive growth and environmental sustainability remains critical, both domestically and across ASEAN.

Rural communities

Indonesia's population reached 283.5 million in 2024, with 43% still residing in rural areas. However, rural populations are gradually declining due to urban migration and falling fertility rates, while the proportion of elderly residents continues to rise. The World Bank notes that Indonesia's large working-age population presents an opportunity for rural economic growth, though this window is narrowing as aging accelerates.

Rural areas face persistent challenges in nutrition, education and access to services. The 2024 SSGI survey reported a national stunting rate of 19.8%, with higher prevalence in rural and eastern provinces. Informal employment remains dominant, particularly among women. These demographic and nutritional shifts are reshaping rural livelihoods and development priorities.

Political and economic environment

Indonesia's political and economic direction is guided by the RPJMN (National Medium-Term Development Plan) 2025–2029, which emphasises inclusive growth, food sovereignty and rural development. The government is advancing structural reforms to boost agricultural productivity, reduce poverty and strengthen national food systems. Key initiatives include expanding farmer support programs, improving irrigation infrastructure, and enhancing access to agricultural inputs and markets.

Indonesia continues to face global pressures from trade disruptions and commodity price volatility. Domestically, the administration is focused on deregulation, bureaucratic reform and regional development to improve competitiveness and service delivery. These priorities align with the long-term 'Golden Indonesia 2045' Vision, aiming to position Indonesia as a high-income, food-secure nation.

Climate change

Climate change is increasingly affecting rural livelihoods and farmland across Indonesia. Rising temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns and extreme weather events are disrupting planting cycles, reducing yields, and increasing production risks especially for smallholder farmers. According to BPS, food crop subsectors such as rice and maize are particularly vulnerable, with productivity declining in areas affected by drought and flooding.

Climate-related disruptions are compounding existing challenges in rural areas, including limited access to technology, finance, and infrastructure. These pressures are driving changes in land use, labour patterns and income sources, with many rural households diversifying into non-farm activities. To safeguard food security and rural livelihoods, Indonesia is investing in adaptive farming practices, early warning systems and improved irrigation, a key priority under the RPJMN 2025–2029.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity remains a pressing issue for Indonesia's smallholders and rural communities. Rising food prices, uneven access to nutritious diets, and regional disparities continue to undermine household resilience. According to the FAO and WFP, food price inflation has disproportionately affected low-income and rural populations, increasing vulnerability to hunger and malnutrition.

The 2024 Global Hunger Index ranked Indonesia 67th out of 127 countries, reflecting moderate but persistent food insecurity. The WFP notes that smallholder farmers face challenges in accessing markets, inputs, and support services, limiting productivity and income stability. In eastern Indonesia, food insecurity is compounded by infrastructure gaps and limited social protection coverage.

Partnering with Australia

Australia and Indonesia share a longstanding and dynamic partnership, particularly in agriculture, food systems and rural development. In 2024, the two countries celebrated 75 years of diplomatic relations, an enduring commitment to regional cooperation and shared prosperity.

In 2025, ACIAR Indonesia is deepening collaboration with Bappenas (Ministry of National Development Planning) and key technical ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, and BRIN (National Research and Innovation Agency), to align future research investments with Indonesia's national development priorities. These efforts are guided by the Australia–Indonesia Development Partnership Plan 2024–2028 and closely aligned with Indonesia's RPJMN, which emphasises inclusive economic growth, food security and climate resilience.

ACIAR's partnerships in Indonesia span Bappenas, BRIN, leading universities, and technical government agencies. Together, they deliver research, capacity building, and policy support focused on smallholder productivity, market access, climate resilience and gender equity.

This bilateral cooperation is underpinned by Australia's International Development Policy, which prioritises gender equality, locally led development and climate action. ACIAR's work in Indonesia reflects these values, promoting evidence-based approaches and inclusive innovation.

Country priorities

Indonesia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors are central to its national development agenda, contributing to food security, rural livelihoods and environmental sustainability. The RPJMN 2025–2029 outlines strategic goals to modernise these sectors through innovation, climate resilience and inclusive growth.

In 2025, ACIAR Indonesia is actively consulting with Bappenas and relevant technical ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, and BRIN to streamline key investment themes and align future research priorities with Indonesia's development goals. These consultations aim to ensure that ACIAR's work continues to support inclusive rural growth, food system transformation, and science-based policy innovation.

ACIAR's research-for-development priorities in Indonesia include:

- biosecurity for plant and animal health
- climate change mitigation and adaptation
- productivity and sustainability of smallholder systems
- restoration of peatland, marine and terrestrial ecosystems
- reduction of food loss and waste
- development of bioeconomy policy frameworks
- analytical studies and policy formulation
- capacity building and institutional strengthening
- pilot projects and joint initiatives
- areas of mutual benefit to both countries.

Capacity development remains a cornerstone of ACIAR's engagement with Indonesia. In addition to the John Allwright Fellowship, the John Dillon Fellowship and Meryl Williams Fellowship contribute to strengthen leadership and institutional capability across Indonesia's research and policy landscape.

2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 25 agricultural research-for-development projects in Indonesia during 2025–26. Of these, 14 are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

- climate change resilience of agrifood systems and rural communities
- 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
Visit **aciar.gov.au** for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Indonesia, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Agribusiness				
Creating resilient communities through smallholder-inclusive tourism markets in Indonesia **AGB/2021/125**	Indonesia	1/07/2023	31/12/2028	$2,800,000
Evidence to underpin Indonesia's AgTech transformation **AGB/2023/155**	Indonesia	1/09/2024	31/08/2027	$1,497,866
Crops				
International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	1/07/2020	30/06/2026	$2,715,207
Fisheries				
FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia **FIS/2018/153**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	1/01/2020	31/12/2025	$8,509,335
The value of using a south–south triangular cooperation approach in mariculture for Cambodia and Indonesia **FIS/2024/105**	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/04/2024	31/12/2025	$382,907
Increasing capacity in population biology and harvest strategy implementation for sustainable tuna fishing and food security in Indonesia **FIS/2024/110**	Indonesia	1/06/2024	31/03/2026	$499,414
Enhancing marine environmental governance in Indonesia and the Philippines **FIS/2023/185**	Indonesia, Philippines	1/07/2024	30/06/2027	$2,272,725
Southeast Asia coral larval restoration network **FIS/2024/120**	Indonesia, Philippines	1/05/2025	30/04/2027	$600,000
InFish: sustainable river development for Indonesian inland fisheries **FIS/2024/124**	Indonesia	1/01/2026	31/12/2029	$3,820,000
Forestry				
Managing risk in Southeast Asian forest biosecurity **FST/2018/179**	Indonesia, Vietnam	24/09/2021	31/12/2025	$1,900,220
Protecting peat forests and livelihoods **FST/2024/145**	Indonesia	1/10/2025	30/09/2030	$3,500,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Horticulture				
An integrated management response to the spread of Fusarium wilt of banana in Southeast Asia **HORT/2018/192**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	1/01/2020	31/12/2025	$3,037,501
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	1/01/2021	30/06/2026	$1,789,999
Smarter use of pesticides in tree crop systems in Philippines and Indonesia for reduced fruit loss and improved safety **HORT/2022/125**	Indonesia, Philippines	1/01/2026	30/06/2030	$3,150,000
Livestock Systems				
Evaluating zoonotic malaria transmission and agricultural and forestry land use in Indonesia **LS/2019/116**	Indonesia	1/01/2020	30/06/2026	$4,620,467
Livestock enhancement through Eco Health/ One Health assessment in Southeast Asia **LS/2022/163**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	12/12/2022	31/12/2025	$997,838
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Pathways to build a gender inclusive and climate resilient food sector: country focus Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines **SSS/2023/191**	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/01/2024	30/06/2026	$320,000
Evaluating service provision approaches and value-chain interventions to support milk cooperatives to grow the smallholder dairy sector of Indonesia **AGB/2021/124**	Indonesia	1/05/2024	30/04/2029	$3,799,033
Developing co-management options for sustainable peatland livelihoods in Indonesia SSS/2022/155	Indonesia	1/07/2024	30/06/2029	$2,791,003
Scoping pathways to improved biosecurity outcomes for Indonesia **SSS/2025/113**	Indonesia	18/08/2025	17/12/2025	$345,442
Soil & Land Management				
Crop health and nutrient management of shallot-chilli-rice cropping systems in coastal Indonesia **SLAM/2018/145**	Indonesia	1/08/2020	31/12/2026	$2,000,001
Carbon flux pathways: from ecosystem to the global carbon market **SLAM/2024/116**	Indonesia	15/07/2024	31/01/2026	$500,000
Meeting the biophysical information needs of peatland restoration and management stakeholders to support improved and integrated decision-making **SLAM/2022/104**	Indonesia	23/07/2024	30/06/2029	$2,500,000
Meeting community needs through carbon markets, governance and recognition of natural capital **SLAM/2025/104**	Indonesia	1/09/2025	31/12/2026	$500,000
Water				
Towards Indonesian sustainable lake management **WAC/2024/119**	Indonesia	1/02/2025	30/06/2026	$500,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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

www.aciar.gov.au

Laos

A$6.40 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

20 projects

18 Bilateral and regional research projects

2 Small projects and research activities

8 Projects specific to Laos

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

Agriculture plays a significant role in the Lao economy, and while export opportunities are increasing for agricultural products, most production is consumed domestically.

Improved performance in services, electricity, mining, agriculture, manufacturing and tourism, has contributed to a continuing economic recovery. However, growth is hindered by the ongoing depreciation of Lao kip, inflation, labour shortages and unfavourable weather. Double-digit inflation continues to erode household purchasing power, dampen consumption and increase business costs. Labor shortages continue to pose a risk 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 key commodities such as cassava, banana and rubber. There are concerted efforts by the government and private sector to develop the livestock sector especially cattle for both domestic and foreign markets. However, due to capacity the country is still well behind meeting the import quota granted by China.

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. The country has seen huge out-migration, which has not only impacted the economic sector but has also significantly reduced enrolments at universities and colleges. Out-migration signals a long-term capacity challenge for Laos.

Political and economic environment

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has a vision to transform the country from one that is economically landlocked to one that is linked to the Asia region through infrastructure (roads, railways and airports) to foster 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 23.1%, slightly improved from 31% in 2023. Growth of GDP was 4.1% in 2024, and is projected to increase to 4.4% in 2025. To address financial issues during 2025, including public spending, the Lao government reduced its ministries from 16 to 13. The Ministry of Agriculture was merged with Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, with a new name as Ministry of Agriculture and Environment.

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 Lao National Disaster Management Committee, the recent Wutip typhoon hit more than 8 provinces of Laos, causing huge damage to property, farmland, infrastructure and livestock, and impacting the lives of nearly 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 essential foods such as rice, eggs, meat and cooking oils remains high. 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 and 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 7 decades 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 Environment 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 is finalising an investment design document for the Lao–Australia Climate Resilient Agriculture Initiative. It is to commence implementation in early 2026. ACIAR has been involved in the scoping and design phases of the initiative and will continue to enhance coordination going forward to ensure complementarity.

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 Laos, Australia and international organisations strives to support and advance this vision.

The Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Environment 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.

The merger of the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment presents the opportunity for ACIAR work with Lao partners in a more coordinated and holistic manner on agricultural development and natural resources/environmental management. In 2025, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment has embarked an exercise to explore upgrading National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) to a National Academy of Agriculture and Environment (LAAES). ACIAR is providing technical and financial support to undertake feasibility study of LAAES. If established LAAES will be ACIAR's main counterpart. 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.

2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 20 agricultural research-for-development projects in Laos during 2025–26. Of these, 8 are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

- climate change resilience of agrifood systems and rural communities
- 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
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Current and proposed projects in Laos, 2025–26

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	1/04/2023	30/06/2026	$1,441,701
Crops				
Weed management techniques for mechanised and broadcast lowland crop production systems in Cambodia and Laos **CROP/2019/145**	Cambodia, Laos	1/01/2021	31/12/2025	$2,228,627
Addressing the rapid emergence of cassava witches broom disease in Laos **CROP/2023/157**	Laos	1/06/2023	30/11/2025	$750,000
Disease-resilient and sustainable cassava production systems in the Mekong region **CROP/2022/110**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	1/11/2023	30/06/2028	$3,500,000
FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia **FIS/2018/153**	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	1/01/2020	31/12/2025	$8,509,335
Fisheries				
Optimising fish passage at hydropower sites in the Mekong **FIS/2023/133**	Laos	1/07/2024	30/06/2029	$5,700,001
FishEd: growing capacity of the Lower Mekong countries to implement technical fisheries solutions into river development programs **FIS/2024/141**	Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam	1/10/2025	30/06/2029	$5,000,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Forestry				
Building an effective forest health and biosecurity network in Southeast Asia **FST/2020/123**	Cambodia, Laos	1/11/2021	30/06/2026	$1,898,717
Forest restoration for economic outcomes **FST/2020/137**	Laos	1/07/2023	30/06/2028	$4,306,332
Sustainable expansion of forestry and wood processing in Laos and Australia **FST/2023/153**	Laos	1/07/2025	30/06/2030	$3,179,399
Horticulture				
An integrated management response to the spread of Fusarium wilt of banana in Southeast Asia **HORT/2018/192**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	1/01/2020	31/12/2025	$3,037,501
Safe, fresh, year-round vegetables in Cambodia and Laos through research and development support of smallholder productivity and engagement in collaborative supply chains **HORT/2021/143**	Cambodia, Laos	1/07/2024	31/12/2030	$2,100,006
Livestock Systems				
Asian chicken genetic gains: a platform for exploring, testing, delivering, and improving chickens for enhanced livelihood outcomes in Southeast Asia **LS/2019/142**	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam	15/09/2020	30/06/2029	$5,500,000
Livestock enhancement through Eco Health/ One Health assessment in Southeast Asia **LS/2022/163**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	12/12/2022	31/12/2025	$997,838
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
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	1/09/2021	31/05/2027	$3,788,853
Assessing the social and economic implications of transitioning to low-input and organic rice production in Laos **SSS/2023/137**	Laos	1/10/2023	31/12/2025	$500,000
Pathways for future farmers in Southeast Asia **SSS/2022/134**	Laos	1/08/2024	31/03/2026	$957,211
Strengthening policy and research integration for agricultural and rural development in Laos **SSS/2023/160**	Laos	1/03/2025	30/07/2030	$3,190,000
Harnessing the potential of digital agri-market services for inclusive and competitive markets in Cambodia and Laos **SSS/2023/105**	Cambodia, Laos	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	$3,500,000
Soil & Land Management				
Quantifying the impacts of nitrogen use and developing sustainable agricultural nitrogen management strategies in Lao rice-based farming systems **SLAM/2022/102**	Laos	1/01/2024	31/12/2028	$3,089,448

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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$3.37 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

20 projects

13 Bilateral and regional research projects

7 Small projects and research activities

11 Projects specific to the Philippines

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

The agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sector of the Philippines is the source of livelihoods for about a quarter of the Philippine population but contributes to less than 10% of GDP.

There has been stagnant growth in these sectors and continuing decline in agricultural productivity, in part due to rising production costs and land reform policies that have reduced average farm size by 34% and agricultural productivity by 17%. Soil degradation, deforestation, climate change impacts, transboundary animal diseases, plant pests and diseases, low farm productivity, poor market access and cheap agricultural imports continue to constrain sustainability of agrifood systems in the Philippines.

The Philippines aims to modernise agriculture production and agribusinesses by enhancing production efficiency, expanding access to markets and improving climate resilience through various national and local government programs and through a robust R&D program. Development programs that support rice, corn, livestock and high-value crops production are prioritised through national investments. Farmers and fisherfolks are also provided access to agricultural credit and insurance against losses due to natural disasters, crop diseases and pest infestation. Local governments in agricultural provinces complement national programs through their local development programs that address context-specific issues affecting agriculture, aquatic and natural resources in their province. Science, technology and innovations that will drive modernisation efforts in the agriculture, aquatic and natural resource sectors are prioritised through a Harmonised National Research and Development Agenda, the blueprint for R&D investments. ACIAR's program in the Philippines is anchored on these national R&D priorities.

Rural communities

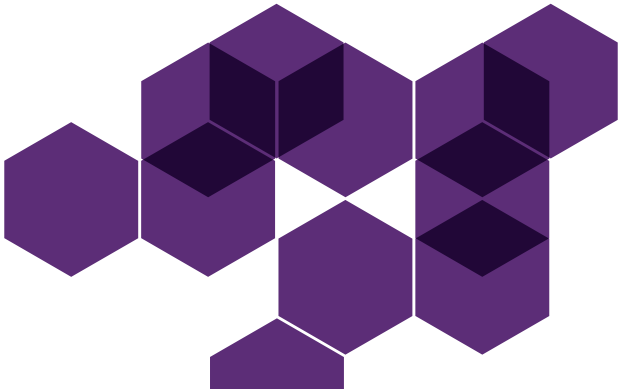
More than half of the Philippine population lives in rural areas. Rural poverty is significantly higher than in urban areas. Most households are engaged in the agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sectors for their livelihoods. According to studies, rural transformation is slow owing to low rural investments, gaps in market infrastructure, inclusive policies and research, and continuing land issues. Furthermore, 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 industry 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. There are knowledge gaps on locality-specific agro-ecological and socio-economic impacts of climate risks, which is a significant barrier to achieving climate resilient agrifood systems in rural communities. Moreover, the increasing frequency of climate events often keep national and local programs as reactive responses and diverts focus from mitigation and climate resilience initiatives that can more sustainably address the impact of climate change.



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, one of the highest rates in Southeast Asia. National surveys attribute food insecurity and hunger to increasing food prices (especially rice), unemployment and impact of frequent extreme weather events that damage crops and reduce yields. 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. Food insecurity caused significant negative impacts on health outcomes, contributing to increasing malnutrition, chronic diseases, and reduced overall wellbeing for many Filipinos. The most significant impact affect is that one quarter of the child population is undernourished, stunted have poor cognitive development.

Partnering with Australia

The Philippines is one of Australia's long-standing bilateral partners, since 1946. 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. The partnership between ACIAR and DOST-PCAARRD continues 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 2024–2030. 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.

2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 20 agricultural research-for-development projects in the Philippines during 2025–26. Of these, 11 are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

- climate change resilience of agrifood systems and rural communities
- 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, 2025–26

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	1/08/2021	31/10/2025	$2,800,005
Improving the enabling environment to effectively scale Good Agriculture and Aquaculture Practice (GAAP) in the Philippines **AGB/2024/150**	Philippines	1/10/2025	30/09/2028	$3,000,000
Fisheries				
Regional coral restoration networks and appropriate technologies for larger-scale coral and fish habitat restoration in the Philippines and Australia **FIS/2019/123**	Philippines	1/12/2020	31/10/2025	$2,559,960
Institutional effectiveness and political economy of coral reef restoration in the Philippines **FIS/2021/112**	Philippines	1/09/2021	31/12/2025	$2,023,488
Enhancing marine environmental governance in Indonesia and the Philippines **FIS/2023/185**	Indonesia, Philippines	1/07/2024	30/06/2027	$2,272,725
Southeast Asia coral larval restoration network **FIS/2024/120**	Indonesia, Philippines	1/05/2025	30/04/2027	$600,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Horticulture				
An integrated management response to the spread of Fusarium wilt of banana in Southeast Asia **HORT/2018/192**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	1/01/2020	31/12/2025	$3,037,501
Scoping the opportunity for urban and peri-urban agricultural development in Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/147**	Philippines, Vietnam	1/07/2023	31/12/2025	$400,856
Benchmarking mango breeding and genomics **HORT/2024/122**	Philippines	1/12/2024	30/11/2026	$482,833
Smarter use of pesticides in tree crop systems in Philippines and Indonesia for reduced fruit loss and improved safety **HORT/2022/125**	Indonesia, Philippines	1/01/2026	30/06/2030	$3,150,000
Livestock Systems				
Control programs for African swine fever, avian influenza and antimicrobial resistance: a One Health systems approach **LS/2022/162**	Philippines	12/12/2022	31/12/2025	$1,000,000
Livestock enhancement through Eco Health/ One Health assessment in Southeast Asia **LS/2022/163**	Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	12/12/2022	31/12/2025	$997,838
Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Philippines	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$1,400,001
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Reframing the yield gap: integrating farmer knowledge, culture and agroecological conditions for sustainable rice yields in the Philippines **SSS/2023/139**	Philippines	1/10/2023	31/12/2025	$500,000
Extending climate and disaster risk and resilience to community level in the Philippines – a proof-of-concept **CLIM/2023/195**	Philippines	22/07/2024	10/10/2025	$500,000
Evaluate the opportunities and constraints for growth of smallholder dairy value chains in the Philippines **AGB/2023/192**	Philippines	14/10/2024	30/09/2026	$499,939
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	1/02/2023	31/01/2027	$2,036,588
Developing soil knowledge, information and capacity to improve the productivity and sustainability of key cropping systems in Philippines **SLAM/2023/146**	Philippines	1/11/2024	30/09/2029	$3,500,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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

www.aciar.gov.au

Timor-Leste

A$3.33 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

10 projects

7 Bilateral and regional research projects

3 Small projects and research activities

8 Projects specific to Timor-Leste

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

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.

Agriculture, fisheries and forestry are foundational to Timor-Leste's economy and society, supporting the majority of the population and employing nearly 38% of the workforce.

Agriculture contributes a substantial share of non-oil GDP, with animal production, crops and fisheries as key sub-sectors. However, productivity is low due to traditional practices, limited inputs and poor infrastructure.

The fisheries sector supports livelihoods and nutrition, providing 31% of animal-source protein. Yet, per capita fish consumption is only 6 kg annually – well below the national target of 15 kg by 2030.

Forests cover about 62% of the country, playing a crucial role in sustainability and rural livelihoods. However, deforestation and unsustainable land use have led to the loss of 42,000 hectares between 1990 and 2020.

The livestock sector also faces challenges, including low productivity, limited feed and water, and minimal veterinary services. Diseases like African swine fever and brucellosis have disrupted pig and cattle production. In response, the government, with international partners like Australia, is promoting sustainable development, market access, and innovation to modernise agrifood systems and build resilience.

Rural communities

Approximately 70% of the Timor-Leste population lives in rural areas and depend largely on subsistence farming for their survival and income. Timor-Leste experiences a significant youth bulge, with around 60% of the population under 24 years old. This means that a significant portion of the rural population, more than 400,000 people, is under the age of 24. The youth demographic presents both challenges and opportunities. They also represent a vital resource for agricultural innovation and community development. Rural communities, especially in mountainous and coastal regions, face significant climate risks such as floods, droughts and landslides, which threaten infrastructure and livelihoods. Limited access to markets, income-generating opportunities and essential services is combined by difficult terrain and dispersed populations. Various initiatives are focused on enhancing infrastructure, boosting agricultural output, and improving disaster readiness, with the goal of strengthening resilience and increasing food security across these vulnerable communities.

Political and economic environment

The economy of Timor-Leste is expected to grow at an average rate of 3.9% during 2025–26, fuelled by public investment, increasing consumer demand and enhanced budget execution. Inflation has notably decreased, supporting households' purchasing power. However, Timor-Leste continues to depend significantly on its petroleum fund, raising worries about long-term fiscal sustainability. The 9th Constitutional Government is focusing on economic diversification, especially via its Blue Economy Policy which seeks to sustainably utilise marine resources while enhancing coastal livelihoods. Strategic changes are being implemented to lessen reliance on oil income and enhance non-oil industries such as agriculture and tourism. Despite progress, obstacles remain, such as vulnerability to climate impacts, inadequate absorptive capacity and threats from international trade conflicts. Ongoing investment in infrastructure, agriculture, human resources and governance is crucial for achieving inclusive and resilient growth.

Climate change

Timor-Leste faces growing climate risks, including rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, droughts, floods and landslides. These hazards threaten agriculture, water resources, infrastructure and coastal communities. Climate change is intensifying soil erosion and reducing crop yields, worsening food insecurity and poverty. Vulnerable populations, especially in rural and mountainous areas, are most affected. The government is advancing climate adaptation through its National Adaptation Plan and resilience-building initiatives. Key priorities include disaster risk reduction, climate-resilient agriculture, improved water management, and early warning systems. International donors and partners support Timor-Leste's efforts to integrate climate risk into development planning. Despite progress, limited institutional capacity and funding gaps remain challenges. Strengthening local resilience and sustainable resource management is essential to safeguard livelihoods and promote inclusive development in the face of climate change.

Food insecurity

More than 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 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. Australia is Timor-Leste's largest development partner, with cooperation spanning governance, education, health, infrastructure and agriculture. The Australia–Timor-Leste Development Partnership Plan 2025–2030 outlines 4 joint objectives: quality services, inclusive economic growth, national resilience and social equity. These objectives guide Australia's support for Timor-Leste's national priorities through coordinated, evidence-based programs. 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 2025–26 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 CONSSAN-TL. These partnerships aim to enhance agricultural productivity, improve food security and address nutritional needs.

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

- improving crop productivity, profitability and sustainability
- 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.

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. The objectives of the 2025–26 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.

2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 10 agricultural research-for-development projects in Timor-Leste during 2025–26. Of these, 8 are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

- climate change resilience of agrifood systems and rural communities
- 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 Timor-Leste, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Crops				
Agricultural innovations for communities – intensified and diverse farming systems for Timor-Leste **CROP/2021/131**	Timor-Leste	1/11/2022	31/10/2027	$3,198,681
Fisheries				
Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands **FIS/2019/124**	Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste	1/09/2021	31/12/2025	$2,444,001
Improved nutrition outcomes from safe aquatic foods and sustainable fisheries in Timor-Leste **FIS/2025/118**	Timor-Leste	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	$3,750,000
Livestock Systems				
Developing strategies to reduce brucellosis transmission in Timor-Leste based on One Health collaboration **LS/2022/161**	Timor-Leste	5/12/2022	31/12/2025	$999,943
Bacteria enteropathy and nutrition in infants and children in Timor–Leste through a One Health approach **LS/2021/126**	Timor-Leste	15/04/2023	31/12/2027	$2,100,000
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Extending integrated analysis for improved food system outcomes in Timor-Leste and the Pacific region **FIS/2022/121**	Kiribati, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu	1/10/2023	30/09/2026	$2,499,998
Enhancing food and nutrition security through an improved understanding of farming households and value chains in Timor-Leste **SSS/2024/133**	Timor-Leste	27/01/2025	29/01/2027	$500,000
Towards integrated water management solutions for water and food security in Timor-Leste **SSS/2025/110**	Timor-Leste	18/08/2025	17/02/2027	$462,462
Understanding Timor-Leste coffee value chains, their enabling environment and the potential benefit for smallholder producers **AGB/2024/129**	Timor-Leste	1/12/2025	30/06/2026	$444,935
Soil & Land Management				
Increasing on-farm labour productivity for sustainable production, nutrition and inclusive livelihood gains in Timor-Leste **SLAM/2020/141**	Timor-Leste	1/07/2024	30/06/2028	$2,950,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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

www.aciar.gov.au

Vietnam

A$5.36 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

23 projects

10 Bilateral and regional research projects

13 Small projects and research activities

16 Projects specific to Vietnam

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

Agriculture, fisheries and forestry are central to Vietnam's socio-economic development. These sectors contribute 12% of GDP (2024), ensure food security and employ about one-third of the workforce. They remain vital to rural livelihoods, poverty reduction and national exports.

Over the past decades, Vietnam has shifted from subsistence and low-value production to more market-oriented and technology-driven agriculture. This transformation has strengthened value chain linkages and increased access to domestic and international markets.

Sustainability and climate resilience are now at the core of Vietnam's agricultural strategy. The government prioritises modernisation and mechanisation, and promotes high-value products, green technologies and improved resource management. These efforts aim to meet global market standards and contribute to the country's low-emission development goals.

This transformation underpins Vietnam's broader 'New Era of Development' introduced by the current leadership. Building on 4 decades of reform, this new agenda places science, innovation, digital transformation and green growth at the centre of national progress, creating new demands and opportunities for agricultural research and partnerships.

Rural communities

Vietnam's rural development has made strong progress. By 2025, most communes are expected to meet national 'New Rural' standards, with over 220,000 houses upgraded under the government's renovation program for poor households. Poverty has declined sharply, and rural economies are diversifying.

However, demographic shifts are presenting new challenges. The rural population, 60% of the total (2024), is steadily declining due to urbanisation. Agriculture labour is shrinking, driven by vocational training that supports transitions into non-farm sectors and a growing preference for non-agricultural jobs. Youth migration, especially among those aged 18–35, is leading to labour shortages and aging population in many regions.

In addition, deep-rooted challenges remain. Pockets of high poverty persist, particularly in upland and ethnic minority communities. Rural girls and ethnic minorities face lower education completion rates, while climate vulnerability continues to limit livelihoods in many areas.

Political and economic environment

Vietnam aims to become a high-income country by 2045, focusing on governance reform, digitalisation and science and innovation. The agenda includes reducing administrative waste, improving public services, and empowering the private sector.

In 2025, Vietnam began consolidating its 63 provinces and cities into 34 and removed the district level, creating a 2-tier system: province/city and commune/ward. This restructuring offers an opportunity to modernise agriculture and rural development through larger production zones, improved infrastructure and stronger value chains. But to realise its full potential and ensure equitable benefits, it requires strong oversight and inclusive planning.

As Vietnam deepens global integration, trade agreements like the EVFTA and CPTPP raised the bar for quality and sustainability standards. In addition, the emerging tariff risks highlight the need for a market diversification and upgraded standards across agrifood supply chains.

Climate change

Vietnam ranks among the world's most vulnerable countries in terms of climate change, facing rising temperature, sea level rise, salinity intrusion and more frequent storms. The Mekong Delta is especially exposed with salinity intrusion now reaching up to 50 km inland, threatening to displace 6 to 12 million people from the region in the coming decades.

Vietnam has committed to net zero emissions by 2050 and is incorporating agriculture into both mitigation and adaptation strategies. These include climate-resilient rice and livestock systems, water management, mangrove restoration and sustainable forest management. The sector is part of broader efforts of Vietnam to establish domestic carbon markets by 2028.

One flagship initiative is the one million hectares of high-quality, low-emission rice using practices such as alternate wetting and drying, precision fertilising, and rice straw reuse. However, scaling these practices remains challenging for smallholder farmers, highlighting the need for continued research, policy innovation, and partnerships to support climate resilience in agriculture.

Food insecurity

Vietnam produces enough staple calories to meet domestic needs, but food insecurity persists in terms of nutrition. Poor and near-poor households, including in urban areas, struggle to afford nutrition-rich foods. Child malnutrition remains an issue in vulnerable regions.

The government has committed to maintaining 3.5 million hectares of rice land to ensure domestic food security while upgrading the rice quality for premium markets. At the same time, it is promoting more diverse and sustainable farming systems, including fruit, vegetables, aquaculture and agroforestry. These actions aim to boost farmers' incomes, reduce environmental pressures and improve dietary outcomes.

Partnering with Australia

Australia and Vietnam are strong partners with a shared commitment to regional peace, stability and prosperity. In March 2024, the two countries elevated their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, making Australia a top-tier partner of Vietnam.

ACIAR has worked with Vietnam for more than 30 years. As Vietnam enters a new era of development, ACIAR is well-positioned to support its goal through research-for-development partnerships. The ACIAR – Vietnam collaboration strategy aligns with 4 out of the 6 pillars of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership:

- **Enhancing Economic Engagement:** improving livelihoods and incomes of smallholder farmers
- **Building Knowledge and Connecting People**: strengthening research capacity among Vietnamese scientists, extension officers, and farmers
- **Climate, Environment and Energy Cooperation**: promoting efficient natural resource use and contributing to climate policy
- **Science Technology, Innovation and Digital transformation**: advancing innovation in agrifood systems, nutrition and human health.

In March 2024, ACIAR and Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), which has since changed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MAE), signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen collaboration in agriculture, promoting the leadership and proactive direction of local partners from Vietnam. The MoU was an agreement by both partners to focus on urgent national priorities and promote long-term, sustainable solutions to help smallholders and vulnerable groups adapt to climate change and meet their food and nutrition needs.

Country priorities

The ACIAR Vietnam Program is currently guided by its 10-year strategy for 2017–2027. Under this framework, 6 research themes and 3 key geographical focus areas have been prioritised. ACIAR also places strong emphasis on locally led approaches and actively encourages Vietnamese partners to participate in shaping new research directions for the medium-term strategy.

Recently proposed priorities from Vietnam include:

- supporting the achievement of net-zero emissions by 2050
- strategic agricultural planning tailored to specific ecological zones
- marine aquaculture and marine biodiversity conservation
- low-emission farming practices in the Mekong Delta
- circular agriculture and transformation of food systems
- enhancing biosecurity and applying advanced technologies to strengthen industrial value chains.

Capacity development is central to Vietnam's 'New Era' goals, especially as the agriculture sector has been facing deep human resources constraints. These include an aging rural workforce, limited interest in agriculture among youth and a research brain drain.

Addressing these gaps is crucial to navigating climate change, digital transformation, urbanisation and growing compliance demands in agricultural exports.

ACIAR contributes directly to strengthening Vietnam's research and innovation systems. Through integrated capacity development embedded in research projects, scholarship and institutional partnerships, ACIAR supports the growth of skilled scientists, extension officers and farmers. The ACIAR alumni network also plays an important role in building research leadership and fostering multidisciplinary collaboration.

2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 23 agricultural research-for-development projects in Vietnam during 2025–26. Of these, 16 are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

- climate change resilience of agrifood systems and rural communities
- 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 Vietnam, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Agribusiness				
Planning and establishing a sustainable smallholder rice chain in the Mekong Delta **AGB/2019/153**	Vietnam	25/02/2022	30/12/2025	$2,600,000
Food loss in the pangasius catfish value chain of the Mekong River Basin **CS/2020/209**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	1/04/2023	30/06/2026	$1,441,701
Integrating smallholder households and farm production systems into commercial beef supply chains in Vietnam **AGB/2020/189**	Vietnam	1/07/2023	31/12/2026	$2,780,003
Digital monitoring of VietGAP compliance for high-value domestic markets and potential export in smallholder fruit value chains from northwest Vietnam **AGB/2022/114**	Vietnam	1/07/2025	31/12/2028	$2,345,559
Understanding markets, value chains and production constraints for medicinal plants in Vietnam **AGB/2025/101**	Vietnam	1/07/2025	31/12/2026	$134,154
Crops				
Disease-resilient and sustainable cassava production systems in the Mekong region **CROP/2022/110**	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	1/11/2023	30/06/2028	$3,500,000
Fisheries				
Addressing key technical bottlenecks in the grouper supply chain in Vietnam (and Australia) through manufactured feed and hatchery developments that aim to improve the small-medium enterprise sector profitability **FIS/2022/148**	Australia, Vietnam	1/06/2024	1/12/2027	$2,585,435
Potential for tropical abalone aquaculture in Vietnam **FIS/2024/125**	Vietnam	1/07/2025	30/12/2026	$280,739
Continued momentum towards a cultured mabé pearl and pearl-based livelihoods sector in Vietnam **FIS/2024/131**	Vietnam	1/01/2025	30/06/2026	$300,010
FishEd: growing capacity of the Lower Mekong countries to implement technical fisheries solutions into river development programs **FIS/2024/141**	Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam	1/10/2025	30/06/2029	$5,000,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Forestry				
Managing risk in Southeast Asian forest biosecurity **FST/2018/179**	Indonesia, Vietnam	24/09/2021	31/12/2025	$1,900,220
Diversified livelihoods from native tree species in northwest Vietnam **FST/2023/150**	Vietnam	1/04/2026	31/03/2028	$347,643
Horticulture				
Scoping the opportunity for urban and peri-urban agricultural development in Southeast Asia **HORT/2023/147**	Philippines, Vietnam	1/07/2023	31/12/2025	$400,856
Scoping Vietnam's citrus industry priorities to inform the development of a research roadmap **HORT/2023/179**	Vietnam	1/02/2024	31/10/2025	$299,999
Livestock Systems				
Asian chicken genetic gains: a platform for exploring, testing, delivering, and improving chickens for enhanced livelihood outcomes in Southeast Asia **LS/2019/142**	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam	15/09/2020	30/06/2029	$5,500,000
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Evidence-based policies to support Vietnam's agricultural and rural development **SSS/2023/138**	Vietnam	1/10/2023	31/12/2025	$500,000
Vietnam smallholder farmers: challenges and opportunities for a sustainable future **SSS/2024/108**	Vietnam	1/06/2024	31/03/2026	$562,790
Evaluating agricultural investment efficiency (2021–25): strategic directions for 2026–30 and vision for 2045 **SSS/2024/132**	Vietnam	1/11/2024	31/12/2025	$499,999
Soil & Land Management				
Farmer options for crops under saline conditions **SLAM/2018/144**	Vietnam	1/01/2020	31/12/2025	$2,313,288
Defining the potential for mangrove-based agribusiness transformation in the coastal Mekong Delta **CLIM/2023/190**	Vietnam	1/03/2024	30/06/2026	$478,304
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	3/06/2024	30/11/2025	$500,000
Expanding climate resilient farming systems in Vietnam's Mekong River Delta region **SLAM/2025/114**	Vietnam	1/09/2025	31/08/2027	$500,000
Water				
Understanding the role of remote sensing in supporting agricultural water management in Southeast Asia **WAC/2023/117**	Vietnam	1/10/2024	28/02/2026	$370,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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

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4

ACIAR in South Asia

Regional program 2025–26

Partner countries

Bangladesh
India
Nepal
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

A$7.62 million

Investment in agricultural research for development

27 projects

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, it has the highest regional Global Hunger Index and a 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.

Agricultural research priorities in South Asia are shifting towards climate resilience, sustainable intensification and improved nutrition, with a focus on technologies that enhance resource use efficiency and address the needs of vulnerable populations.

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 the 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.

Key areas of focus for ACIAR in the region include climate-smart agriculture, water conservation, sustainable pest and disease management, and the development of climate-resilient crops. Furthermore, research is needed to understand the impact of climate change on food systems, improve food safety and hygiene, and ensure equitable access to healthy diets.

Current and proposed projects in the South Asia region, 2025–26

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	1/08/2022	31/12/2025	$1,100,000
Crops				
International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	1/07/2020	30/06/2026	$2,715,207
Managing wheat blast in Bangladesh: identification and introgression of wheat blast resistance for rapid varietal development and dissemination **CROP/2020/165**	Bangladesh	1/11/2021	30/06/2026	$1,500,000
Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan **CROP/2020/167**	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/12/2021	30/06/2026	$2,311,970
Additive intercropping in wide row crops for resilient crop production in Bangladesh, Bhutan and India **CROP/2022/111**	Bangladesh, India	1/06/2023	30/06/2028	$2,842,648
Profitable pulses in Pakistan **CROP/2024/159**	Pakistan	24/03/2025	24/12/2025	$298,403
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	1/06/2020	30/11/2025	$2,250,000
Review and scoping study: interactions between mangrove system health and fisheries resource condition in the Sundarbans **FIS/2024/127**	Bangladesh	19/05/2025	18/05/2026	$245,175
Forestry				
Bangladesh Sundarban ecosystem management project **FST/2022/123**	Bangladesh	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	$2,933,018
Horticulture				
Improving smallholder wellbeing through participation in modern value chains: sustaining future growth in the Pakistan citrus industry **HORT/2020/129**	Pakistan	1/01/2022	31/12/2025	$1,499,999
Livestock Systems				
Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Fiji	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$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	1/09/2024	31/12/2028	$2,400,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Soil & Land Management				
Cropping system intensification in the salt-affected coastal zones of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India **LWR/2014/073**	Bangladesh, India	1/11/2015	30/06/2026	$5,556,587
Developing and translating soil health information in Bangladesh with farmers and for farmers to build resilient agricultural systems **SLAM/2021/107**	Bangladesh	10/06/2024	31/05/2029	$1,200,097
Change in soil and water dynamics and supporting adoption of conservation agriculture in Bangladesh **SLAM/2022/101**	Bangladesh	26/09/2024	30/04/2029	$3,312,252
Water				
Transforming smallholder food systems in the Eastern Gangetic Plain **WAC/2020/148**	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	1/10/2021	30/09/2026	$4,693,755
Paribartan: participatory action research on locally led iterative learning and inclusive business models for adaptive transformation in Bangladesh polders **CLIM/2021/137**	Bangladesh	21/08/2023	31/12/2027	$3,115,808
Current and projected hydrological trends in the Sundarbans mangrove forest and their impacts on ecology and ecosystem services **WAC/2022/129**	Bangladesh	1/01/2024	31/12/2025	$250,000
Spring water management, agriculture and resilient livelihoods in the midhills of Nepal **WAC/2022/151**	Nepal	1/10/2024	30/09/2028	$2,800,000
Climate resilient and adaptive water allocation in Pakistan **WAC/2022/152**	Pakistan	4/11/2024	8/06/2029	$3,000,001
Scoping study for resilient agrifood systems in water constrained environments **WAC/2024/149**	Global	24/02/2025	30/11/2025	$175,000
Community-led and stakeholder-engaged adaptation processes for southern Pakistan **WAC/2024/153**	Pakistan	16/06/2025	30/06/2026	$349,988
Climate adaptive livelihoods in Sindh: locally led pathways for inclusive transformation **CLIM/2022/136**	Pakistan	1/09/2025	31/03/2030	$3,200,000
Evaluating effectiveness of water infrastructure investments in Pakistan **WAC/2024/146**	Pakistan	1/09/2025	31/08/2026	$500,000
Bangladesh Sundarban ecosystem management project **FST/2022/123**	Bangladesh	1/01/2026	30/12/2030	$2,933,018
Water resilient rural communities in South Punjab, Pakistan **WAC/2021/134**	Pakistan	1/03/2026	31/08/2030	$3,400,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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

www.aciar.gov.au

Bangladesh

A$3.85 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

15 projects

13 Bilateral and regional research projects

2 Small projects and research activities

8 Projects specific to Bangladesh

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

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.

An estimated 58.5 million people are employed in the primary sector. Agriculture accounts for almost 11.5% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and provides employment opportunities for about 45% of the workforce. 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.

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.

Bangladesh is transforming from a country of chronic food shortages to one of net food grain self-sufficiency, however the country still faces substantial food security challenges, and many people still live below the poverty line.

Rural communities

Bangladesh is urbanising at a much quicker rate than other countries in South Asia, and in 2022, had the highest urban population in the region. About 60% of the population of Bangladesh lives in rural areas, compared to 90% in 1972. Poverty rates remain higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and the poorest regions are also agriculture-based economies. The rate of urbanisation has depleted the rural workforce. Additionally, globalisation has exposed rural communities and smallholder famers to volatile global markets and intensified competition. Diversification of agricultural practices is needed, as well as the development of non-agriculture (value-add) opportunities to improve livelihoods in rural areas. However, social inequity is also a contributor to poverty, such as lack of education and access to infrastructure and resources.

Political and economic environment

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

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.

2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 15 agricultural research-for-development projects in Bangladesh during 2025–26. Of these, 8 are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

- climate change resilience of agrifood systems and rural communities
- 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
Visit **aciar.gov.au** for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Bangladesh, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Crops				
International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	1/07/2020	30/06/2026	$2,715,207
Managing wheat blast in Bangladesh: identification and introgression of wheat blast resistance for rapid varietal development and dissemination **CROP/2020/165**	Bangladesh	1/11/2021	30/06/2026	$1,500,000
Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan **CROP/2020/167**	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/12/2021	30/06/2026	$2,311,970
Additive intercropping in wide row crops for resilient crop production in Bangladesh, Bhutan and India **CROP/2022/111**	Bangladesh, India	1/06/2023	30/06/2028	$2,842,648
Fisheries				
Review and scoping study: interactions between mangrove system health and fisheries resource condition in the Sundarbans **FIS/2024/127**	Bangladesh	19/05/2025	18/05/2026	$245,175
Forestry				
Bangladesh Sundarban ecosystem management project **FST/2022/123**	Bangladesh	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	$2,933,018
Livestock Systems				
Indo-Pacific Initiative for Sustainable Animal Health Cooperation **LS/2022/143**	Bangladesh, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Philippines	1/01/2024	30/06/2027	$1,400,001

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
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	10/06/2024	31/05/2029	$1,200,097
Change in soil and water dynamics and supporting adoption of conservation agriculture in Bangladesh **SLAM/2022/101**	Bangladesh	26/09/2024	30/04/2029	$3,312,252
Water				
Cropping system intensification in the salt-affected coastal zones of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India **LWR/2014/073**	Bangladesh, India	1/11/2015	30/06/2026	$5,556,587
Transforming smallholder food systems in the Eastern Gangetic Plain **WAC/2020/148**	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	1/10/2021	30/09/2026	$4,693,755
Paribartan: participatory action research on locally led iterative learning and inclusive business models for adaptive transformation in Bangladesh polders **CLIM/2021/137**	Bangladesh	21/08/2023	31/12/2027	$3,115,808
Current and projected hydrological trends in the Sundarbans mangrove forest and their impacts on ecology and ecosystem services **WAC/2022/129**	Bangladesh	1/01/2024	31/12/2025	$250,000
Bangladesh Sundarban ecosystem management project **FST/2022/123**	Bangladesh	1/01/2026	30/12/2030	$2,933,018

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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$0.6 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

4 projects

4 **Bilateral and regional research projects**

0 **Small projects and research activities**

0 **Projects specific to India**

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

India is emerging as a major exporter of several agricultural commodities, and ranks among the largest exporters of rice and cotton, globally.

India accounts for 18% of the world's population and is the world's 4th largest economy. While the contribution of the agriculture sector to GDP is declining, agriculture is a major source of employment and accounts for 46% of the total national workforce.

Rural communities

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 in all agricultural development programs. 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 a significant challenge to India's long-term food security. Climate is the most important determinant of crop productivity, 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 rural population reliant on climate-dependent agricultural activities for their livelihoods.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity in India is a significant concern, impacting a large portion of the population. Despite economic growth, poverty and hunger remain prevalent, with nearly 195 million people undernourished, representing a quarter of the world's undernourished population, according to the United Nations.

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. As stated in A New Roadmap for Australia's Economic Engagement with India, ACIAR will explore the next generation of partnerships in India based on South-South and triangular relationships. Present ACIAR engagement focuses on regional issues of natural resource management and climate change. In 2025–26, 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 for important crops, lack of adoption of precision and smart farming techniques, and lower application of innovation such as biotechnology, material sciences and data and digital technologies.

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.

2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 4 agricultural research-for-development projects in India during 2025–26, which are part of regional projects. The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

- climate change resilience of agrifood systems and rural communities
- 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 India, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	1/07/2020	30/06/2026	$2,715,207
Additive intercropping in wide row crops for resilient crop production in Bangladesh, Bhutan and India **CROP/2022/111**	Bangladesh, India	1/06/2023	30/06/2028	$2,842,648
Cropping system intensification in the salt-affected coastal zones of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India **LWR/2014/073**	Bangladesh, India	1/11/2015	30/06/2026	$5,556,587
Transforming smallholder food systems in the Eastern Gangetic Plain **WAC/2020/148**	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	1/10/2021	30/09/2026	$4,693,755

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

More information about projects at **www.aciar.gov.au**. Search by project title or project code.

Nepal

A$0.9 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

2 projects

2 **Bilateral and regional research projects**

0 **Small projects and research activities**

1 **Project specific to Nepal**

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

Agriculture is the largest sector of the Nepalese economy.

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 many members of rural households living abroad for foreign employment, remittances have become a major part of the national economy. The agriculture sector is dominated by subsistence farming and the country relies heavily on imports of agricultural commodities, mainly from India.

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.

Australia and Nepal celebrate 65 years of diplomatic relations in 2025. The Nepal Agriculture Research Council has been an ACIAR partner in many projects. 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, has contributed to around 45% forest cover in Nepal.

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.

Cooperative research linkages with neighbouring countries on alluvial plains will be explored to understand pathways to crop diversification to reduce inequity, production risk and unsustainable resource use. A project on spring water management is underway, 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 2025–26, ACIAR will engage alumni from Nepal in regional alumni activities to focus on meaningful engagement and knowledge exchange.

Regional Manager, South Asia
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Research Program Managers
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Current and proposed projects in Nepal, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Transforming smallholder food systems in the Eastern Gangetic Plain **WAC/2020/148**	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	1/10/2021	30/09/2026	$4,693,755
Spring water management, agriculture and resilient livelihoods in the midhills of Nepal **WAC/2022/151**	Nepal	1/10/2024	30/09/2028	$2,800,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

More information about projects at **www.aciar.gov.au**. Search by project title or project code.

Pakistan

A$2.3 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development

10 projects

7 Bilateral and regional research projects

3 Small projects and research activities

7 Projects specific to Pakistan

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

Agriculture is a core pillar of Pakistan's economy, supporting millions of livelihoods and ensuring food security, rural development and export earnings.

The agriculture sector alone provides 37.4% of national employment and nearly 24% of GDP, making its growth essential for economic development, job creation and poverty reduction. Crops and livestock are primary sub-sectors, with forestry and fisheries gaining traction due to their emerging significance. Livestock is especially vital, contributing 63.6% to overall agriculture and 14.97% to GDP. In the last fiscal year, agriculture grew by only 0.56% – the lowest in nearly a decade – primarily due to adverse weather affecting crop yields. In contrast, the livestock sector expanded by 4.72%, forestry by 3.03%, and fisheries by 1.42%. These figures highlight a trend towards diversification, with farmers moving away from traditional crops to higher-value alternatives and integrated approaches. Fisheries have benefited from adoption of technology and increased policy attention, while forestry is playing a larger role in climate mitigation and biodiversity conservation. Pakistan's agrifood exports reached $8 billion last year, yet the export base remains focused on textiles. However, with targeted investment and sustainable practices, agriculture holds significant potential to drive economic growth and stability, positioning Pakistan as a key player in the global food market.

Rural communities

With a population of more than 240 million, about 64% of Pakistan's population resides in rural areas and includes more than 80% of the country's poor. Poverty is mainly due to small farm sizes, broken value chains, lack of access to credit, unavailability of inputs and support services, scarce off-farm employment opportunities, and policy and institutional constraints. A remarkably young population, with more than 60% under the age of 30, fosters a dynamic but challenging labour market. Rural communities are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, facing frequent droughts and natural disasters. These environmental stresses, coupled with population pressures and ongoing resource development, have led to significant land degradation. Erratic weather patterns add further uncertainty to farming, undermining the security of rural livelihoods.

Political and economic environment

Pakistan continues to face a challenging economic environment in the face of political uncertainty, global monetary policy tightening, and fiscal and external imbalances, that led to pressures on domestic prices and foreign reserves. Climate change further complicates the landscape, intensifying food and water insecurity and necessitating global cooperation. There has been some progress towards macroeconomic stability and critical structural reforms.

There is an expansion of off-farm economic opportunities and increased external remittances has not fully translated into improved socio-economic conditions. The micro-economic conditions remain difficult, potentially leading to disturbance in society. The continuing cost-of-living crisis is likely to sustain pressure on the economy and on the government. As of 2025, approximately 45% of Pakistan's population lives in poverty, with 16.5% classified as living in extreme poverty. Over one-third of school-age children across Pakistan were found to be out of school. Additionally, children experience high rates of stunting – at 40%.

Climate change

A lower-middle-income country, Pakistan is susceptible to weather extremes, including floods and drought, There has been a significant impact of climate change on rural livelihoods leading to substantial land degradation. Farmers' income from agriculture and livestock have been adversely affected. 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. There is urgency for targeted and comprehensive strategies to navigate rural communities towards sustainable livelihoods in an evolving climate landscape. There are continuous efforts to identify, develop and promote adaptation strategies to mitigate these adverse effects which encompass crop diversification, divergence of livestock populations and seeking non-farm income sources. These adaptation strategies are intricately influenced by socioeconomic, demographic, agronomic and climate-related information, and forecasting parameters as well.

Food insecurity

Despite progress, the nutrition and hunger situation remains serious in Pakistan, with a ranking of 109th out of 127 countries in the 2024 Global Hunger Index. Pakistan struggles with high multidimensional poverty. Nearly half of an average household's monthly expenditure goes towards food and 82% of the population cannot afford a healthy diet. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations 11 million people are facing acute food insecurity in 68 flood-affected rural districts across Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A high prevalence of acute malnutrition among pregnant and breastfeeding women was accompanied by a high proportion of children being born with a low birth weight, particularly in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Chronic poverty, recurring disasters and political and economic volatility are the key drivers of undernutrition and food insecurity throughout Pakistan.

Partnering with Australia

The diplomatic relationships between Pakistan and Australia are dynamic and manifold, underpinned by decades of partnership and mutual interest and based on recognition of the importance of collaboration to address shared challenges and promote regional stability. The partnership in agricultural research and development is pivotal in diplomatic ties and ACIAR has been the key to this partnership over the past four decades. These relationships not only enhance economic opportunities in Pakistan's rural communities but also strengthen institutional linkages between research bodies, universities and governmental agencies in both countries.

The collaboration has emerged on a shared vision to enhance Pakistan's food security, economic growth and climate resilience by leveraging Australia's advanced agricultural science and innovation. Australian innovations have facilitated capacity enhancement of Pakistan partners in preparedness to meet the challenges of agriculture productivity, water management and food security. ACIAR's in-country partners include the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, Ministry of Water Resources, provincial Agriculture Departments, provincial Irrigation Departments, leading agricultural universities, agribusinesses, ACIAR alumni and small growers of the country. These partnerships enable a robust exchange of expertise and foster the development of context-specific solutions to Pakistan's pressing agricultural challenges along with the inclusion of women and girls at all stages and levels of agricultural research. Promotion of gender equality and social inclusion are the key elements of ACIAR's approach. The aim is to ensure that women and marginalised communities have access to training, resources and leadership opportunities in agricultural research and innovation.

Country priorities

Agriculture, livestock and fisheries are the fundamental drivers for economic growth, food security and rural development in Pakistan. With nearly two-thirds of the population relying on these sectors for their livelihoods, the Government of Pakistan has a major goal to transition smallholder farming from traditional subsistence farming to a more productive and diversified system.

The government is pursuing a multi-pronged approach focused on improving irrigation efficiency, advancing seed sector reforms, scaling up digital agriculture initiatives, and strengthening R&D and extension services. The focus is on improving access to high-quality inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, and mechanisation, along with challenges in finance, efficient market systems, research and development, and extension services.

The government is addressing these issues by promoting market-driven agricultural production and productivity, enhancing agricultural value adding, and improving access to both domestic and international markets. These efforts aim to enable agriculture to contribute significantly to the economy.

The inclusion of the agriculture sector as a primary focus of the Special Investment Facilitation Council, shows the government's seriousness in making the agriculture sector the backbone of the economy. The government is prioritising the end of malnutrition, reduction of food grain imports and an increase in agricultural exports. Key actions include strengthening seed production systems, scaling up local hybrid seed development, improving crop yields through climate-smart agriculture and developing a robust legal and regulatory framework to attract private sector investment. However, changing climatic patterns and natural disasters will remain threats, highlighting the importance of mitigation and adaptation measures.

Pakistan's agriculture faces challenges from water scarcity, climate variability and resource degradation. ACIAR partners with local institutions to enhance water management, climate resilience and value chain development. Research priorities include developing efficient irrigation, reducing food losses, building sustainable production systems and strengthening policy analysis. Efforts also focus on empowering women, promoting gender inclusion and training researchers to support smallholder farmers. Capacity building and fostering private sector engagement ensure that innovation and sustainability remain central to Pakistan's agricultural, livestock and forestry goals, aiming for improved productivity, rural livelihoods and climate adaptation.

2025–26 research program

ACIAR is supporting 10 agricultural research-for-development projects in Pakistan during 2025–26. Of these, 7 are specific to this country and the remainder are part of regional projects.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

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

Country Manager, Pakistan
Dr Munawar Raza Kazmi

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

Current and proposed projects in Pakistan, 2025–26

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	1/08/2022	31/12/2025	$1,100,000
Crops				
Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan **CROP/2020/167**	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/12/2021	30/06/2026	$2,311,970
Profitable pulses in Pakistan **CROP/2024/159**	Pakistan	24/03/2025	24/12/2025	$298,403
Horticulture				
Improving smallholder wellbeing through participation in modern value chains: sustaining future growth in the Pakistan citrus industry **HORT/2020/129**	Pakistan	1/01/2022	31/12/2025	$1,499,999
Livestock Systems				
Moving further towards formalized sheep and goat value chains in Pakistan and Ethiopia through business-oriented breeder and producer groups **LS/2023/132**	Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/09/2024	31/12/2028	$2,400,000
Water				
Climate resilient and adaptive water allocation in Pakistan **WAC/2022/152**	Pakistan	4/11/2024	8/06/2029	$3,000,001
Community-led and stakeholder-engaged adaptation processes for southern Pakistan **WAC/2024/153**	Pakistan	16/06/2025	30/06/2026	$349,988
Evaluating effectiveness of water infrastructure investments in Pakistan **WAC/2024/146**	Pakistan	1/09/2025	31/08/2026	$500,000
Climate adaptive livelihoods in Sindh: locally led pathways for inclusive transformation **CLIM/2022/136**	Pakistan	1/09/2025	31/03/2030	$3,200,000
Water resilient rural communities in South Punjab, Pakistan **WAC/2021/134**	Pakistan	1/03/2026	31/08/2030	$3,400,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

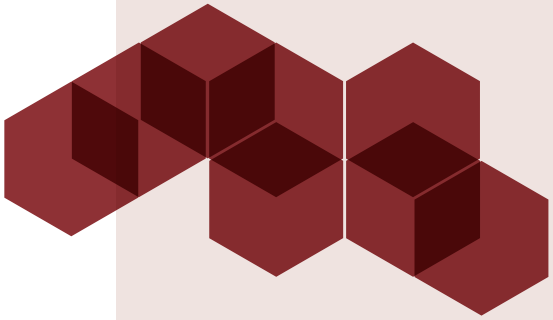
More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

www.aciar.gov.au

Sri Lanka

A$0.01 million

2025–26 investment in agricultural research for development



2 projects

2 **Bilateral and regional research projects**

0 **Small projects and research activities**

1 **Project specific to Sri Lanka**

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2025–26.

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 2025–26 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.

Regional Manager, South Asia
Dr Pratibha Singh

Research Program Managers
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Current and proposed projects in Sri Lanka, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
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	1/08/2022	31/12/2025	$1,100,000
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	1/06/2020	30/11/2025	$2,250,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

More information about projects at **www.aciar.gov.au**. Search by project title or project code.

5

ACIAR in Africa

Regional program 2025–26

Partner countries

Egypt
Ethiopia
Ghana
Kenya
Malawi
Morocco
Mozambique
Nigeria
Rwanda
South Africa
Tanzania
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe

A$5.24 million

Investment in agricultural research for development

18 projects

Australia will make additional research and capacity development investment in climate responsive agriculture during 2025–26 through AAPCRA (page 94)

Despite facing multiple and overlapping shocks, the economies of African countries remain resilient.

African countries have suffered 4 turbulent years dealing with global shocks such as 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.

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.

Despite continued challenges, 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 Africa Food Systems Forum (AFSF), 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. ACIAR recently joined the AFSF as a partner.

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, and the African Union Development Agency–New partnership for Africa Development, 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, West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development, and the Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network.

A good source for calibrating our regional priorities comes from the annual Africa Food Systems 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 Africa and northern Australia have much in common, varying from wet tropics to arid rangelands. 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 has traditionally focused on eastern and southern Africa. It filled 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 and ability to enable projects with a trans-disciplinary and cross institutional approach.

The similarities of the agricultural environments of Australia and Africa have built synergies between teaching and research institutions on both continents. Australia's long-term commitment has helped address specific constraints in agricultural production and increase the resilience of agricultural production systems and communities.

In late 2024, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs announced a new initiative, the Africa–Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture (AAPCRA) to support increased food and nutrition security and climate resilience of farming communities across Africa. This initiative expands the ACIAR footprint into northern and western Africa. Through agricultural research and capacity development, the initiative will work with smallholder farmers across Africa to improve access to climate-smart innovations and safeguard food production as the impacts of climate change become more severe.

The ACIAR program in Africa is delivered primarily through bilateral country research partnerships (linked to regional impact pathways) and regional collaborations coordinated with sub-regional organisations. We 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 and national government organisations that we collaborate with. We also work with other international agricultural research centres such as CABI, WorldVeg and *icipe*, which all work throughout Africa.

We also have a substantial collaboration with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) 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, having supported 9 projects across 7 countries. It was a highly regarded and unique program within Africa. The 2 agencies recently signed a new partnership agreement and are discussing options for the future.

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.

Climate responsive agriculture

GOAL

Farming communities across Africa are climate resilient resulting in food security and agriculture-led development.

AUSTRALIA'S INVESTMENT

$76 million ODA

2024–2030

EXPANDED FOOTPRINT

This program takes ACIAR into northern and western Africa

During 2025–26, ACIAR and the Australia Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade continues to establish and implement the Africa–Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture (AAPCRA).

This 6-year program (2024–2030), while expanding ACIAR's work into northern and western Africa, focuses on supporting agricultural research and capacity development to improve the access to climate-smart innovations for smallholder farmers and safeguard food production systems as the impacts of climate change become more severe.

Research organisations in Africa will be key partners of the program, as ACIAR expands its support across the continent under AAPCRA, with work planned in Ghana, Nigeria, Egypt and Morocco. Initially, the focus will be individual and institutional capacity development, as well as establishing research partnerships with key institutions and policymakers to plan and encourage climate-responsive agriculture into the future. In-country partners are essential to ensure solutions and innovations developed by the program address local priorities and research gaps.

A number of new partnerships are supported under AAPCRA in 2025, which include the Pan African Bean Research Alliance (PABRA) Academy, which aims to strengthen partner capacities along the bean value chain and for crop researchers. In addition, in June 2025 ACIAR signed a Partnership Arrangement with the West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF), which aims to enhance the capacity of national agriculture and research systems to meet current and emerging needs of agricultural development and food security.

In Ghana, a partnership will support the Start Up Discovery School Africa, to help young African 'agripreneurs' to further develop their innovative solutions for climate resilient agriculture. The school will start in Ghana, then scale across the western African corridor with the ambition to set up multiple academia and innovation centres where entrepreneurs can build scalable technological solutions for communities (including farmers, low-income households and women) to adapt and build resilience against climate change.

Women play a vital role in smallholder agriculture production in Africa. Improving climate resilient agriculture practices and achieving food security outcomes requires a strong focus on gender equity. AAPCRA prioritises research that addresses gender challenges, focuses on reaching women through targeted extension services, and fosters opportunities for women to lead agricultural research initiatives.

ACIAR is supporting a cohort of 100 women fellow through the African Women in Agriculture Research and Development (AWARD) program, providing leadership and mentoring with a focus on climate resilient agricultural research. ACIAR has also engaged with the Nigerian Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative (AWWDI) to identify challenges and opportunities and make policy recommendations to enhance participation and socio-economic empowerment of African women in agriculture.

Throughout 2025–26 there will continued focus on developing valuable research and institutional relationships between Africa and Australia, to identify key research priorities addressing food security and climate resilience. Key partners from northern and western Africa will discuss regional priorities and potential opportunities to inform future project development at a workshop in December 2025, in Nairobi.

2025–26 program

ACIAR is supporting 18 agricultural research-for-development projects in Africa during 2025–26.

The projects address specific issues and opportunities identified by partner countries and ACIAR, consistent with the objectives outlined in the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 (2nd Edition).

All research investments align with Australia's International Development Policy and have the underlying aims of contributing to:

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

Regional Manager, Africa
Dr Leah Ndungu

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

Current and proposed projects in the Africa region, 2025–26

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Agribusiness				
Strengthening productivity in agribusiness through research in Kwale **AGB/2024/115**	Kenya	1/08/2024	31/01/2026	$498,432
Regreening for the future: integrating climate change adaptation pathways into community-led regreening in East Africa **CLIM/2022/140**	Kenya	16/12/2024	30/10/2028	$3,449,846
Evidence and lessons from the Virtual Irrigation Academy for improving the sustainability of scaling through innovative business models **AGB/2025/116**	Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe	16/06/2025	15/06/2026	$479,558
Crops				
Rapid breeding for reduced cooking time and enhanced nutritional quality in common bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) **CROP/2018/132**	Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda	1/08/2019	31/12/2026	$3,126,688
International Mungbean Improvement Network (Phase 2) **CROP/2019/144**	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar	1/07/2020	30/06/2026	$2,715,207
Protecting Ethiopian lentil crops **CROP/2020/164**	Ethiopia	1/07/2021	30/06/2026	$2,140,000
Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan **CROP/2020/167**	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/12/2021	30/06/2026	$2,311,970
Village-based biological control of fall armyworm in Zambia **CROP/2022/112**	Zambia	1/05/2023	30/06/2026	$1,130,000
Optimising crop root growth and function for enhanced drought resilience in legume-sorghum intercropping **CROP/2024/154**	Ethiopia	1/04/2025	31/03/2029	$659,577

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Forestry				
Management of pests and diseases of forest crops in Ethiopia **FST/2022/122**	Ethiopia	15/05/2024	14/05/2029	$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	1/01/2022	31/12/2025	$726,904
Livestock Systems				
Upscaling the benefits of insect-based animal feed technologies for sustainable agricultural intensification in Africa **LS/2020/154**	Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda	23/02/2022	30/06/2026	$3,000,000
Strengthening adaptive capacity of extensive livestock systems for food and nutrition security and low-emissions development in Africa **LS/2020/152**	Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe	22/09/2022	31/12/2026	$3,050,000
Exploring local constructs of 'resilience' in the face of chronic uncertainty in the drylands **LS/2022/144**	Ethiopia, Kenya	1/10/2023	30/06/2027	$1,199,998
Moving further towards formalized sheep and goat value chains in Pakistan and Ethiopia through business-oriented breeder and producer groups **LS/2023/132**	Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/09/2024	31/12/2028	$2,400,000
Water				
Circular food systems in Africa **WAC/2023/111**	Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe	1/10/2023	30/06/2026	$3,270,001
Food and water security in southern Africa (Phase 1) **WAC/2024/100**	South Africa	21/10/2024	24/10/2025	$349,887
Food and water security in Sub-Saharan Africa (Phase 2) **WAC/2024/102**	Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe	1/03/2026	30/11/2028	$1,300,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2025–26.

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

www.aciar.gov.au

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 2025–26.

- 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 and Africa.

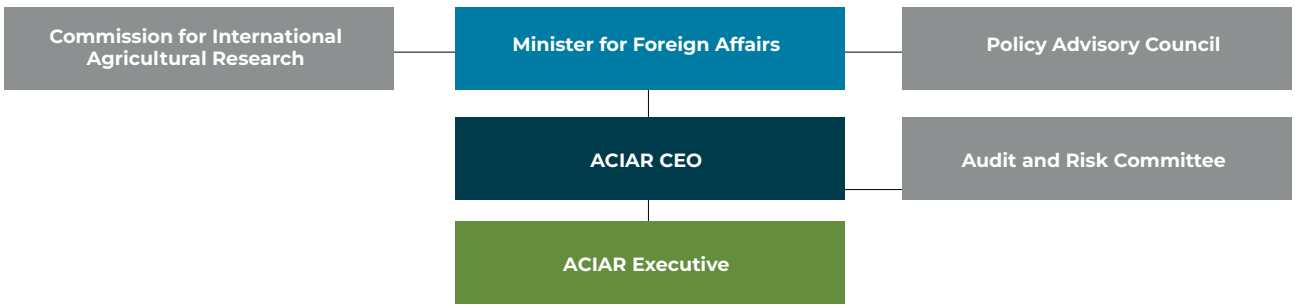
Staff are organised into 3 branches:

- Research
- Partnerships
- Corporate

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

www.aciar.gov.au

Governance structure of ACIAR



Shortened forms

AAPCRA	Africa–Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ACIAR Act	*Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982*
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
CORAF	West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development
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)
NGO	non-government organisation
R&D	research and development
SPC	Pacific Community
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development, until 2025
WorldVeg	World Vegetable Center

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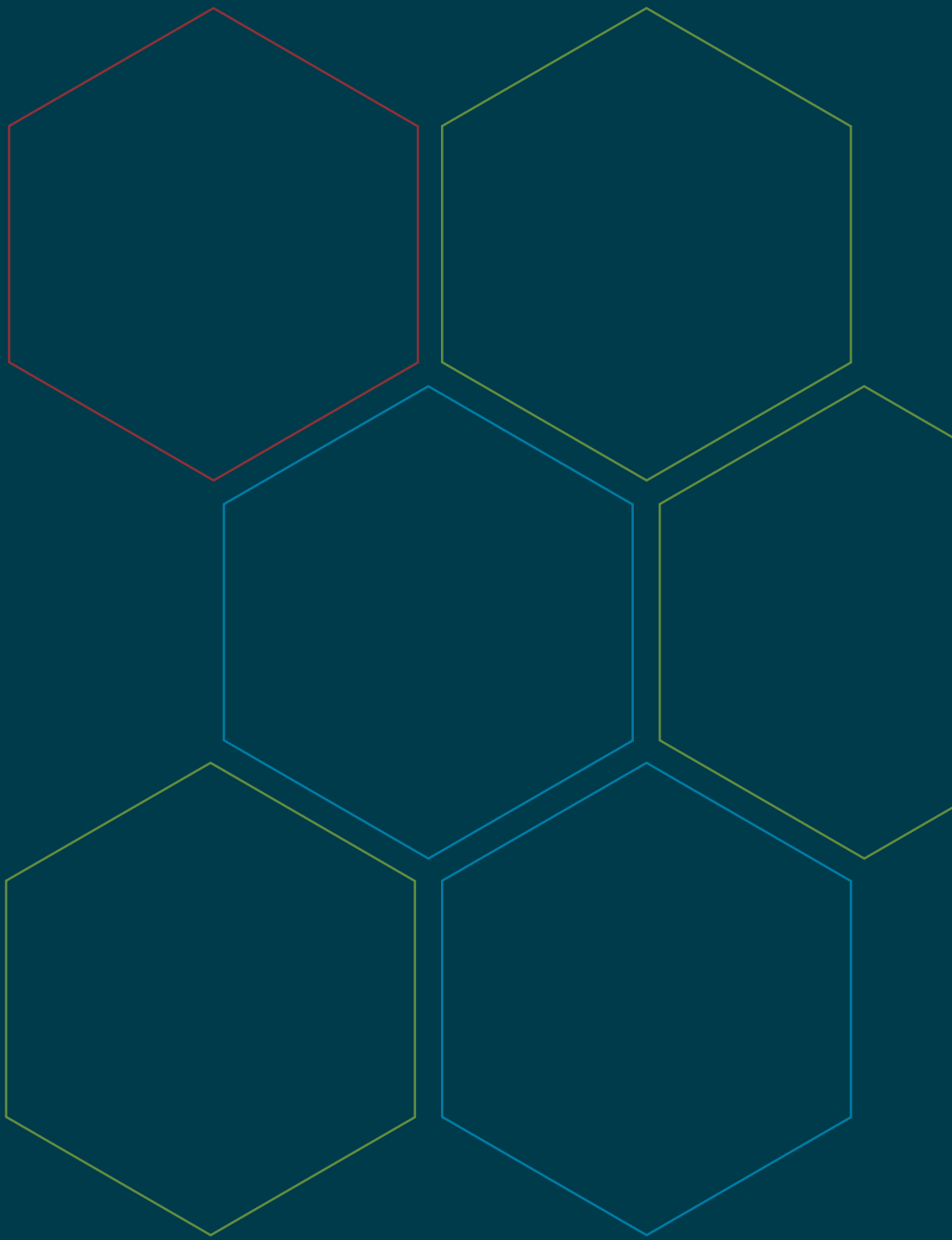

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