



Australian Government

Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research

ACIAR

ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN 2026–27



About ACIAR

Research that works for developing countries and Australia

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.

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

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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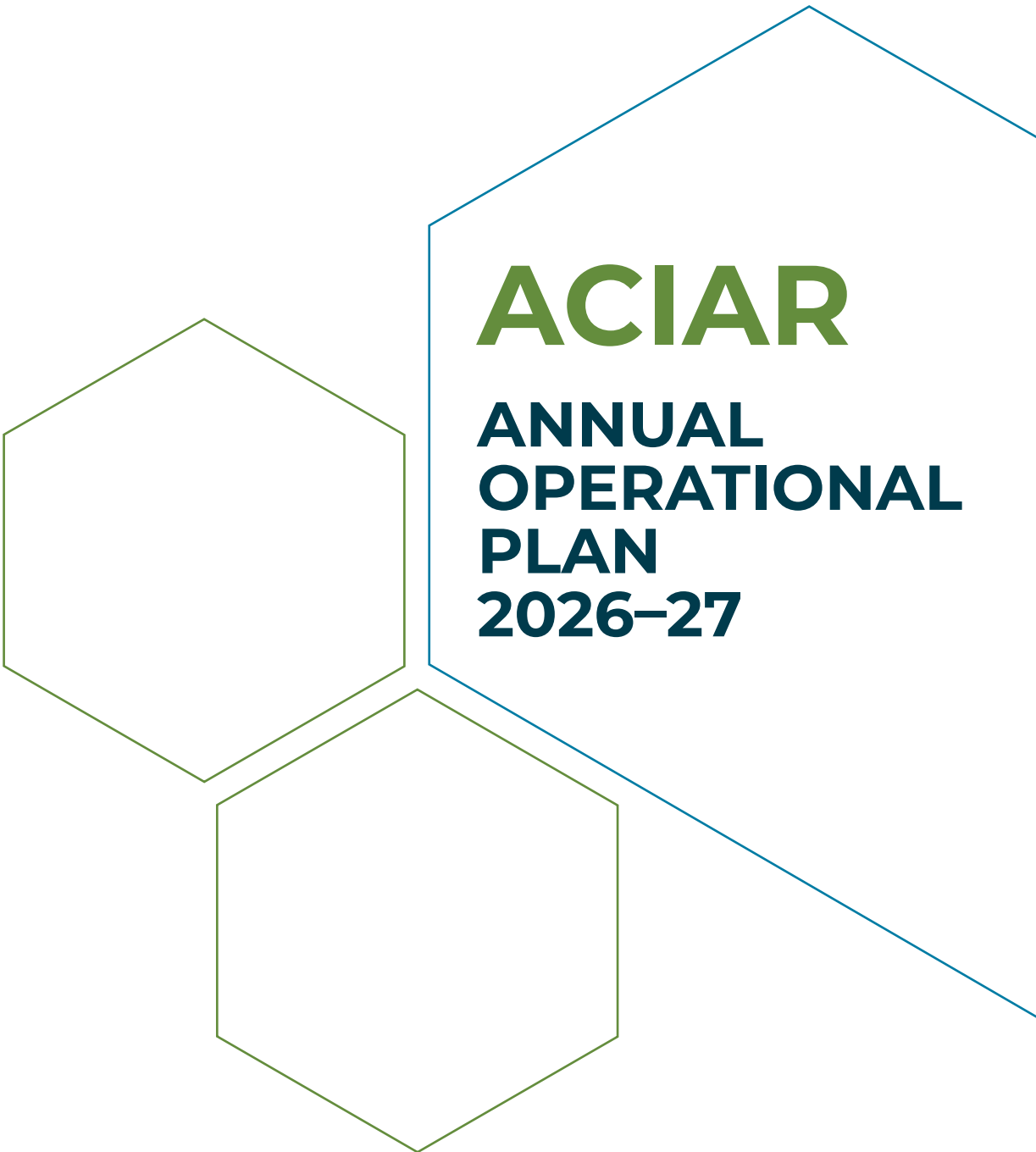
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Front cover: Researchers assessing coral ecosystems, Palawan, Philippines. ACIAR has invested in research to develop, test and scale successful coral restoration techniques, since 2012. New projects aim to understand the social, economic and political factors that contribute to sustainable reef protection and restoration initiatives. Credit: Roger Dolorosa



ACIAR

ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN 2026–27



ACIAR

Science partnerships for development

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

We also support partner-country individuals and institutions to build their science and policy capacity.

Our work is an essential part of Australia's development program.

During 2026–27:



165

research projects
and small research
activities



37

countries
where projects
are located



55

commissioned
organisations



273

collaborating
institutions



A\$75m

invested in bilaterals and
regional research



A\$23m

invested in global
collaboration

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 2026–27.



Welcome

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) works to reduce poverty and improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa.

Established under the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982*, ACIAR was created to 'encourage research for the purpose of identifying, or finding solutions to, agricultural problems of developing countries'. More than 4 decades later, the world has changed profoundly but ACIAR's purpose remains as relevant as ever.

Global poverty has fallen significantly in the last 25 years yet an estimated 826 million people live in poverty in 2026 – primarily in the regions and countries where ACIAR supports agricultural research for development. While economic growth and regional transformation have lifted millions out of poverty, the benefits have not been shared equally. ACIAR's partnerships and investments place particular emphasis on improving opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

Solutions through science partnerships

ACIAR brings a distinctive approach to development. We broker long-term partnerships between Australian and partner-country researchers, combining scientific expertise, local knowledge and practical innovation to address challenges and create sustainable solutions. Through collaborative research, we help strengthen agriculture, fisheries and forestry systems that underpin food security, economic growth and community resilience.

While there are important differences between farming systems across regions, food and fibre producers throughout the Indo-Pacific region and Africa face many of the same challenges confronting producers in Australia. Climate variability and increasingly extreme weather events are affecting productivity and livelihoods across the globe. Geopolitical tensions continue to disrupt markets, supply chains and access to key agricultural inputs. Growing population mobility and urbanisation are increasing biosecurity risks, while the emergence and spread of zoonotic diseases remind us of the close connection between environmental, animal and human health.

At the same time, there are unprecedented opportunities for innovation. Advances in digital technologies, remote sensing, artificial intelligence and precision agriculture are transforming the way agriculture, fisheries and forestry systems operate. Better connected supply chains are creating opportunities for producers to capture greater value by responding to consumer preferences and market demand.

Prosperity, resilience and sustainability

ACIAR leads Australia's efforts to build international partnerships for agricultural research for development. Our investments support sustainable growth in agriculture, fisheries and forestry – sectors that have consistently demonstrated their capacity to reduce poverty more effectively than almost any other area of economic development.

Yet progress is never guaranteed. The gains achieved through decades of development can be unwound by a single major shock. During 2026, a very strong El Niño event developed and is expected to persist into 2027. Across much of ACIAR's operating regions, seasonal conditions are forecast to be hotter and drier than average, increasing pressure on food production systems. Other areas are expected to experience above-average rainfall, with increased risk of flooding and landslides. These impacts are likely to affect food availability and prices globally, while posing immediate threats to smallholder farmers through reduced yields, crop losses and livestock mortality.

Strengthened by local engagement

ACIAR's operating model is designed to be responsive and adaptive in a changing world. A critical strength is our Country Network of locally engaged staff who connect Australian expertise with partner country priorities and institutions.

Our work is grounded in the belief that research, when co-designed, locally led, and focused on practical outcomes, can be a powerful driver of prosperity, resilience and sustainable development. Throughout 2026–27 we will continue to work closely with our partners to refresh and strengthen our strategic research investment priorities, ensuring our investments remain aligned with the challenges and opportunities facing our region.

New 10-year strategy

The year 2026–27 marks the renewal of ACIAR's 10-year strategy. This is an important opportunity to reflect on how the global agriculture, fisheries and forestry landscape is evolving, and to consider where Australia, through ACIAR, can make the greatest contribution to a safe, stable and prosperous region, in the coming decade.

The current *10-Year Strategy 2018–2027* has provided a strong foundation for ACIAR's work, guiding our investment in agricultural research for development and strengthening science partnerships between Australia and our partner countries. As we look ahead, we will build on this foundation, reviewing our vision, mission and strategic objectives to ensure they remain relevant in a rapidly changing global context, and continue to deliver value for Australia and partners.

The strategy renewal will be informed by extensive consultation with key stakeholders, including the Commission for International Agricultural Research, the Policy Advisory Council, Australian research organisations, partner-country institutions and development partners. Through this collaborative process, we will refine our priorities and identify where ACIAR's unique strengths, expertise and partnerships can deliver greatest impact.

The new strategy will position ACIAR to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities, including climate adaptation, food and nutrition security, biosecurity threats, technological innovation and the growing importance of resilient and sustainable food systems. Following consultation and development, the strategy will be submitted for endorsement by the Commission for International Agricultural Research and approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Mapping out 2026–27

This Annual Operational Plan outlines ACIAR's priorities and activities for 2026–27. It provides an overview of the key trends, opportunities and challenges influencing our work, and highlights the important programs and partnerships that support our research investments across the regions and countries in which we operate.

Drawing on ongoing consultation with partner-country governments, research organisations, industry stakeholders and Australian institutions, we have identified priority areas where research can contribute most effectively to productivity, sustainability, resilience and poverty reduction. The Plan sets out the research portfolio that will be active during 2026–27, including both continuing and proposed investments across our country and regional programs.

I thank our many partners and dedicated staff for their expertise, collaboration and commitment. Their contributions are fundamental to the continued success of ACIAR's work and to achieving lasting development outcomes for the communities we serve.

Dr Nick Austin

Chief Executive Officer (Acting), ACIAR



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1



Overview

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982 positions ACIAR as a strategic element of Australia's development program.

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

ACIAR contributes to sustainable development by establishing science partnerships between Australian and partner-country governments and institutions in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa. These partnerships strive to increase food production and food system resilience, improve human nutrition, reduce poverty and manage natural resources sustainably. While striving for more productive, profitable and sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry systems, we must support mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Our work also aims to improve opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalised groups; develop inclusive value chain opportunities; and develop the capacity of individuals and institutions.

Contributing to our region

ACIAR's investments in agricultural research for development support peace, prosperity and climate change resilience in our region. The work of ACIAR reflects Australian Government policy imperatives articulated in:

- » **Australia's International Development Policy**
- » **2026-27 priorities for government funding of strategic policy research** (specifically, to support a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific)
- » **Sustainable Development Goals** of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- » **The 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 for our operating program. Three of our objectives build knowledge to underpin crucial development objectives and 3 ensure that our work is equitable, inclusive and empowering.

During the 2026–27 year, we will develop and launch a new 10-year strategy. This is an opportunity to review and refresh our strategic aspirations and operational priorities, and to consider the dynamic global and local environments in which we operate, and the changing capacity and priorities of our partners.

Listening to our partners

ACIAR works to ensure that the impacts of investments in research and capacity development are lasting and empowering. We achieve this by building enduring partnerships, and striving to have our projects and programs based on genuine partnership, arising from locally led consultations and initiatives.

To ensure worthwhile investment of funds that have the potential for positive change, our research and capacity-development programs must be informed by partner knowledge and expertise and designed according to partner priorities. Programs must be flexible enough 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 derived from international research collaborations between Australian and partner-country institutions. Our track record of building and sustaining deep, trusting partnerships since 1982 is a strategic asset.

Key areas of work

While working to our mandate, we continue to face interrelated and complex global challenges such as population growth, economic and political volatility, climate change and pandemics. Partner countries across our diverse operating environments are singularly or regionally affected by weather extremes and natural disasters; food, water and energy shortages; degradation of air, water and soil quality; civil unrest and geopolitical tension; and biosecurity threats.

Within an ever-evolving operational context, ACIAR delivers against the enabling legislation of the ACIAR Act through 3 key areas of work:

Global research collaborations

We administer Australian Government funding to international agricultural research centres, specifically CGIAR and the entities of the Association of International Research and Development Centers for Agriculture, and contribute to shaping and strengthening the global research-for-development ecosystem and its interface with national agricultural research systems. Along with international agricultural research centres, we also engage with international, public and private research-for-development funders.

Bilateral and regional research projects

We develop and foster science partnerships between Australian and partner-country researchers. Through these partnerships we invest in the generation of knowledge that empowers partners and stakeholders to address the intersecting challenges of improving food security and livelihoods while using resources sustainably and mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Scientific and policy capacity-development activities

We identify and establish opportunities for individuals and institutions in partner countries to strengthen research, technical, policy and management skills in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and the management of land and water resources. Capacity development occurs through formal programs and first-hand experience of implementing research projects.

ACIAR operational model

The ACIAR operational model of brokering and commissioning science partnerships between the Australian innovation system and our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa is based on close engagement with our partner countries.

During 2026–27, ACIAR will work with partners in 37 countries across 4 regions: Pacific, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Africa. In each region and country, research and capacity-development programs are shaped by shared priorities, as well as local challenges and opportunities.

ACIAR organises the agency's functions around a number of programs to achieve our mandate and to ensure responsible and effective use of public monies.

- » Research Programs
- » Country Network
- » Multilateral and Strategic Partnerships Program
- » Capacity Development Program
- » Impact and Learning Program
- » Outreach Program
- » Corporate Program

The function and goals of these programs are described in more detail in Chapter 6.

As the Australian Government's specialist agency for agricultural research for development, our work falls into 9 focus areas.

- » Agribusiness
- » Crops
- » Fisheries
- » Forestry
- » Horticulture
- » Livestock Systems
- » Social Sciences, Economics and Policy
- » Soil and Land Management
- » Water

While focusing on a specialist area, research investments also deliver against ACIAR's strategic objectives.

ACIAR strategic objectives

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

Strategic objectives 1, 2 & 3



1. Food security and reduced poverty

Improving food security and reducing poverty among smallholder farmers and rural communities



2. Natural resources and climate change

Managing natural resources and producing food more sustainably, adapting to climate variability and mitigating climate change



3. Human health and nutrition

Enhancing human nutrition and reducing risks to human health

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

Strategic objectives 4, 5 & 6



4. Gender equity and women's empowerment

Improving gender equity and empowerment of women and girls



5. Inclusive value chains

Fostering more inclusive agrifood and forestry value chains, engaging the private sector where possible



6. Capacity building

Building scientific and policy capability within our partner countries

ACIAR investment 2026–27

ACIAR plans to invest A\$75 million in bilateral and regional agricultural research-for-development projects.

In addition ACIAR plans to contribute A\$23 million to global partnerships and collaborations, and provide A\$20 million for program support, capacity development, impact evaluation and learning, and communicating the results and impact of our investments.



Pacific

44
projects

25%
research investment



Southeast Asia

83
projects

50%
research investment



South Asia

18
projects

15%
research investment



Africa

27
projects

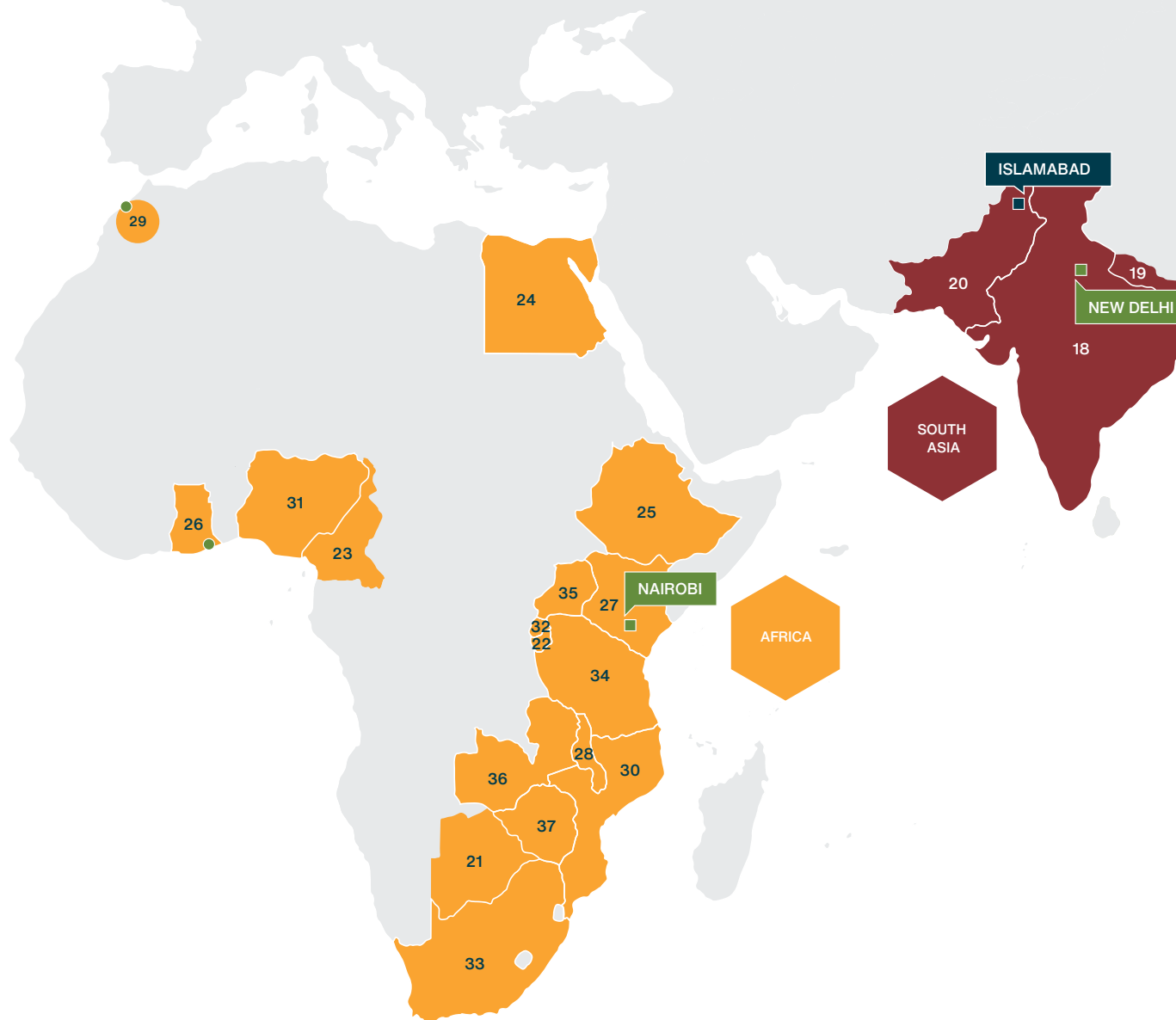
10%
research investment



Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27. Some projects occur in more than one region, therefore the total of projects in each region will exceed the total number of individual projects.

Where we work

In 2026–27, ACIAR will support research in 37 partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa. We will work with more than 270 research organisations, universities, government agencies and private sector organisations from partner countries and Australia.



KEY

Pacific

- 1 Fiji
- 2 Kiribati
- 3 Papua New Guinea
- 4 Samoa
- 5 Solomon Islands
- 6 Tonga
- 7 Tuvalu
- 8 Vanuatu

Southeast Asia

- 9 Cambodia
- 10 Indonesia
- 11 Laos
- 12 Myanmar
- 13 Philippines
- 14 Thailand
- 15 Timor-Leste
- 16 Vietnam

South Asia

- 17 Bangladesh
- 18 India
- 19 Nepal
- 20 Pakistan

Africa

- 21 Botswana
- 22 Burundi
- 23 Cameroon
- 24 Egypt
- 25 Ethiopia
- 26 Ghana
- 27 Kenya
- 28 Malawi
- 29 Morocco
- 30 Mozambique
- 31 Nigeria
- 32 Rwanda
- 33 South Africa
- 34 Tanzania
- 35 Uganda
- 36 Zambia
- 37 Zimbabwe

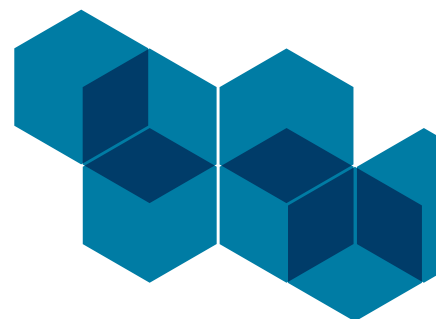
- Country Office
- Regional Office
- Staff location



2



ACIAR in the Pacific



Regional program 2026–27



Partner countries

Fiji
Kiribati
Papua New Guinea
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Tonga
Tuvalu
Vanuatu

A\$18.75 million

Investment in agricultural research
for development



44 projects

The Pacific region, often described as the ‘Blue Pacific Continent’, is defined by its vast geography and its peoples’ deep ancestral connection to land and sea.

Spanning Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, the region comprises 22 nations and territories that collectively manage about 20% of the world’s exclusive economic zones.

ACIAR partners with 8 countries in the Pacific region. One program of work engages with partners in Pacific island countries: Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu (see page 12). Another program of work engages with partners in Papua New Guinea (see page 19).

Agriculture, fisheries and forestry are central to food security, cultural identity and rural livelihoods of smallholders and communities in the Pacific region. However, the economy of the region is supported by key economic pillars such as tourism, aid and remittances, and in addition in Papua New Guinea, energy and mining. The economies face increasing volatility as the climate becomes more variable and extreme weather events are more intense and frequent.

Emerging global uncertainties add further pressure to the economies of the Pacific region. Heightened geopolitical tensions and disruptions to key global supply chains pose significant risks for economies that depend heavily on imported goods, particularly for food and fuel. In the event of a global economic downturn, key revenue streams such as remittances, tourism, fishing licence fees, aid and international investment are expected to weaken.

These pressures may accelerate momentum towards renewable energy options in the Pacific region, driven not only by concern about the impacts of climate change but also by energy security. There is already a strong focus on climate change adaptation in many countries of the Pacific region, and growing uncertainty in the global economic environment may increase the urgency to close the gap between renewable energy ambitions and implementation.

Ultimately, strengthening the resilience of the Pacific region will depend on how effectively countries align development pathways with local priorities, invest in productive sectors such as agriculture and fisheries, and build social, economic and environmental systems that can withstand future shocks. In this context, innovation and productive partnerships will be critical to helping the region navigate uncertainty while safeguarding identity, livelihoods, food systems and its unique connection to land and ocean.

Australia remains the largest and most consistent development partner of the Pacific region, with its engagement in 2026–27 focused on regional stability. Through longstanding partnerships with countries such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, Australia’s approach combines development assistance, policy cooperation and people-to-people links.

In 2026–27, Australia will provide \$2.2 billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the Pacific region. This is approximately 40% of Australia’s total ODA and reflects the importance of a strong and resilient future for all countries in the region. This sustained development investment reinforces Australia’s position as the primary development partner in the region.



Drivers of regional collaboration

Climate change continues to be one of the most significant forces shaping the future of the Pacific region. Rising sea levels, increasing temperatures and more frequent extreme weather events are placing strain on agriculture, fisheries and coastal production systems. These impacts are not only environmental; they are closely connected to food security and livelihoods. In response, co-designed investments that reflect Pacific contexts and capacities, together with locally led research that amplifies Pacific voices, will be critical. The regional research agenda identifies shared agriculture and forestry challenges across the region and sets out strategies to address them.

At the same time, shifting population dynamics and urbanisation are increasing demand for food and placing pressure on natural resources. The need for sustainable intensification – producing more with less – has become critical. ACIAR's engagement with regional strategies, including aquaculture development and agroforestry, reflects the growing importance of diversified food systems. Aquaculture presents an opportunity to improve nutrition, generate income and reduce pressure on wild fisheries, provided it is developed in environmentally sustainable ways.

A defining feature of the Pacific is its rich repository of traditional knowledge. Harnessing this knowledge in step with scientific research is an important way to achieve sustainable outcomes. Indigenous practices in land management, fisheries and food systems offer valuable insights that can strengthen resilience and sustainability when combined with modern approaches.

The Pacific region is characterised by strong collaboration between governments, regional organisations, research institutions and communities. Understanding the drivers of regional collaboration, and change, is central to ensuring ACIAR investments remain relevant to regional priorities. In 2026–27, regional collaboration aligns with the Growing the Pacific 2050 Strategy, the Pacific Regional Research Agenda for forestry and agriculture, and the Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy.

Regional ACIAR program

Partnerships remain at the heart of ACIAR's approach to agricultural research for development. By working closely with local partners, ACIAR ensures the research it supports is grounded in local context, responsive to community priorities and able to deliver practical outcomes. These partnerships also strengthen regional capacity, enabling countries to lead and sustain their own development pathways.

ACIAR works with a broad network of partners across Pacific island countries and Papua New Guinea, including national governments, research agencies, regional organisations such as the Pacific Community (SPC), ministries responsible for agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and regional universities and academic institutions. These partnerships are complemented by engagement with international research centres and Australian institutions, creating a platform that brings together scientific expertise and local knowledge. This approach helps ensure research is technically robust, grounded in the realities of Pacific communities, and responsive to regional priorities and needs.

Our strategic partnership with SPC, reviewed and reaffirmed in April 2026, strengthens regional coordination and collaboration through our relationships with the SPC divisions of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems and Land Resources. SPC and ACIAR will advocate for a Pacific-led research agenda for Pacific peoples, and support regional dialogues such as the 2027 Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry, and other forums that raise Pacific voices and priorities for the agriculture and fisheries sector.

The ACIAR Pacific program is driven by a shared objective of partners in the Pacific region and Australia to support productive and sustainable food systems. This includes improving livelihoods and nutrition outcomes, while strengthening Pacific countries' capacity to respond to pressures such as climate variability, population growth, natural disasters and constraints on natural resources. ACIAR supports research to balance productivity with environmental stewardship, while recognising the close relationship between communities and their natural resource base.

Several cross-cutting themes shape the direction of research projects within the ACIAR Pacific program. These include strengthening climate resilience, supporting sustainable intensification of both land and ocean-based food systems, enhancing biosecurity and improving the performance of value chains.

Capacity development is central to our program to build scientific skills of Pacific researchers, strengthen institutions, and enable peer-to-peer collaboration across the region. Increasingly, traditional knowledge systems are integrated with scientific research to support locally appropriate solutions.

During 2026–27, ACIAR is developing regional and country investment plans, which will set out research priorities to guide project development and ensure research aligns with, and contributes to, national and regional objectives. ACIAR will develop, review and adjust the plans through regular consultation with leaders and representatives from partner governments, research organisations, universities and academic institutions, farmer organisations and civil society organisations.

Current and proposed projects in the Pacific region, 2026–27

Project title and 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
Governing circular food systems in Fiji for food and climate benefits CLIM/2022/107	Fiji	1/07/2026	30/06/2029	\$2,131,125
Crops				
Sustainable agricultural intensification systems for climate resilient development in Pacific island countries CLIM/2020/186	Samoa, Tonga	1/02/2023	31/03/2027	\$1,633,626
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	30/08/2026	\$455,344
Pacific peanuts: improving peanut productivity to improve health and livelihoods in Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga CROP/2025/150	Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/01/2027	31/12/2030	\$3,543,743
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
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
Coalitions for change in sustainable national community-based fisheries management programs in the Pacific FIS/2020/172	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu	1/09/2021	30/09/2026	\$8,770,504
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
'Planim fiuia fo yumi': co-planning, risk-informed and equitable livelihood futures with small-scale fishing communities through a participatory and integrated approach to community engagement FIS/2023/122	Solomon Islands	22/01/2025	3/02/2030	\$3,816,085
Mitigating the incidence of ciguatera poisoning in Kiribati FIS/2023/161	Kiribati	1/04/2024	31/01/2028	\$491,739
Integrating community fisheries and rural development in a changing Pacific region FIS/2024/140	Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/07/2026	30/06/2030	\$4,679,999
Improving fish handling in Solomon Islands, with extension to other Pacific island countries FIS/2024/147	Solomon Islands	1/11/2025	31/10/2030	\$3,491,001
Addressing bottlenecks in giant clam mariculture for the marine aquarium trade in the western Pacific FIS/2025/151	Fiji	1/01/2027	31/12/2028	\$500,000
Forestry				
Livelihoods in forest ecosystem recovery FST/2020/135	Solomon Islands	1/11/2022	31/10/2028	\$3,544,264
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
Okari nut value chain development for sustainable livelihoods in the Kokoda track region FST/2026/117	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2027	30/06/2031	\$3,608,090
Supporting agri-environmental health outcomes in Honiara catchment WAC/2025/134	Solomon Islands	3/08/2026	1/12/2027	\$400,000



Project title and code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Horticulture				
Exploring carbon opportunities to drive multiple benefits for Papua New Guinea coffee smallholders CLIM/2022/109	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2027	31/03/2031	\$2,565,000
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
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
Resilient commercial vegetable production systems for Pacific island countries HORT/2023/165	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	1/04/2027	31/03/2030	\$1,200,000
Plant health laboratory: a regional public good for the development of effective integrated pest management solutions HORT/2024/148	Fiji	15/03/2025	30/10/2026	\$363,332
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	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$8,000,000
Strengthening climate-resilient vegetable seed systems in Samoa and the Pacific HORT/2025/149	Samoa	1/04/2026	31/03/2028	\$500,000
Livestock Systems				
Strengthening beekeeping industries for improved production and livelihoods in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands LS/2014/042	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands	1/07/2019	31/12/2027	\$3,100,000
A farm planning approach to increase productivity and profitability of smallholder cattle systems in Vanuatu LS/2018/185	Vanuatu	1/01/2022	31/08/2026	\$1,770,000
Enhancing the management of antimicrobial resistance in Fiji and Samoa LS/2019/119	Fiji, Samoa	1/01/2020	30/06/2027	\$4,660,747
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	30/06/2027	\$118,000
Scaling insect-based feed and fertiliser innovations for sustainable livelihoods in the Pacific LS/2024/152	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu	1/01/2027	31/12/2030	\$2,450,000
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	1/10/2023	30/09/2026	\$2,499,998
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
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
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
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	\$3,499,293

Project title and code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
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
Pathways to improved biosecurity outcomes for Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea SSS/2025/137	Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste	1/10/2026	30/09/2030	\$4,850,000
Soil & Land Management				
Better soil and land information for improving PNG'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
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
Soil management in 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
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
Healthy watersheds, healthy futures: unlocking co-benefits across agrifood, health, and environment leveraging the wish approach WAC/2025/133	Fiji, Vanuatu	1/06/2026	30/09/2027	\$499,712
Interweaving traditional practices and global understandings for water-centred livelihood security in rural Pacific island communities WAC/2025/136	Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/07/2026	31/08/2027	\$500,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.



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Pacific island countries

A\$13.12 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development

33 projects



24 Bilateral and regional research projects



9 Small projects and research activities



27 Projects specific to Pacific island countries

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27



Agriculture, fisheries and forestry are central to food security and economic stability in Pacific island countries, but these sectors are changing in response to climate pressures, demographic shifts and evolving regional strategies.

During 2026–27, ACIAR supports a coordinated program of agricultural research for development with the following Pacific island countries: Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Regional commitments, such as the Growing the Pacific 2050 agriculture and forestry strategy, highlight a shift towards regenerative and climate-resilient production systems. In response, ACIAR is supporting research on climate-resilient vegetable production systems, circular food systems that deliver food and climate benefits, stronger biosecurity and plant health capacity, and healthy soils and sustainable land management to increase crop productivity, particularly on atolls and low-lying islands.

The fisheries sector remains one of the most economically significant for Pacific island countries. Coastal and reef fisheries provide a major source of protein, accounting for up to 70% in some countries, and are deeply connected to culture and livelihoods. However, ocean warming and overfishing are disrupting marine ecosystems and affecting fish stocks and migration patterns. At the same time, the region's vast exclusive economic zones present ongoing opportunities for tuna fisheries and ocean-based economic development.

Forestry varies across the region, reflecting differences in land availability and ecosystems on volcanic and atoll islands. While it contributes to livelihoods, forestry is constrained in many smaller island states by limited land area. The sector is increasingly focused on sustainable forest management, reforestation and afforestation, in line with broader climate and land restoration goals.

The future presents both opportunities and risks for Pacific island countries. Climate change is expected to continue to intensify natural disasters, with the Pacific already experiencing significantly higher rates of weather-related events than many other regions. At the same time, momentum is building around food system transformation through regional cooperation and investment in local production. Efforts to diversify food systems, strengthen value chains and reduce dependence on imports are expected to continue.

Fiji and Tuvalu will co-host Pacific Pre-COP31 in October 2026, a high-level preparatory meeting intended to ensure Pacific priorities, including climate finance and ocean protection, are reflected in negotiations at COP31 in Türkiye in November 2026. Hosting the meeting gives the Pacific a platform to bring global leaders closer to the region's climate realities and strengthen its influence on negotiation priorities, funding discussions and the broader international climate agenda.

Overall, the outlook for 2026 and beyond suggests a shift towards more integrated and locally driven production systems, in which traditional knowledge, science and regional collaboration will play an important role in shaping sustainable futures for Pacific agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

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

The political and economic environment across Pacific island countries is relatively stable, alongside growing strategic interest from international partners and continued recovery from global shocks. Many countries, including Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, have development agendas that prioritise economic stability, climate action and food security.

Politically, global attention on the Pacific region is increasing, with partners such as Australia, New Zealand, China and the United States of America deepening engagement and investing in development, security and infrastructure. This creates new opportunities for Pacific island countries but also requires careful management to ensure external support aligns with national priorities.

Cooperation among Pacific island countries remains strong, guided by frameworks such as the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which emphasises collective action on climate change, ocean management and sustainable development.

Pacific island countries' economies are steadily recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with growth projected at 3.4% for 2026, however progress remains vulnerable to high fuel costs and ongoing global volatility. Because the region relies heavily on imported energy and goods, rising freight and input costs continue to place pressure on households, agriculture and fisheries, particularly in smaller and more import-dependent economies.

Inflationary pressures, high import dependency and rising public debt are key concerns, particularly for smaller island economies. At the same time, there is increasing focus on strengthening domestic production systems, especially agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, to reduce vulnerability to global supply disruptions.

Small island economies across the Pacific are working to diversify income sources and reduce their reliance on international tourism. However, progress towards more resilient and diversified economies has been slow due to government investment being constrained by the continuing burden of debt and disaster recovery, and the impact of global economic shocks.



Climate change

Climate change remains the defining challenge shaping development outcomes for Pacific island countries, with impacts expected to intensify throughout 2026–27. Countries including Fiji, Kiribati and Vanuatu are already experiencing rising sea levels, increased ocean temperatures and more frequent extreme weather events. These pressures are affecting food systems, water security, infrastructure and livelihoods, particularly in low-lying atoll nations and coastal communities.

Pacific island countries are among the world's most vulnerable to climate change, with many ranked in the top 30 of 190 countries, in order of vulnerability, by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. Yet, Pacific island countries contribute negligibly to global emissions so climate change adaptation has been the primary focus of building resilience. In the longer term, frameworks such as the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent are guiding coordinated action on climate change, with countries prioritising nature-based solutions, climate-smart agriculture and improved disaster preparedness.

A very strong El Niño is occurring in 2026, where equatorial Pacific Ocean surface temperatures rise more than 2.0°C above historical average conditions. This El Niño will have global impact and is projected to cause a 14% drop in global agricultural production in a worst-case scenario. In the western Pacific region, warmer sea temperature and weaker winds resulting from the El Niño will reduce rainfall, which in turn disrupts planting and harvesting schedules, increases pest and disease pressure, and reduces yields. These conditions will challenge food security across the region. The central and eastern Pacific region is likely to experience cooler-than-normal sea surface temperatures and above-normal rainfall, bringing opportunities to replenish freshwater resources.

Food insecurity

Many Pacific island countries rely heavily on imported foods, leaving them vulnerable to global price fluctuations and supply chain disruptions. At the same time, local food production systems are under strain. Climate change is affecting crop yields, fisheries and water availability through flooding and extreme weather events. In atoll nations like Kiribati and Tuvalu, limited land, poor soil quality and saltwater intrusion further constrain agricultural production. Coastal fisheries, a primary source of protein for many communities, are also under pressure from overfishing and changing ocean conditions.

Economic factors compound these challenges. High costs of living, limited income opportunities and rising food prices are reducing access to nutritious foods, particularly for low-income and rural households. This has contributed to a dual burden of malnutrition across the region, where undernutrition persists alongside increasing rates of obesity and diet-related diseases.

Pacific governments and regional partners are prioritising efforts to strengthen local food systems, improve nutrition and reduce import dependence. However, addressing food insecurity will require sustained investment in climate-smart agriculture, fisheries management and community-based solutions that support long-term food security.

Partnering with Australia

Australia is a longstanding and important development partner of Pacific island countries and continues to engage with and support key regional institutions, including the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Forum. Australia was a founding member of SPC, which was established in 1947 as the principal scientific and technical organisation supporting development in the Pacific region.

Australia is a strong supporter of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which was endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum in July 2022. The strategy is intended to guide the political and development interests of the region for the next 30 years.

ACIAR has supported agricultural research for development in many Pacific island countries since 1982. It works directly with SPC and with many other regional organisations to ensure investments in agricultural research for development align with priorities of Pacific island countries.

Institutional and individual capacity development is also a key focus area of Australia's development program in the Pacific region. The Australian Government provides a wide range of support from infrastructure financing through to scholarships for Pacific students to study in country and in Australia.

ACIAR contributes to the goals of this program through the John Allwright Fellowship established under the Australia Awards program, and the Pacific Agriculture Scholarships and Support Program which provides the opportunity for students to study at the University of the South Pacific or Fiji National University.

Regional priorities

Pacific leaders consistently highlight that productive and sustainable food, and land-use systems are essential to economic stability and prosperity in the region. Strengthening these sectors is also integral to regional strategies on climate change adaptation 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 continues to work with partners to deliver research that addresses immediate challenges and builds long-term resilience of Pacific island countries. Current research priorities include:

- » food and nutrition security: strengthening sustainable food production systems, diversifying crops and fisheries production, and improving local supply chains to ensure healthy, accessible diets.
- » climate resilience: developing and scaling agricultural, fisheries and forestry practices and systems that adapt to changing weather patterns, rising sea levels and extreme events.
- » biosecurity and plant/animal health: enhancing surveillance, prevention and management of pests and diseases to protect livelihoods and trade.
- » sustainable fisheries and aquaculture: supporting community-based management of coastal fisheries and developing aquaculture systems that reduce pressure on wild stocks while creating income opportunities.
- » natural resource management: promoting sustainable use of forests and trees for livelihoods, ecosystem services and climate mitigation, improving soil and farming system management, and promoting regenerative agriculture practices.
- » capacity development and partnerships: strengthening Pacific research institutions, enhancing the science skills of researchers, and fostering peer-to-peer learning and collaboration with Australian scientists and experts.

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.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 33 agricultural research-for-development projects in Pacific island countries during 2026–27. Of these, 27 are specific to Pacific island countries and the remainder are multi-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, Pacific

Ms Mai Alagcan

Research Program Managers

Visit aciarc.gov.au for contact details



Current and proposed projects in Pacific island countries, 2026–27

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
Governing circular food systems in Fiji for food and climate benefits CLIM/2022/107	Fiji	1/07/2026	30/06/2029	\$2,131,125
Crops				
Sustainable agricultural intensification systems for climate resilient development in Pacific island countries CLIM/2020/186	Samoa, Tonga	1/02/2023	31/03/2027	\$1,633,626
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
Pacific peanuts: improving peanut productivity to improve health and livelihoods in Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga CROP/2025/150	Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/01/2027	31/12/2030	\$3,543,743
Fisheries				
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
Coalitions for change in sustainable national community-based fisheries management programs in the Pacific FIS/2020/172	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu	1/09/2021	30/09/2026	\$8,770,504
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
'Planim fiuia fo yumi': co-planning, risk-informed and equitable livelihood futures with small-scale fishing communities through a participatory and integrated approach to community engagement FIS/2023/122	Solomon Islands	22/01/2025	3/02/2030	\$3,816,085
Mitigating the incidence of ciguatera poisoning in Kiribati FIS/2023/161	Kiribati	1/04/2024	31/01/2028	\$491,739
Integrating community fisheries and rural development in a changing Pacific region FIS/2024/140	Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/07/2026	30/06/2030	\$4,679,999
Improving fish handling in Solomon Islands, with extension to other Pacific island countries FIS/2024/147	Solomon Islands	1/11/2025	31/10/2030	\$3,491,001
Addressing bottlenecks in giant clam mariculture for the marine aquarium trade in the western Pacific FIS/2025/151	Fiji	1/01/2027	31/12/2028	\$500,000
Forestry				
Livelihoods in forest ecosystem recovery FST/2020/135	Solomon Islands	1/11/2022	31/10/2028	\$3,544,264
Supporting agri-environmental health outcomes in Honiara catchment WAC/2025/134	Solomon Islands	3/08/2026	1/12/2027	\$400,000
Horticulture				
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
Resilient commercial vegetable production systems for Pacific island countries HORT/2023/165	Fiji, Samoa, Tonga	1/04/2027	31/03/2030	\$1,200,000
Plant health laboratory: a regional public good for the development of effective integrated pest management solutions HORT/2024/148	Fiji	15/03/2025	30/10/2026	\$363,332
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	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$8,000,000
Strengthening climate-resilient vegetable seed systems in Samoa and the Pacific HORT/2025/149	Samoa	1/04/2026	31/03/2028	\$500,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Livestock Systems				
Strengthening beekeeping industries for improved production and livelihoods in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands LS/2014/042	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands	1/07/2019	31/12/2027	\$3,100,000
A farm planning approach to increase productivity and profitability of smallholder cattle systems in Vanuatu LS/2018/185	Vanuatu	1/01/2022	31/08/2026	\$1,770,000
Enhancing the management of antimicrobial resistance in Fiji and Samoa LS/2019/119	Fiji, Samoa	1/01/2020	30/06/2027	\$4,660,747
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	30/06/2027	\$118,000
Scaling insect-based feed and fertiliser innovations for sustainable livelihoods in the Pacific LS/2024/152	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu	1/01/2027	31/12/2030	\$2,450,000
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	1/10/2023	30/09/2026	\$2,499,998
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
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
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
Soil & Land Management				
Soil management in 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
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
Healthy watersheds, healthy futures: unlocking co-benefits across agrifood, health, and environment leveraging the wish approach WAC/2025/133	Fiji, Vanuatu	1/06/2026	30/09/2027	\$499,712
Interweaving traditional practices and global understandings for water-centred livelihood security in rural Pacific island communities WAC/2025/136	Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu	1/07/2026	31/08/2027	\$500,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.



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Papua New Guinea

A\$5.63 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development



16 projects



13

Bilateral and regional research projects



3

Small projects and research activities



10

Projects specific to Papua New Guinea

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27.





Agriculture is the primary economic activity in 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 agricultural export commodities are produced by smallholder farmers. In 2026, agriculture, including fisheries and forestry, is projected to contribute about 18% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Growth is expected to be driven by palm oil, cocoa, copra, copra oil and rubber.

Economic growth in Papua New Guinea is guided by the government's Medium-Term Development Plan IV, 2023–2027. Commercial agriculture, livestock development, forestry and fisheries are among the broad-based investment strategies intended to drive economic and social development.

The National Agriculture Sector Plan 2024–2033 aligns with the development plan and sets out a vision to 'make agriculture the engine of socioeconomic growth and development through commercial agriculture'. Commodity commercialisation, including downstream processing and value adding, agricultural infrastructure, private sector participation, and research and development are among the major investment programs outlined in the plan.

The Asian Development Bank forecasts overall economic growth of 3.4% in 2026, including in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors. A significant contribution is expected from increased palm oil production on new and established plantations, and from coffee and cocoa production by smallholder farmers through the revitalisation of neglected plantations. However, ongoing conflict in the Middle East may affect trade and investment opportunities, as well as the prices of imported and exported commodities.

Rural communities

The population of Papua New Guinea is projected to reach 10.95 million in 2026, with 86% living in rural areas. The proportion of young people is increasing, with about 60% of the population under 25 years of age, most of whom live in rural areas. Creative strategies to engage this growing population are needed to avoid increasing societal tensions, and pressure on natural resources and agrifood systems. The Highlands region will be particularly challenged, as it is already more densely populated than the lowland regions. Rivalry among ethnic groups, together with local social structures and land tenure systems, also poses challenges for agrifood systems in many communities.

Political and economic environment

Papua New Guinea is navigating a challenging political and economic landscape marked by ongoing but slower economic growth, security and geopolitical challenges, and potential shortages of imported fuel and food linked to conflict in the Middle East. However, global fuel shortages many benefit the local LNG industry and earnings for the national economy.

In 2025, the government launched the 'PNG Reset@50' initiative, focused on economic diversification and fiscal responsibility following the country's 50th Independence Anniversary. The initiative reviewed the first 50 years of independence, from 1975 to 2025, and set out a 20-year plan for public sector reform and economic governance from 2025 to 2045. The plan aims to improve accountability, service delivery and digital transformation to deliver tangible development outcomes.

Climate change

Climate change is already affecting crop production. Most rural communities and households in Papua New Guinea depend on locally grown rainfed crops for food and income, but few have access to reliable information, planning tools or the adaptive capacity needed to manage climate risks. Climate change is affecting seasonal weather patterns and crop production through changes in flowering and fruiting. It also affects production because drought, high temperatures and excess moisture can contribute to major pest and disease outbreaks. For example, ongoing drier conditions across the country have led to a significant increase in weevil populations, affecting sweetpotato production. Drought conditions in the New Guinea islands region and in parts of East Sepik, Enga and Milne Bay became evident at the end of 2025 are expected to persist throughout 2026 due to the El Niño that is occurring in the region.

Food insecurity

Risks to household food security are shaped by several factors, including population growth, unequal access to resources and the effects of climate change. Together, these factors place significant pressure on food systems, including the production, distribution and accessibility of food. In 2025, Papua New Guinea ranked 113 out of 123 countries on the Global Hunger Index, with a score of 31, unchanged since 2000. This score indicates a serious and persistent level of hunger and highlights the country's ongoing food security challenges. Strengthening natural resource management, seed quality, crop and livestock production and distribution systems, and awareness of food consumption patterns will help build the resilience of communities and agricultural systems.

Partnering with Australia

Australia values its longstanding ties with Papua New Guinea, grounded in shared history and geography. The relationship has evolved to reflect a 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 supports an ambitious vision for the future.

The Australia–Papua New Guinea Economic Development Partnership sets out 5 pillars through which Australia will deliver economic support. Pillar 4 focuses on agriculture and aims to support export facilitation, local supply chains, biosecurity and agricultural productivity. Australia also supports agricultural development in Papua New Guinea through other regional and multilateral programs, including GrowPNG, the International Finance Corporation, Australia–PNG subnational programs in Bougainville, Western Province and Kokoda, and work with the PNG Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The National Agriculture Sector Plan 2024–2033 highlights the need to commercialise agriculture and the importance of private sector partnerships in growing businesses and developing the sector. It also identifies the role of science and research in improving agricultural systems and natural resource management to strengthen livelihood resilience.

ACIAR plays an important role in building the resilience of smallholders and the capability of partner organisations to support sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry livelihood systems.



Country priorities

In 2026–27, ACIAR research partnerships in Papua New Guinea will continue to focus on crops, horticulture, livestock, fisheries and forestry, with the aim of delivering scientific and socioeconomic benefits. This research seeks to improve food supply, food access and rural incomes for smallholders through increased productivity and better 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 so farmers and communities can benefit from agricultural technologies, particularly with respect to gender equity and women
- » improve smallholder vegetable production and staple crop 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 innovative agricultural technologies
- » monitor and identify options for managing biosecurity threats
- » enhance livelihoods from smallholder fisheries, and freshwater and marine aquaculture
- » increase household income through diversifying agricultural and related value chain enterprises.

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

ACIAR will continue to support partner institutions to build the capability of research personnel through long-term and short-term courses, informal networking events and hands-on project experience. In this way, ACIAR makes an important contribution to building Papua New Guinea's human capital in sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry.



2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 16 agricultural research-for-development projects in Papua New Guinea during 2026–27. Of these, 10 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

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Current and proposed projects in Papua New Guinea, 2026–27

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	30/08/2026	\$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				
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
Okari nut value chain development for sustainable livelihoods in the Kokoda track region FST/2026/117	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2027	30/06/2031	\$3,608,090
Horticulture				
Exploring carbon opportunities to drive multiple benefits for Papua New Guinea coffee smallholders CLIM/2022/109	Papua New Guinea	1/01/2027	31/03/2031	\$2,565,000
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
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	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$8,000,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
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
Scaling insect-based feed and fertiliser innovations for sustainable livelihoods in the Pacific LS/2024/152	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu	1/01/2027	31/12/2030	\$2,450,000
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	\$3,499,293
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
Pathways to improved biosecurity outcomes for Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea SSS/2025/137	Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste	1/10/2026	30/09/2030	\$4,850,000
Soil & Land Management				
Better soil and land information for improving PNG'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
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
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

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.



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3



ACIAR in Southeast Asia

Regional program 2026–27



Partner countries

Cambodia
China
Indonesia
Laos
Malaysia
Myanmar
Philippines
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Vietnam

A\$37.5 million

Investment in agricultural research
for development



83 projects

The Southeast Asia region is a global economic powerhouse, with agriculture continuing to play an important role in the individual country economies of the region.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) provides the central platform for regional cooperation across Southeast Asia, including Timor-Leste as its recent 11th member. ASEAN continues to deepen economic ties with north-eastern Asia, particularly China, through trade and investment.

Although regional growth has remained comparatively resilient to recent global shocks and geopolitical tensions, the economy of Southeast Asia has been affected by inflationary pressures, tariffs and increased competition. China has been the largest trading partner of ASEAN countries since 2009, underscoring the extent to which regional prosperity depends on stable and adaptive cross-border economic relationships.

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the ASEAN economy, with more than 100 million hectares of agricultural land. Collectively, ASEAN countries are major producers, suppliers and exporters of crops, grains and livestock products. Although agriculture contributes only around 10% of ASEAN's total gross domestic product (GDP), it accounts for about one-third of total employment. Given its significant role, development of the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors is vital to equitable and inclusive growth and stability in the region.

Women's participation in agricultural value chains is a prominent ASEAN priority for addressing gender gaps in economic participation. Food security, food safety and better nutrition also remain priority concerns across the region. These priorities are shaped by the shared impacts of climate change, including more frequent extreme heat, floods and storms, and less reliable rainfall patterns, which threaten agricultural production and sustainability.

At the same time, digital transformation presents new opportunities to improve productivity, traceability, market access and system resilience. Countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia are investing in technologies, data systems and platforms that can support more connected and responsive food systems.

Drivers of regional collaboration

ASEAN provides the institutional architecture through which its member countries coordinate on shared economic, development and security interests. For ACIAR, ASEAN's convening role matters strategically because it enables agricultural research partnerships to align with broader regional priorities on food security, resilience, market integration and inclusive growth, while also creating practical pathways for engagement with trade and development partners such as Australia and China.

Australia's longstanding relationship with ASEAN strengthens this operating environment. Since becoming ASEAN's first Dialogue Partner in 1974, Australia has progressively deepened its engagement, culminating in the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and its 2025–2029 Plan of Action, which gives greater policy weight to cooperation in agriculture and food, trade and investment, climate and energy transition, education and regional resilience. This provides a stronger enabling framework for collaborative research and development initiatives that address shared regional challenges.

Trade and investment are major drivers of economic growth in the region, alongside overseas development assistance. The ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement came into force in January 2022 to strengthen regional economic integration and improve market access. In agricultural research, ACIAR supports regional collaboration through its board membership of the Asia–Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI).

Shared concerns about the growing threats posed by climate change have led ASEAN to establish a framework for community building, with strategies and actions to strengthen regional and international cooperation on adaptation.

Regional cooperation in agricultural research for development plays an important role in strengthening resilience and adaptation to climate change, natural disasters and other shocks. Natural disasters threaten food security and rural livelihoods and have economic consequences across the region, making disaster mitigation a shared priority among neighbouring countries. The ASEAN Declaration of 'One ASEAN, One Response' aims to strengthen 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 towards greater regional integration. In the Mekong region, plant diseases have recently spread across borders, affecting cassava, banana and plantation forests. Likewise, the livestock sector is facing increased disease-related disruption to cross-border trade, reinforcing the need for stronger regional biosecurity. At the same time, strong market demand for animal protein is creating opportunities for smallholder farmers.

Regional ACIAR program

ACIAR engagement in Southeast Asia is strongly bilateral, based on robust partnerships with national research systems, longstanding diplomatic connections and sustained development collaboration with Australia. However, there is a growing trend towards regional collaboration among countries facing shared challenges, particularly in relation to climate change. This is consistent with research partnerships under ASEAN, which recognise collaboration among member states as a practical way to address common regional challenges.

ASEAN's 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 through regional research collaboration.

Trilateral collaboration and new partnership models are emerging for ACIAR in the region. These new models are driven by the greater capacity that can be achieved when resources are pooled. This is leading to 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, ACIAR-supported trilateral collaboration is becoming increasingly feasible and attractive to partner countries.

In Southeast Asia, ACIAR works primarily with 6 partner countries. However, we also work with development and coordinating organisations based elsewhere in the region on issues and programs of regional significance. For example, Thailand has transitioned from aid recipient to aid donor and hosts regional organisations relevant to ACIAR's work, including the Asian Institute of Technology and the FAO regional office. We also draw on expertise from Thailand and Malaysia for projects of regional significance when opportunities arise.

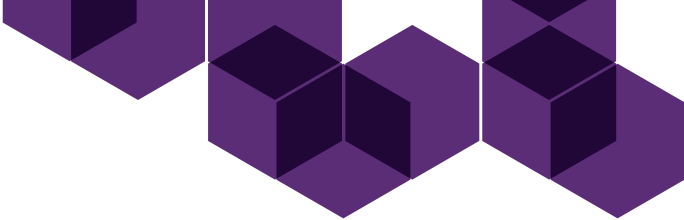
ACIAR no longer has an in-country presence in China, or bilateral projects in China. However, we continue to partner with Chinese organisations on regional programs in biosecurity, policy reform and rural transformation, and engage with China in multilateral forums such as CGIAR.

ACIAR supports 2 research collaborations that include multilateral partners in Myanmar in 2026–27. Consistent with Australian Government policy, ACIAR does not provide direct funding to Myanmar authorities.

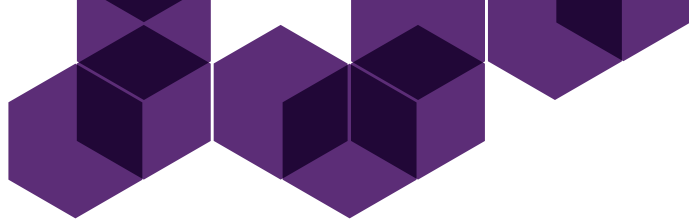
Current and proposed projects in the Southeast Asia region, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Agribusiness				
Integrating smallholder households and farm production systems into commercial beef supply chains in Vietnam AGB/2020/189	Vietnam	1/07/2023	30/06/2027	\$2,780,003
Creating resilient communities through smallholder-inclusive tourism markets in Indonesia AGB/2021/125	Indonesia	1/07/2023	31/12/2028	\$2,800,003
Digital monitoring of VietGAP compliance for high-value domestic markets and potential export in smallholder fruit value chains from the northwest of Vietnam AGB/2022/114	Vietnam	1/07/2025	31/12/2028	\$2,345,559
Evidence to underpin Indonesia's ag-tech transformation AGB/2023/155	Indonesia	1/09/2024	31/08/2027	\$1,497,866
Improving the enabling environment to effectively scale good agriculture and aquaculture practice in the Philippines AGB/2024/150	Philippines	1/08/2026	31/07/2031	\$5,000,000
Understanding markets, value chains and production constraints for medicinal plants in Vietnam AGB/2025/101	Vietnam	1/11/2025	30/06/2027	\$538,463
Pathways to enduring peace: enhancing market linkages for climate-resilient agriculture in Mindanao AGB/2025/124	Philippines	1/07/2026	30/06/2031	\$3,500,000
Strengthening a climate-smart premium rice value chain with smallholders in the Mekong Delta AGB/2025/154	Vietnam	1/07/2026	31/07/2027	\$497,298
Crop				
Weed management techniques for mechanised and broadcast lowland crop production systems in Cambodia and Laos CROP/2019/145	Cambodia, Laos	1/01/2021	31/12/2026	\$2,761,861
Agricultural innovations for communities - intensified and diverse farming systems for Timor-Leste (AI-Com 2) CROP/2021/131	Timor-Leste	1/11/2022	31/10/2027	\$3,198,681
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
Enabling high-quality low-emissions rice in Vietnam using real-time remote sensing-based field-level monitoring tools CROP/2025/143	Vietnam	1/07/2026	30/06/2027	\$331,700
Biological control of mistflower (<i>Ageratina riparia</i>) in Timor-Leste CROP/2025/144	Timor-Leste	1/05/2026	30/06/2027	\$499,892
Fisheries				
FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia FIS/2018/153	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	1/01/2020	31/12/2026	\$9,009,335
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	31/12/2026	\$2,855,422
Institutional effectiveness and political economy of coral reef restoration in the Philippines FIS/2021/112	Philippines	1/09/2021	31/12/2026	\$2,330,305
Addressing key technical bottlenecks in the grouper supply chain in Vietnam (and Australia) through manufactured feed and hatchery developments that aim to improve SME sector profitability FIS/2022/148	Vietnam	1/06/2024	1/12/2027	\$2,585,435

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Optimising fish passage at hydropower sites in the Mekong FIS/2023/133	Laos	1/07/2024	30/06/2029	\$5,700,000
Enhancing marine environmental governance in Indonesia and the Philippines FIS/2023/185	Indonesia, Philippines	1/07/2024	30/06/2027	\$2,272,725
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	31/03/2027	\$499,414
Southeast Asia coral larval restoration network FIS/2024/120	Indonesia, Philippines	1/05/2025	30/04/2027	\$600,000
IndoFish: sustainable river development for Indonesian inland fisheries FIS/2024/124	Indonesia	1/07/2026	30/06/2030	\$3,820,000
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	31/12/2026	\$478,224
FishTech Plus: growing capacity of Mekong subregion countries to implement technical fisheries solutions into river development programs FIS/2024/141	Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam	1/07/2026	30/06/2030	\$9,045,454
Supporting development of the mabé pearl sector in Khánh Hòa, Vietnam FIS/2025/117	Vietnam	1/01/2027	31/12/2031	\$2,795,913
Improved nutrition outcomes from safe aquatic foods and sustainable fisheries in Timor-Leste FIS/2025/118	Timor-Leste	1/07/2026	31/12/2030	\$3,750,000
Enhancing <i>Penaeus monodon</i> health and production in the Philippines through harnessing genetic potential, surveillance, and novel therapeutic approaches FIS/2025/121	Philippines	1/12/2026	31/12/2030	\$3,810,000
Increasing Cambodian self-sufficiency in freshwater production by supporting sustainable intensification of nutrient-rich freshwater aquaculture FIS/2025/131	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/01/2027	31/12/2030	\$4,000,000
PeatFish: peatland fisheries for sustainable livelihoods in Indonesia FIS/2025/132	Indonesia	1/07/2026	30/06/2028	\$500,000
Building foundational fisheries management capacity in Timor-Leste FIS/2026/107	Timor-Leste	1/10/2026	1/04/2028	\$258,687
Multi-scale governance support for coral restoration in the Philippines FIS/2026/114	Philippines	1/01/2027	31/12/2031	\$2,570,000
Forestry				
Building an effective forest health & biosecurity network in Southeast Asia FST/2020/123	Cambodia, Laos	1/11/2021	30/06/2027	\$2,138,717
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	27/08/2030	\$3,179,399
Protecting peat forests and livelihoods FST/2024/145	Indonesia	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$3,500,000
Horticulture				
Safe, fresh, year-round vegetables in Laos through research and development support of smallholder productivity and engagement in collaborative supply chains HORT/2021/143	Laos	1/07/2024	31/12/2030	\$1,722,703
Transforming mango production through IPM and smarter pesticide use in Southeast Asia and Australia HORT/2022/125	Indonesia, Philippines	1/06/2026	31/12/2030	\$5,457,457
Benchmarking mango breeding and genomics HORT/2024/122	Philippines	1/12/2024	30/11/2026	\$482,833



Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Agroecological management for resilient smallholder banana systems in Asia HORT/2025/126	Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, Philippines	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$6,000,000
Future-proofing mango: genomic conservation and climate adaptation strategies HORT/2025/127	Philippines	1/07/2027	30/05/2032	\$4,500,000
Advancing climate-smart pest management and plant health education through localised solutions in Timor-Leste HORT/2025/142	Timor-Leste	1/01/2027	31/12/2029	\$1,500,000
Livestock Systems				
Evaluating zoonotic malaria transmission and agricultural and forestry land use in Indonesia LS/2019/116	Indonesia	1/01/2020	31/12/2026	\$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
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
Developing strategies to reduce brucellosis transmission in Timor-Leste based on One Health collaboration LS/2022/161	Timor-Leste	5/12/2022	1/10/2026	\$999,943
Country research update and policy support to the Philippines' national surveillance and control programs for African swine fever, avian influenza and antimicrobial resistance: a One Health systems approach to food animal security, public health resilience LS/2022/162	Philippines	12/12/2022	1/10/2026	\$1,000,000
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Evaluating service provision approaches and value-chain interventions to support milk cooperatives to grow the smallholder dairy sector of Indonesia (IndoDairy 2) AGB/2021/124	Indonesia	1/05/2024	30/04/2029	\$3,799,033
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
Understanding Timor-Leste coffee value chains, their enabling environment and the potential benefit for smallholder producers AGB/2024/129	Timor-Leste	24/11/2025	16/05/2027	\$445,000
Extending integrated analysis for improved food system outcomes in Timor-Leste and the Pacific region FIS/2022/121	Kiribati, Timor-Leste	1/10/2023	30/09/2026	\$2,499,998
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
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
Pathways for future farmers in Southeast Asia SSS/2022/134	Laos	1/08/2024	30/09/2026	\$957,210
Developing co-management options for sustainable peatland livelihoods in Indonesia SSS/2022/155	Indonesia	1/07/2024	30/06/2029	\$2,791,003



Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Harnessing the potential of digital agri-market services for inclusive and competitive markets in Laos SSS/2023/105	Laos	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	\$2,010,032
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
Pathways to build a gender inclusive and climate resilient food sector: Cambodia and Indonesia SSS/2023/191	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/01/2024	31/12/2026	\$320,000
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
Agri-inputs and One Health in Cambodia: pathways to enhanced agricultural resilience SSS/2025/111	Cambodia	16/06/2025	30/09/2026	\$499,090
Pathways for future farmers in Philippines SSS/2025/125	Philippines	1/07/2026	30/06/2030	\$2,000,000
Harnessing the potential of digital agri-market services for inclusive and competitive markets in Cambodia SSS/2025/135	Cambodia	1/01/2027	31/12/2030	\$1,489,968
Pathways to improved biosecurity outcomes for Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea SSS/2025/137	Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste	1/10/2026	30/09/2030	\$4,850,000
Scaling low-emission rice in Vietnam through circular economy innovation SSS/2025/146	Vietnam	12/01/2026	30/06/2027	\$499,963
Better use of agricultural inputs for sustainable food systems in Cambodia SSS/2026/101	Cambodia	1/02/2027	31/07/2031	\$3,435,000
Pathways to prosperity: scaling community-led water and food system innovations for resilient communities in Timor-Leste SSS/2026/104	Timor-Leste	3/05/2027	30/04/2032	\$3,569,690
Institutional innovations for cattle market-chain development in Laos SSS/2026/106	Laos	1/07/2026	31/12/2027	\$500,000
Strengthening evidence use for resilient food systems in Timor-Leste through improved knowledge governance SSS/2026/116	Timor-Leste	1/08/2026	31/07/2028	\$500,000
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	\$3,310,493
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	31/12/2027	\$2,274,565
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
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
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

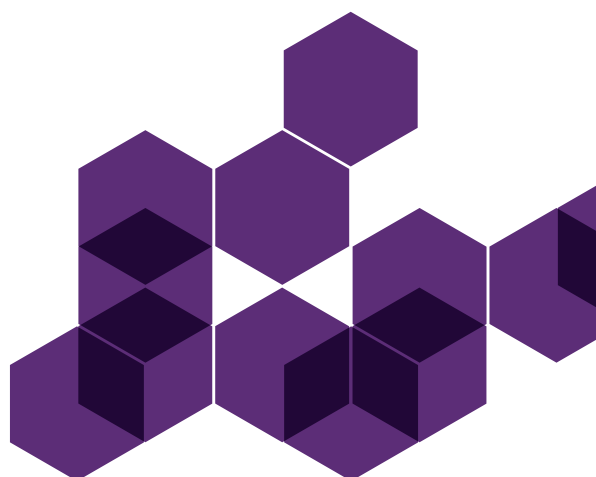
Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Supporting practice change to improve the sustainability of agronomic management in vegetable production systems in Cambodia SLAM/2023/100	Cambodia	1/06/2025	31/05/2030	\$3,692,692
Developing soil knowledge, information and capacity to improve the productivity and sustainability of key cropping systems in Philippines SLAM/2023/146	Philippines	1/11/2024	30/09/2029	\$3,500,000
Carbon flux pathways: from ecosystem to the global carbon market SLAM/2024/116	Indonesia	15/07/2024	31/01/2027	\$500,000
Expanding climate resilient farming systems in Vietnam's Mekong River Delta region SLAM/2025/114	Vietnam	12/11/2025	31/12/2026	\$500,000
Water				
Water for rice and fish: co-design & piloting of water management interventions for enhanced productivity of rice–fish systems in the Mekong floodplains WAC/2022/153	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	1/07/2026	30/06/2029	\$2,100,000
'Menuju danau sehat': sustainable lakes management in Indonesia WAC/2025/155	Indonesia	2/11/2026	31/10/2030	\$5,000,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.



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

www.aciar.gov.au



Cambodia

A\$3.75 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development

17 projects



15

Bilateral and regional research projects



2

Small projects and research activities



7

Projects specific to Cambodia

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27.





Agriculture contributed approximately 16% of Cambodia's GDP in 2025, making it the third-largest sector after industry and services.

Cambodia's agricultural production is dominated by smallholders, with an average landholding of 1.7 hectares. Notably, 44% of agricultural holdings are less than one hectare, constraining economies of scale and limiting the adoption of mechanisation and advanced technologies. Input use is widespread, with 77.9% of agricultural households using inorganic fertilisers. Just 37.6% use organic fertilisers, and only 20.6% of holdings have access to irrigation.

Cambodia has strong potential across a diverse range of agricultural export commodities, including rice, rubber, cassava, mangoes, bananas, peppercorns, cashew nuts, longans and durians. Although growth in the sector has declined, agricultural export earnings have grown, approximately US\$6.46 billion in 2025, representing a 7.3% increase from 2024. China remains a critical market for Cambodian agricultural exports and is the leading destination for Cambodian milled rice.

An estimated 80–90% of Cambodia's agricultural production is exported as raw or minimally processed commodities, highlighting significant opportunities for domestic processing and value adding. In response, the Royal Government of Cambodia is prioritising increased in-country processing, alongside efforts to sustain productivity and improve quality, to increase revenue.

Cambodia's Pentagonal Strategy 2023–2028 sets out the Royal Government of Cambodia's ambition to attain upper middle-income status by 2030 and high-income status by 2050. The strategy prioritises sustained economic growth, poverty reduction, reduced inequality and improved development outcomes. One of its 5 strategic outcomes – resilient, sustainable and inclusive economic development – explicitly recognises agriculture as a priority sector, with the government committing substantial support to accelerate sector transformation and attract increased public and private investment.

Cambodia has achieved significant economic transformation over the past decade, sustained by strong growth and poverty reduction gains. However, development progress remains uneven and fragile, with persistent geographic and gender disparities and high vulnerability to shocks, particularly climate-related disasters.

Recognising the strategic importance of agriculture, the sector is a key area of cooperation between Australia and Cambodia under the flagship arrangement, the Cambodia–Australia Partnership for Resilient Economic Development. Since 1990, ACIAR has established strong partnerships with Cambodian research institutes and researchers. ACIAR's current portfolio in Cambodia focuses on soil and land management, crops, aquaculture and fisheries, livestock, horticulture, and value chain and market access improvements, all of which align closely with national development priorities.

Rural communities

The Cambodia Census of Agriculture 2023, released in May 2025, reported that 54% of Cambodian households are engaged in agricultural production, underscoring the sector's continued centrality to rural livelihoods and food security. Among agricultural households, 94% are engaged in crop production, predominantly rice and cassava, while 58% raise livestock and poultry, reflecting the mixed farming systems common across the country.

The census identified young people aged 10–19 years as the largest demographic group within agricultural households. However, increasing numbers of young people are migrating to urban areas in search of employment opportunities in the manufacturing and services sectors. This trend raises concerns about the future availability of agricultural labour and the need to make farming more productive, profitable and attractive to younger generations.

Political and economic environment

Recent Cambodia–Thailand border tensions and conflicts in the Middle East present external risks to Cambodia's agriculture through disruptions to markets, labour movement, and global fertiliser and input supply chains.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing a resilient, modern and sustainable agricultural sector, identifying 5 strategic priority directions to guide sector development. These priorities focus on price stability, diversification and modernisation, with particular attention to expanding modern agricultural communities, strengthening market linkages for farmers, and enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of commune-level agricultural extension officers. Collectively, these measures aim to improve competitiveness, reduce vulnerability to external shocks, and promote inclusive and sustainable growth across Cambodia's agricultural sector.



Demonstrating the Cambodian Government's commitment to the agriculture sector, MAFF has recruited and deployed 1,600 Commune Agricultural Officers to communities nationwide. These officers are tasked with strengthening production capacity, improving agricultural productivity, and supporting the transition towards modern, market-oriented agricultural systems. Emphasis is placed on enhancing processing, value adding and product quality through targeted technical assistance to modern agricultural communities and producer groups.

Climate change

Cambodia's geography places the country at high risk of climate-related natural hazards. Extensive low-lying floodplains, especially around Tonle Sap Lake and the Mekong River system, support agricultural production but also expose farmland and rural communities to recurrent seasonal flooding. At the same time, pronounced wet and dry seasons contribute to frequent and increasingly severe droughts.

Climate change is increasing the severity of floods and droughts and accelerating saline intrusion in coastal and delta areas, particularly in south-western provinces. In 2023, the World Bank estimated that climate-related shocks, mainly floods and droughts, resulted in average annual economic losses equivalent to 2–4% of GDP, with agriculture disproportionately affected. The FAO further reports that climate variability reduces crop yields, livestock productivity and fisheries output, undermining rural livelihoods, food security and nutrition.

Agriculture remains highly climate sensitive, with most smallholder farmers reliant on rainfed production systems and only around 20% of agricultural land having access to irrigation. Given that agriculture contributes around 16% of GDP and supports the livelihoods of more than half of Cambodian households, strengthening climate resilience through adaptation and mitigation is critical to sustaining productivity, protecting livelihoods and supporting inclusive growth. Research for development plays a central role in addressing these challenges and is integral to Cambodia's ambition to achieve upper middle-income status by 2030.

Food insecurity

According to the UN World Food Programme (2024), around 16% of the population are unable to afford a nutritious diet, especially in rural and agriculture-dependent households. Climate shocks, including floods and droughts, continue to disproportionately affect livelihoods. Malnutrition remains a critical development challenge despite economic progress. In 2025, UNICEF estimated that 22% of children under 5 years of age were stunted and one in five continued to experience wasting.

These conditions undermine human capital development and long-term productivity. The goal to achieve upper middle-income status by 2030 is built on eradication of malnutrition, inclusive growth and strengthened resilience to shocks. Improving the performance and resilience of agriculture and food systems – central to livelihoods, nutrition and rural employment – remains essential to achieving these national development objectives.

Partnering with Australia

Australia and Cambodia are longstanding bilateral partners with a history of close cooperation in health, agriculture, infrastructure and education dating back to the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1952.

Both countries are committed to working together to promote peace, stability and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific region, and continue to collaborate on economic growth, trade, security, development and education. This partnership is underpinned by strong and enduring institutional relationships and people-to-people links built over 7 decades of diplomatic engagement.

Under Australia's International Development Policy, the Australia–Cambodia Development Partnership Plan 2025–2029 was developed through close consultation with the Royal Government of Cambodia and key stakeholders to identify priority areas where Australia's development cooperation can add value and contribute to Cambodia's development outcomes. The Partnership Plan focuses on 3 strategic priorities: stronger institutions and better governance; more inclusive public services; and a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable economy.

Building on more than 3 decades of research collaboration, ACIAR contributes to the objectives of the Partnership Plan by continuing to support agricultural research with key national counterparts, including the General Directorate of Agriculture, the Cambodia Agricultural Research and Development Institute, and the Fisheries Administration under MAFF. Collaboration also extends to leading educational institutions such as the Royal University of Agriculture and the Royal University of Phnom Penh, with a focus on strengthening national research capacity and scientific capability.

ACIAR investments are closely aligned with and complementary to the Cambodia–Australia Partnership for Resilient Economic Development, particularly its component aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity, competitiveness and resilience within Cambodia's agrifood sector.

Country priorities

ACIAR and the Royal Government of Cambodia, represented by MAFF, established a 10-year agreement (2019–2029) that sets out strategic priorities for agricultural research collaboration. Under this agreement, joint research is focused on 3 core domains to support the sustainable development of Cambodian agriculture:

- » sustainable intensification and diversification of agriculture, with a focus on non-rice crops within traditional rice-based systems and the development of alternative cropping systems
- » sustainable intensification of market-oriented smallholder livestock systems
- » sustainable intensification of freshwater aquaculture systems, with particular emphasis on nutrition-rich species.

Across these domains, research priorities are informed by several cross-cutting themes that address systemic challenges within the agriculture sector. These include gender equity, women's empowerment and improved nutrition, which are especially critical in the context of increasing labour migration and persistently high rates of stunting and malnutrition among women and children. Additional cross-cutting priorities include climate change mitigation and adaptation, with an emphasis on climate-resilient farming systems, and food safety and standards to support market access and consumer confidence.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has demonstrated a strong commitment to green growth and climate action through its National Strategic Plan on Green Growth (2013–2030) and its Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality by 2050. Given the central role of agriculture in food security and its growing commercial potential, development partners – including ACIAR – are supporting increased emphasis on climate-smart agriculture and natural capital management.



MAFF has undertaken major institutional reform to strengthen Cambodia's national agricultural research system through the establishment of the Cambodian Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CASA), announced in early 2026. CASA brings together multiple research institutes and laboratory services within a unified institutional framework and serves as the central authority for coordinating and regulating agricultural research and experimentation, in line with national development priorities and internationally recognised standards. Established as a public administrative institution with General Directorate status, CASA consolidates previously fragmented functions to improve coordination, efficiency and the long-term relevance of agricultural research and innovation. In this role, CASA acts as MAFF's principal technical authority, supporting evidence-based policymaking, productivity growth and technological advancement across the sector. ACIAR has commenced engagement with CASA's leadership and will continue to strengthen partnerships through formal and informal dialogue to ensure alignment of research priorities and programs.

With the establishment of CASA and the appointment of its President in early 2026, ACIAR will work closely with CASA to review the relevance of the current 10-year partnership agreement. This review will ensure the collaboration continues to reflect emerging national priorities, evolving partnerships and innovative ways of working, thereby supporting mutual understanding and sustaining effective, high-impact research collaboration.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 17 agricultural research-for-development projects in Cambodia during 2026–27. 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.

Regional Manager, Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand)

Mr Ounheuan Saiyasith

Research Program Managers

Visit aciargov.au for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Cambodia, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Crops				
Weed management techniques for mechanised and broadcast lowland crop production systems in Cambodia and Laos CROP/2019/145	Cambodia, Laos	1/01/2021	31/12/2026	\$2,761,861
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	31/12/2026	\$9,009,335
FishTech Plus: growing capacity of Mekong subregion countries to implement technical fisheries solutions into river development programs FIS/2024/141	Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam	1/07/2026	30/06/2030	\$9,045,454
Increasing Cambodian self-sufficiency in freshwater production by supporting sustainable intensification of nutrient-rich freshwater aquaculture FIS/2025/131	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/01/2027	31/12/2030	\$4,000,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Forestry				
Building an effective forest health & biosecurity network in Southeast Asia FST/2020/123	Cambodia, Laos	1/11/2021	30/06/2027	\$2,138,717
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
Pathways to build a gender inclusive and climate resilient food sector: Cambodia and Indonesia SSS/2023/191	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/01/2024	31/12/2026	\$320,000
Agri-inputs and One Health in Cambodia: pathways to enhanced agricultural resilience SSS/2025/111	Cambodia	16/06/2025	30/09/2026	\$499,090
Harnessing the potential of digital agri-market services for inclusive and competitive markets in Cambodia SSS/2025/135	Cambodia	1/01/2027	31/12/2030	\$1,489,968
Better use of agricultural inputs for sustainable food systems in Cambodia SSS/2026/101	Cambodia	1/02/2027	31/07/2031	\$3,435,000
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
Water				
Water for rice and fish: co-design & piloting of water management interventions for enhanced productivity of rice–fish systems in the Mekong floodplains WAC/2022/153	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	1/07/2026	30/06/2029	\$2,100,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.



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Indonesia

A\$9.38 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development

21 projects



16

Bilateral and regional research projects



5

Small projects and research activities

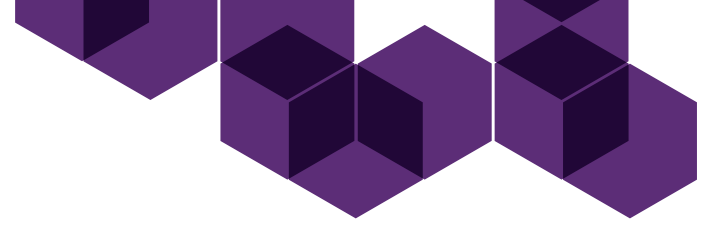


13

Projects specific to Indonesia

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27.





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

In 2025, these sectors collectively accounted for approximately 12% of national GDP and employed around 28–29% of the workforce, making them the largest source of employment in the economy. Agriculture continues to play an important role in rural livelihoods, poverty reduction and regional development across the archipelago.

Indonesia's diverse agroecological and maritime systems support production of a wide range of agricultural and fisheries commodities. Key food crops include rice, maize, cassava and soybeans, alongside horticultural products such as shallots, chillies and tropical fruits. Estate crops, notably palm oil, rubber, coffee and cocoa, are major export earners. In the fisheries sector, Indonesia is among the world's largest producers, with capture fisheries and aquaculture together producing more than 13 million tonnes annually, led by tuna, shrimp, seaweed and freshwater aquaculture commodities. Forestry contributes timber and non-timber forest products while also playing an increasingly important role in ecosystem services, landscape restoration and climate mitigation.

Indonesia's agrifood systems are being reshaped by climate change, digitalisation and evolving domestic and export market requirements. National policy frameworks highlight the need for science-based innovation, climate-resilient production systems and stronger market integration to sustain productivity while improving environmental outcomes. These priorities align closely with Australia's longstanding research partnership with Indonesia.

Rural communities

Indonesia's population is estimated at around 283 million, with 41–43% living in rural areas, reflecting a continued but gradual shift towards urbanisation. Despite this trend, rural communities remain closely tied to agriculture, fisheries and forestry, which continue to provide the primary source of livelihoods in many provinces, particularly in eastern Indonesia, remote island regions and coastal areas.

Rural households face persistent challenges relating to income security, nutrition and access to quality services. While national poverty rates have declined, rural poverty remains higher than urban poverty and informal employment continues to predominate over formally organised employment. Demographic change is also reshaping rural communities.

Ageing farm populations, youth out-migration and skills gaps are affecting labour availability and productivity. Government strategies increasingly emphasise rural productivity growth, food system transformation, value adding and digital inclusion to improve livelihood resilience and create more attractive economic opportunities in rural areas.

Political and economic environment

Indonesia's political and economic direction in 2025 is shaped by the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025–2045 and the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2025–2029, which set out the government's ambition to achieve high-income status by 2045. These frameworks emphasise inclusive economic growth, food security, rural development and stronger institutional performance. Agriculture, fisheries and forestry are identified as strategic sectors for employment generation, regional development and economic resilience, particularly in the context of Indonesia's decentralised governance system.

In the agrifood sector, priorities include increasing productivity, strengthening biosecurity, improving supply chains and supporting smallholder integration into domestic and export markets. These policy directions shape the operating context for agricultural research and inform demand for evidence-based policy support and institutional collaboration.

Climate change

Climate change is increasingly shaping the operating environment for Indonesia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and more frequent extreme weather events are affecting production systems, particularly for rice, maize and other staple crops, as well as aquaculture and capture fisheries. Coastal and island communities are especially vulnerable to sea-level rise, coastal erosion and ecosystem degradation, with direct implications for food security and livelihoods.

The Government of Indonesia has placed climate adaptation at the centre of national development planning. National frameworks, including the National Adaptation Plan 2026–2030, emphasise adaptation alongside mitigation and identify food systems, ecosystems and water resources as priority sectors for resilience building, aligned with the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2025–2029. Within this context, research and innovation play a critical role in supporting evidence-based adaptation strategies, strengthening institutional responses and informing policy decisions to manage climate risks across the agrifood sector.



Food insecurity

Food insecurity remains a concern in parts of Indonesia despite good progress towards food security at the national level. According to the 2025 Global Hunger Index, Indonesia ranks 70th out of 123 countries, with a score of 14.6, indicating a moderate level of hunger. An estimated 6.3% of the population is undernourished, while child malnutrition remains a key challenge.

National nutrition data released in 2025 show that 19.8% of children under 5 years of age are stunted, with higher prevalence in rural, eastern and remote provinces. The UN World Food Programme estimates that more than 23 million people are unable to meet minimum dietary requirements, reflecting continued vulnerability to food price volatility, climate shocks and income insecurity. Improving food distribution, nutrition outcomes and household resilience remain central to strengthening Indonesia's food security.

Partnering with Australia

Australia and Indonesia share a longstanding and dynamic partnership, underpinned by close institutional, research and people-to-people links. Cooperation in agriculture, food systems, fisheries and natural resource management has developed over several decades and supports shared objectives for food security, rural livelihoods and sustainable development.

The partnership is shaped by Indonesia's national development priorities, including the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025–2045, and complemented by Australia's broader development engagement with Indonesia, coordinated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and reflected in the Australia–Indonesia Development Partnership Plan 2024–2028. Within this context, agricultural research and innovation remain important areas of collaboration, particularly in addressing climate risks, productivity constraints and food system transformation.

ACIAR works closely with key Indonesian partners, including BAPPENAS, BRIN, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Forestry, together with Indonesian universities and research institutes. This engagement is supported through collaboration with Australian Government partners, research organisations, universities and industry stakeholders, strengthening scientific capability, informing policy development and delivering mutual benefit for both countries.

Country priorities

Indonesia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors are central to national objectives for food security, rural livelihoods and inclusive economic growth. These priorities are reflected in Indonesia's long-term and medium-term development frameworks, which emphasise productivity growth, food system resilience, value adding and sustainable management of natural resources.

Through ongoing consultation with BAPPENAS, BRIN, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, the Ministry of Forestry and other sectoral agencies, Indonesia has highlighted the importance of modernising agrifood systems while addressing climate risks, demographic change and regional disparities. Strengthening evidence-based policy, improving research uptake and scaling successful innovations are cross-cutting priorities.

A joint ACIAR–BAPPENAS research prioritisation process in September 2025, identified 4 strategic themes to guide future agricultural research collaboration:

- » digitalisation and smart technologies for agriculture and fisheries
- » research uptake, policy translation and institutional scaling
- » value addition, downstream innovation and bioeconomy development
- » productivity enhancement through climate-resilient systems.

These themes underpin ACIAR's research-for-development engagement in Indonesia and inform investment choices that respond to nationally defined needs while delivering mutual benefit.

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

- » digital agriculture and fisheries innovation, including smart and data-driven technologies
- » productivity and sustainability of smallholder farming and fishing systems
- » biosecurity for plant and animal health
- » climate change adaptation and mitigation in agrifood and natural resource systems
- » value addition, downstream processing and bioeconomy development
- » reduction of food loss and waste across agrifood value chains
- » analytical and applied research to inform policy and planning
- » capacity building and institutional strengthening
- » pilot initiatives and scaled research uptake that deliver mutual benefit to Indonesia and Australia.

Capacity development remains central to ACIAR's engagement with Indonesia. In addition to capacity development through implementing research projects, the John Allwright, the John Dillon and the Meryl Williams fellowships contribute to strengthening leadership and individual and institutional capability across Indonesia's research and policy landscape.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 21 agricultural research-for-development projects in Indonesia during 2026–27. 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, Indonesia

Mr Teddy Kristedi

Research Program Managers

Visit aciar.gov.au for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Indonesia, 2026–27

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	\$2,800,003
Evidence to underpin Indonesia's agtech transformation AGB/2023/155	Indonesia	1/09/2024	31/08/2027	\$1,497,866
Fisheries				
FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia FIS/2018/153	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	1/01/2020	31/12/2026	\$9,009,335
Enhancing marine environmental governance in Indonesia and the Philippines FIS/2023/185	Indonesia, Philippines	1/07/2024	30/06/2027	\$2,272,725
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	31/03/2027	\$499,414
Southeast Asia coral larval restoration network FIS/2024/120	Indonesia, Philippines	1/05/2025	30/04/2027	\$600,000
IndoFish: sustainable river development for Indonesian inland fisheries FIS/2024/124	Indonesia	1/07/2026	30/06/2030	\$3,820,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Increasing Cambodian self-sufficiency in freshwater production by supporting sustainable intensification of nutrient-rich freshwater aquaculture FIS/2025/131	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/01/2027	31/12/2030	\$4,000,000
PeatFish: peatland fisheries for sustainable livelihoods in Indonesia FIS/2025/132	Indonesia	1/07/2026	30/06/2028	\$500,000
Forestry				
Protecting peat forests and livelihoods FST/2024/145	Indonesia	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$3,500,000
Horticulture				
Transforming mango production through IPM and smarter pesticide use in Southeast Asia and Australia HORT/2022/125	Indonesia, Philippines	1/06/2026	31/12/2030	\$5,457,457
Agroecological management for resilient smallholder banana systems in Asia HORT/2025/126	Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, Philippines	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$6,000,000
Livestock Systems				
Evaluating zoonotic malaria transmission and agricultural and forestry land use in Indonesia LS/2019/116	Indonesia	1/01/2020	31/12/2026	\$4,620,467
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	\$3,310,493
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
Carbon flux pathways: from ecosystem to the global carbon market SLAM/2024/116	Indonesia	15/07/2024	31/01/2027	\$500,000
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Evaluating service provision approaches and value-chain interventions to support milk cooperatives to grow the smallholder dairy sector of Indonesia (IndoDairy 2) AGB/2021/124	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
Pathways to build a gender inclusive and climate resilient food sector: Cambodia and Indonesia SSS/2023/191	Cambodia, Indonesia	1/01/2024	31/12/2026	\$320,000
Pathways to improved biosecurity outcomes for Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea SSS/2025/137	Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste	1/10/2026	30/09/2030	\$4,850,000
Water				
"Menuju danau sehat": sustainable lakes management in Indonesia WAC/2025/155	Indonesia	2/11/2026	31/10/2030	\$5,000,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.

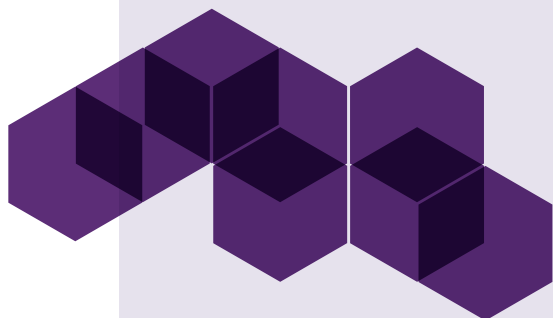


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Laos

A\$7.50 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development



18 projects



17

Bilateral and regional research projects



1

Small projects and research activities

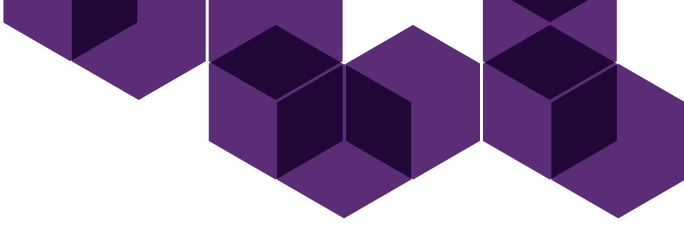


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Projects specific to Laos

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27.





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

Agriculture contributed an estimated 20% of GDP in 2025 and supported the livelihoods of more than 60% of the population, largely through smallholder farming systems. While export opportunities are expanding, particularly for livestock, cassava, bananas, rubber, coffee and maize, most agricultural production is still consumed domestically, reflecting constraints in processing capacity, biosecurity and market access, in addition to little surplus production to export.

Economic recovery since the COVID-19 pandemic continues, supported by growth in services, electricity exports, mining, agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. However, recovery remains fragile, constrained by currency depreciation, persistently high inflation, labour shortages, climate variability, and rising input and transport costs. These pressures disproportionately affect agriculture and other labour-intensive sectors, weakening farm profitability and rural livelihoods.

Agriculture remains central to national development plans, both as a major source of employment and as a foundation for resilience and self-reliance. Strengthening the knowledge and innovation system is a key priority, including the proposed upgrade of the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) to a Lao Academy of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. This upgrade would strengthen the national research system by consolidating scientific leadership, improving coordination across research institutes, and strengthening links between research, policy and practice. These reforms are expected to improve the quality, relevance and impact of agricultural and environmental research, support evidence-based decision-making, and accelerate the development of climate-resilient, market-oriented farming systems, reinforcing agriculture's role in economic recovery and long-term national resilience.

The development of agricultural exports remains limited despite government policy support. Biosecurity and phytosanitary challenges continue to affect key commodities, while the livestock sector, particularly cattle prioritised for regional markets including China, faces constraints in animal health systems, feed supply, logistics and export certification. As a result, recorded export volumes remain well below approved quotas.

Recent regional and global conflicts, including those affecting energy and fertiliser markets, have added further pressure on the agricultural sector through input price volatility, supply chain disruptions and higher transport costs. These factors increase risks for smallholder farmers who rely heavily on imported fertilisers and fuel.

Input supply challenges present clear opportunities for ACIAR to support agricultural research for development in Laos, including climate-resilient and low-input production systems, improved biosecurity and animal health, productivity and value chain upgrading, and stronger institutional and policy capability. Such investments can help buffer agriculture against external shocks, improve competitiveness, and contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Rural communities

Subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture remain the primary livelihoods for much of the Lao population, with around 62% of the national workforce engaged in agriculture in 2025, through smallholder farming systems. The 2019–20 Lao Census of Agriculture indicated that smallholder farmers account for around 52% of agricultural households, with average landholdings of 1–2 hectares, limiting economies of scale and mechanisation.

Agricultural productivity is further constrained by limited infrastructure and services. Only 20–25% of agricultural land has access to irrigation, leaving most production reliant on rainfall and highly vulnerable to climate variability. The sector also faces persistent challenges from high inflation, raising the costs of fuel, fertiliser, feed and transport, and eroding farm profitability.

In addition, significant outward labour migration has reduced the availability of workers in rural areas, contributing to labour shortages and signalling a longer-term skills and capability challenge for the agricultural sector. Together, small landholdings, limited irrigation, rising input costs, biosecurity risks, climate stress and labour shortages continue to constrain agricultural productivity, commercialisation and rural income growth in Laos.

Political and economic environment

The Lao Government is striving for a self-reliant and independent economy, with agriculture positioned as a cornerstone of food security, rural livelihoods and national resilience. This vision is reinforced by national strategies, including the policy to transform Laos from 'land-locked to land-linked', leveraging regional connectivity, transport corridors and cross-border trade to integrate domestic production with regional markets.

Recent institutional reforms further support this agenda, including the merger of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, intended to strengthen integrated governance across agriculture, land, water, forestry and environmental management. At the same time, the Government continues to address high public debt and macroeconomic fragility through fiscal consolidation, debt restructuring and measures to stabilise inflation and the exchange rate. These are critical steps to restore confidence, reduce input cost pressures, and improve the enabling environment for agricultural investment.

The Lao economy is expected to sustain gradual GDP growth of around 5%, supported by services, electricity exports, manufacturing and a renewed focus on agriculture as a driver of inclusive growth.

Climate change

Approximately 80% of the country is mountainous, with the remaining 20% comprising low-lying plains along the Mekong River and its major tributaries. This geography makes Laos particularly susceptible to intensified rainfall, flooding, landslides and riverbank erosion: risks projected to increase in both frequency and severity by 2030 under climate change scenarios. While Laos is subject to climate change-related impacts, livelihood resilience and other adaptation measures have potential to reduce climate change vulnerability.

With around 62% of the population engaged in agriculture, mainly in rainfed and smallholder-based systems, climate change and extreme weather events pose growing threats to food security, household incomes and economic stability. Recent tropical storms and flooding events, including Tropical Storm Wutip, affected 8 or more provinces, causing widespread damage to farmland, livestock, housing and rural infrastructure, and affecting close to 200,000 people.

These events underscore the increasing human and economic costs of climate shocks and highlight the urgency of strengthening climate resilience in agriculture and rural livelihoods.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity remains a significant risk in Laos, particularly among rural, agriculture-dependent and low-income households. Key drivers include high exposure to droughts, floods and typhoons, declining arable land availability, volatile food and input prices, low agricultural productivity, and limited livelihood diversification. These structural vulnerabilities have been compounded by prolonged macroeconomic pressures.

High inflation and rising living costs have continued to erode household purchasing power. The World Bank reports that around 63% of low-income households have reduced consumption of meat and fish, while a large majority of surveyed households report cutting back on higher-cost nutritious foods due to affordability constraints. Prices of essential food items, including rice, eggs, meat and cooking oil, remain elevated, particularly in urban and market-dependent areas. Reduced intake of protein-rich foods poses risks to nutrition outcomes, child development and long-term human capital formation, a concern also highlighted by UNICEF and FAO nutrition assessments.

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has enacted policies to increase domestic food production and reduce reliance on imports, particularly for rice, livestock and selected horticultural products. However, addressing food insecurity remains complex and will require coordinated structural reforms, including productivity growth in agriculture, improved resilience to climate shocks, stronger value chains, and complementary macroeconomic and monetary measures to stabilise prices and protect vulnerable households.



Partnering with Australia

Australia and Laos are longstanding bilateral and regional partners, sharing Laos' longest unbroken diplomatic relationship. The partnership is characterised by strong development cooperation, growing business ties and deep people-to-people links. Australia and Laos also work closely through regional organisations and initiatives, including Australia's support to Laos during its role as ASEAN Chair in 2024.

Building on more than 7 decades of diplomatic relations, the leaders of Australia and Lao PDR elevated bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Partnership at the Australia–ASEAN Special Summit in March 2024. The Comprehensive Partnership is structured around 4 key pillars:

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

Complementing this framework, the whole-of-government Laos–Australia Development Partnership Plan 2024–2029 sets out 4 priority outcome areas:

- » building effective, accountable states that drive their own development
- » enhancing state and community resilience to external pressures and shocks
- » strengthening Lao connections with Australia and the regional architecture
- » promoting collective action on global challenges affecting the region.

ACIAR has supported agricultural research-for-development partnerships in Laos since 1990, reflecting the sector's central role in the Lao economy. In line with Australia's increased engagement in Southeast Asia through the Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040, ACIAR will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment through research partnerships with NAFRI, the National University of Laos, and regional universities across 6 mutually agreed program areas. In parallel, DFAT is finalising the investment design for the Lao–Australia Climate Resilient Agriculture Initiative, which is expected to commence implementation in 2026. ACIAR has contributed to the scoping and design of this initiative and will continue to strengthen coordination to ensure complementarity and maximise development impact.

Country priorities

The Government of the Lao PDR is committed to transforming its agrifood system to be more sustainable, modern and resilient, while maintaining agriculture's central role in the national economy and a strong focus on supporting smallholders. The Government's Agriculture Development Strategy to 2025 and Vision to 2030 provides the overarching framework, vision and long-term goals for ensuring national food security and the sustainable development of the agriculture, forestry and natural resources sectors. The partnerships that ACIAR brokers and supports between Laos, Australia and international organisations are designed to advance and contribute directly to this national vision.

The Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Environment implements these priorities through the Agricultural Development Plan 2026–2030, which focuses on improving food security, promoting commercial agriculture for domestic and export markets, increasing agricultural productivity, creating rural employment, and strengthening production systems and practices. The recent merger of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment presents an important opportunity for ACIAR and Lao partners to work in a more coordinated and holistic way, integrating agricultural development with natural resource and environmental management.

In 2025, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment commenced an initiative to explore the upgrade of NAFRI into a Lao Academy of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. ACIAR is providing technical and financial support for the feasibility study of this proposed institution. When established, it becomes ACIAR's principal national counterpart for agricultural research collaboration in Laos. ACIAR will continue to refine its long-term strategic program priorities through ongoing consultation with Lao stakeholders to ensure alignment with national needs and reform priorities.

The current strategic priority outcomes guiding ACIAR investments in Laos include:

- » innovative livestock systems that enable sustainable intensification and efficient land use, while strengthening animal health and biosecurity for domestic and international markets
- » sustainable crop production systems, including improved genetics and seed systems, and strengthened value chains for coffee, vegetables, citrus and rice

- » efficient and sustainable forestry industries, including non-timber forest products, with enhanced climate-change resilience
- » improved freshwater fisheries management, including fish habitat restoration and protection of migration routes
- » cost-effective and sustainable rice-based farming systems, supported by mechanisation, diversification, and intensification, alongside improved quality standards, quarantine practices, and value-adding for domestic and export markets
- » improved natural resource management that enhances livelihoods and food security by expanding landuse options for smallholders, with particular attention to water and nutrient management under climate change adaptation
- » stronger institutional training and communication frameworks that support technology adoption by smallholders and build the capacity of researchers and educators.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 18 agricultural research-for-development projects in Laos during 2026–27. Of these, 9 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, Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand)

Mr Ounheuan Saiyasith

Research Program Managers

Visit aciar.gov.au for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Laos, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Crops				
Weed management techniques for mechanised and broadcast lowland crop production systems in Cambodia and Laos CROP/2019/145	Cambodia, Laos	1/01/2021	31/12/2026	\$2,761,861
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				
FishTech: integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia FIS/2018/153	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand	1/01/2020	31/12/2026	\$9,009,335
Optimising fish passage at hydropower sites in the Mekong FIS/2023/133	Laos	1/07/2024	30/06/2029	\$5,700,000
FishTech Plus: growing capacity of Mekong subregion countries to implement technical fisheries solutions into river development programs FIS/2024/141	Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam	1/07/2026	30/06/2030	\$9,045,454

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Forestry				
Building an effective forest health & biosecurity network in Southeast Asia FST/2020/123	Cambodia, Laos	1/11/2021	30/06/2027	\$2,138,717
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	27/08/2030	\$3,179,399
Horticulture				
Safe, fresh, year-round vegetables in Laos through research and development support of smallholder productivity and engagement in collaborative supply chains HORT/2021/143	Laos	1/07/2024	31/12/2030	\$1,722,703
Agroecological management for resilient smallholder banana systems in Asia HORT/2025/126	Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, Philippines	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$6,000,000
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				
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
Pathways for future farmers in Southeast Asia SSS/2022/134	Laos	1/08/2024	30/09/2026	\$957,210
Harnessing the potential of digital agri-market services for inclusive and competitive markets in Laos SSS/2023/105	Laos	1/01/2026	31/12/2030	\$2,010,032
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
Institutional innovations for cattle market-chain development in Laos SSS/2026/106	Laos	1/07/2026	31/12/2027	\$500,000
Soil & Land Management Systems				
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
Water				
Water for rice and fish: co-design & piloting of water management interventions for enhanced productivity of rice-fish systems in the Mekong floodplains WAC/2022/153	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	1/07/2026	30/06/2029	\$2,100,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.

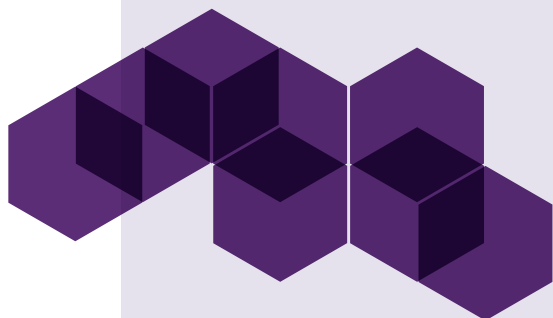


More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website.
Search for the project title or project code.
www.aciar.gov.au

Philippines

A\$5.63 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development



18 projects



15

Bilateral and regional research projects



3

Small projects and research activities



13

Projects specific to the Philippines

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27.





The agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sectors of the Philippines provide livelihoods for about one-quarter of the population and contributed about 8% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2025.

Growth across these sectors has been limited in recent years due to factors including 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 the sustainability of agrifood systems in the Philippines.

With the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and the El Niño that has developed during 2026, the Philippines Department of Agriculture expects negative impacts on about 10 million farmers and fisherfolk. Rising energy costs are threatening the upcoming planting season, and reduced production of key agricultural commodities is anticipated because of higher fuel and fertiliser costs.

The Philippines aims to modernise agricultural production and agribusiness by improving production efficiency, expanding market access and strengthening climate resilience through national and local government programs and a strong research and development program. National investment prioritises rice, corn (maize), livestock and high-value crops. Farmers and fisherfolk also have access to agricultural credit and insurance against losses caused by natural disasters, crop diseases and pest infestations. Local governments in agricultural provinces complement national efforts through development programs that respond to context-specific issues affecting the agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sectors. Science, technology and innovation to drive modernisation in these sectors are prioritised through the Harmonised National Research and Development Agenda, which is the blueprint for the country's research and development investment. ACIAR's program in the Philippines is anchored in these national research and development priorities.

In 2026, in addition to subsidies for farming and fishing households, the Philippine Government is focused on fast-tracking renewable energy programs to support agricultural and fisheries production. This presents an opportunity for ACIAR to explore collaborative research in this area.

Rural communities

More than half of the population of the Philippines lives in rural areas, where poverty rates are significantly higher than in urban areas. Most rural households rely on the agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sectors for their livelihoods. Studies indicate that rural transformation has been slow because of low rural investment, gaps in market infrastructure, limited inclusive policy and research, and continuing land issues. The average farmer is also between 57 and 59 years of age. Increasingly, children from farming families are moving to urban jobs or overseas work, as there are limited incentives for young people to engage in the agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sectors. This loss of 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 in projects with ACIAR.

Climate change

The Philippines is an archipelagic country which is vulnerable to climate change impacts, including rising sea levels, increasing temperatures and more frequent extreme weather events. The country is regularly exposed to cyclones, landslides, floods and droughts, and these hazards are expected to become more frequent as climate variability increases.

Extreme weather events affect farming activities, coastal communities and people whose livelihoods depend on climate-sensitive natural resources. While these sectors bear significant climate impacts, the agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sectors are also the second-largest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

There are knowledge gaps about locality-specific agroecological and socioeconomic impacts of climate risks, which are a significant barrier to achieving climate-resilient agrifood systems in rural communities. In addition, the increasing frequency of climate events often keeps national and local programs focused on reactive responses and diverts attention from mitigation and climate resilience initiatives that could address climate impacts more sustainably.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity is a significant issue for the poorest and most vulnerable people in the Philippines. According to the FAO's *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023* report, 44.7% of the 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 the impacts 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 because their incomes are often insufficient to meet daily needs. Food insecurity has significant negative effects on health outcomes, contributing to increasing malnutrition, chronic disease and reduced overall wellbeing for many Filipinos. One of the most serious impacts is on children: about one-quarter of the child population is undernourished, stunted and experiencing poor cognitive development.

Partnering with Australia

The Philippines has been one of Australia's longstanding bilateral partners, formalised in 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 the 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, academic, 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 that identifies the joint strategic goal, objectives, and priority research and capacity development agenda for 2024–2030. It is anchored in the Philippines Harmonised National Research and Development Agenda for the agriculture, aquatic and natural resources sector and aligned with the Australian Development Partnership Plan for 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.

These strategic objectives are underpinned by cross-cutting objectives that are 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.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 18 agricultural research-for-development projects in the Philippines during 2026–27. 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, Philippines

Ms Hazel Aniceto

Research Program Managers

Visit aciarc.gov.au for contact details

Current and proposed projects in the Philippines, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Agribusiness				
Improving the enabling environment to effectively scale good agriculture and aquaculture practice in the Philippines AGB/2024/150	Philippines	1/08/2026	31/07/2031	\$5,000,000
Pathways to enduring peace: enhancing market linkages for climate-resilient agriculture in Mindanao AGB/2025/124	Philippines	1/07/2026	30/06/2031	\$3,500,000
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	31/12/2026	\$2,855,422
Institutional effectiveness and political economy of coral reef restoration in the Philippines FIS/2021/112	Philippines	1/09/2021	31/12/2026	\$2,330,305
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
Enhancing <i>Penaeus monodon</i> health and production in the Philippines through harnessing genetic potential, surveillance, and novel therapeutic approaches FIS/2025/121	Philippines	1/12/2026	31/12/2030	\$3,810,000
Multi-scale governance support for coral restoration in the Philippines FIS/2026/114	Philippines	1/01/2027	31/12/2031	\$2,570,000
Horticulture				
Transforming mango production through IPM and smarter pesticide use in Southeast Asia and Australia HORT/2022/125	Indonesia, Philippines	1/06/2026	31/12/2030	\$5,457,457
Benchmarking mango breeding and genomics HORT/2024/122	Philippines	1/12/2024	30/11/2026	\$482,833
Agroecological management for resilient smallholder banana systems in Asia HORT/2025/126	Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, Philippines	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$6,000,000
Future-proofing mango: genomic conservation and climate adaptation strategies HORT/2025/127	Philippines	1/07/2027	30/05/2032	\$4,500,000
Livestock Systems				
Country research update and policy support to the Philippines' national surveillance and control programs for African swine fever, avian influenza and antimicrobial resistance: a One Health systems approach to food animal security, public health resilience LS/2022/162	Philippines	12/12/2022	1/10/2026	\$1,000,000
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
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
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
Pathways for future farmers in Philippines SSS/2025/125	Philippines	1/07/2026	30/06/2030	\$2,000,000
Soil & Land Management				
Managing heavy metals and soil contaminants in vegetable production to ensure food safety and environmental health in the Philippines SLAM/2020/117	Philippines	1/02/2023	31/12/2027	\$2,274,565
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 2026–27.



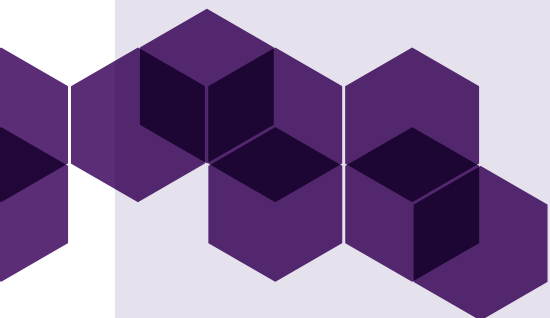
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Timor-Leste

A\$3.75 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development



15 projects



9

Bilateral and regional research projects



6

Small projects and research activities



13

Projects specific to Timor-Leste

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27.



The agriculture sector is the primary livelihood source for most of the population of Timor-Leste, with approximately 70% of people living in rural areas.

Although some progress has been made, Timor-Leste's agriculture sector faces structural constraints and is characterised by low productivity and the country by chronic food insecurity. Agriculture employs almost 38% of the workforce and is a vital component of non-oil gross domestic product (GDP). However, the sector remains underdeveloped, contributing to heavy reliance on imported food and limited domestic income generation. Low productivity is often linked to reliance on conventional practices, limited inputs and inadequate infrastructure. Timor-Leste's National Strategic Development Plan therefore prioritises sustainable improvements in agricultural productivity, diversification and profitability, against which ACIAR's objectives closely align.

Enhancing cropping systems in Timor-Leste is a strategic imperative and a top priority to address persistent malnutrition, mitigate import dependency, and drive national economic growth. With rice and staple food demand mostly met by imports, investing in resilient agricultural systems is critical to reducing widespread rural poverty and securing sustainable national development.

Livestock is critical to local livelihoods but faces low productivity, limited feed and water, and increasing climate-related shocks. The sector is also affected by major disease risks, including the African swine fever outbreak, endemic brucellosis in cattle and Newcastle disease in poultry. In response, the government and international partners such as Australia are supporting sustainable development, innovation and market access to build more resilient agrifood systems.

Fisheries are important for nutrition and livelihoods, supplying 31% of animal-source protein. Fish consumption was reported in 2026 to have risen from 6.0 kg to 8.7 kg per person per year, but it remains well below the target of 15 kg per person per year, set by the National Aquaculture Development Strategy 2012–2030. The global average of fish consumption is more than 20 kg.

Forests cover more than 60% of Timor-Leste and are central to rural livelihoods. However, rapid deforestation during post-conflict recovery, particularly the reliance on forests for fuelwood, subsistence agriculture and unauthorised timber harvesting, combined with unsustainable land use, have resulted in soil and landscape degradation.

Since independence in 2002, Timor-Leste has worked to reduce chronic poverty and address longstanding social challenges. Integrating social science and inclusive development approaches that support rural youth, women and communities are essential to accelerating national economic growth and improving overall wellbeing.

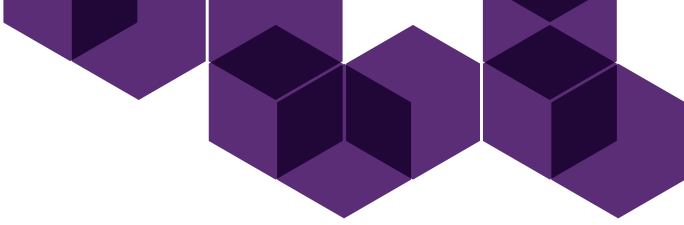
Rural communities

Rural communities in Timor-Leste, especially in mountainous and coastal regions, face significant climate risks, which threaten infrastructure and livelihoods. Difficult terrain and dispersed populations also limit access to markets, income-generating opportunities and essential services. Various initiatives focus on enhancing infrastructure, boosting agricultural output and improving disaster readiness, with the goal of strengthening resilience and increasing food security across these vulnerable communities.

Timor-Leste's demographic structure, with 60% of the rural population under 24 years of age, highlights a critical youth reliance on subsistence agriculture. With more than 400,000 rural residents under the age of 24, strengthening agricultural resilience is crucial for securing future livelihoods. This youth demographic presents both challenges and opportunities and represents a valuable resource for agricultural innovation and community development.

Political and economic environment

Economic growth in Timor-Leste is projected to grow on average by 4.0% in 2026 and 2027. Inflation is forecast to increase gradually, with an average of 1.9% for 2026–27. However, Timor-Leste continues to depend heavily on its Petroleum Fund, raising concerns about long-term fiscal sustainability. The Ninth Constitutional Government is focusing on economic diversification, especially through its Blue Economy Policy, which seeks to use marine resources sustainably while enhancing coastal livelihoods. Strategic reforms are being implemented to reduce reliance on oil income and strengthen non-oil sectors such as agriculture and tourism. Despite progress, challenges remain, including vulnerability to climate impacts, limited absorptive capacity and risks associated with international trade conflicts. Continued investment in infrastructure, agriculture, human resources and governance is crucial to achieving inclusive and resilient growth.



Climate change

Timor-Leste faces growing climate change risks, including rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, droughts, floods and landslides. These hazards threaten agriculture, water resources, infrastructure and coastal communities, while intensifying soil erosion and reducing crop yields, which worsens food insecurity and poverty. Timor-Leste is ranked 29th of 190 countries, in order of climate change vulnerability, by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative.

People in the rural and mountainous areas are the most vulnerable. The government is advancing climate adaptation through its National Adaptation Plan and related 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 experiences food and nutrition insecurity, a persistent issue despite improvements in essential services. The prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age remains alarmingly high at just under 50%. Domestic food production falls well short of demand, resulting in reliance on imports for about 60% of food requirements. In addition, diets are often imbalanced, driven by heavy reliance on cereal staples and insufficient consumption of animal-source protein.

The Government of Timor-Leste has a vision that, by 2030, Timor-Leste will be free from hunger and malnutrition, and Timorese people will enjoy healthy and productive lives. The government is seeking opportunities and strategies to improve food and nutrition security and has ratified a decree-law governing the National Council for Food Security, Sovereignty and Nutrition (CONSSAN-TL), establishing a regulatory framework for the implementation of national nutrition and food security policies.

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 defines 4 joint objectives to guide Australia's, and Timor-Leste's shared development priorities:

- » quality services
- » inclusive and sustainable economic growth
- » a sovereign, stable and resilient nation
- » supporting all Timorese people to equally thrive and prosper.

Australia aligns its aid with the Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030, with a major focus on the agriculture sector via collaborations with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and research institutions to improve productivity and economic diversification. ACIAR also considers other key 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 2 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 improve food security. ACIAR's engagement for 2026–27 aligns with these priorities and involves close collaboration with key institutions, including CONSSAN-TL, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the National University of Timor-Lorosa'e, civil society organisations, local non-government organisations and community groups. These partnerships aim to enhance agricultural productivity, improve food security and address nutritional needs.

Timor-Leste has 5 key goals for agricultural research for development:

- » improving crop productivity, profitability and sustainability
- » improving livestock systems to combat nutritional insecurity and increase return
- » enhancing biosecurity and disease management to increase smallholder productivity through sustainable farming practices and improved crop and livestock management
- » developing 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.

ACIAR contributes to Timor-Leste's development by investing in research that aligns with the 5 key goals, as well as supports the implementation of the Consolidated National Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Security.

The objectives of the 2026–27 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 development, supporting the growth of a skilled and resilient agricultural workforce.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 15 agricultural research-for-development projects in Timor-Leste during 2026–27. 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, Timor-Leste

Mr Luis de Almeida

Research Program Managers

Visit aciar.gov.au for contact details



Current and proposed projects in Timor-Leste, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Crops				
Agricultural innovations for communities – intensified and diverse farming systems for Timor-Leste (AI-Com 2) CROP/2021/131	Timor-Leste	1/11/2022	31/10/2027	\$3,198,681
Biological control of mistflower (<i>Ageratina riparia</i>) in Timor-Leste CROP/2025/144	Timor-Leste	1/05/2026	30/06/2027	\$499,892
Fisheries				
Improved nutrition outcomes from safe aquatic foods and sustainable fisheries in Timor-Leste FIS/2025/118	Timor-Leste	1/07/2026	31/12/2030	\$3,750,000
Building foundational fisheries management capacity in Timor-Leste FIS/2026/107	Timor-Leste	1/10/2026	1/04/2028	\$258,687
Horticulture				
Advancing climate-smart pest management and plant health education through localised solutions in Timor-Leste HORT/2025/142	Timor-Leste	1/01/2027	31/12/2029	\$1,500,000
Livestock Systems				
Bacteria enteropathy and nutrition in infants and children in Timor-Leste through a One Health approach LS/2021/126	Timor-Leste	15/04/2023	31/12/2027	\$2,100,000
Developing strategies to reduce brucellosis transmission in Timor-Leste based on One Health collaboration LS/2022/161	Timor-Leste	5/12/2022	1/10/2026	\$999,943
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
Understanding Timor-Leste coffee value chains, their enabling environment and the potential benefit for smallholder producers AGB/2024/129	Timor-Leste	24/11/2025	16/05/2027	\$445,000
Extending integrated analysis for improved food system outcomes in Timor-Leste and the Pacific region FIS/2022/121	Kiribati, Timor-Leste	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
Pathways to improved biosecurity outcomes for Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea SSS/2025/137	Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste	1/10/2026	30/09/2030	\$4,850,000
Pathways to prosperity: scaling community-led water and food system innovations for resilient communities in Timor-Leste SSS/2026/104	Timor-Leste	3/05/2027	30/04/2032	\$3,569,690
Strengthening evidence use for resilient food systems in Timor-Leste through improved knowledge governance SSS/2026/116	Timor-Leste	1/08/2026	31/07/2028	\$500,000
Soil & Land Management				
Increasing on-farm labour productivity for sustainable production, nutrition and inclusive livelihood gains in Timor-Leste SLAM/2020/141	Timor-Leste	1/07/2024	30/06/2028	\$2,950,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.

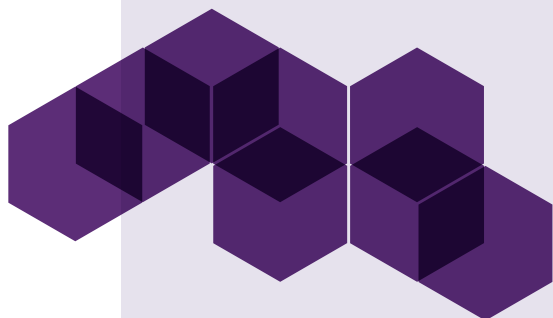


More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.
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Vietnam

A\$7.50 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development



15 projects



8

Bilateral and regional research projects



7

Small projects and research activities



11

Projects specific to Vietnam

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27.



Agriculture, fisheries and forestry are central to Vietnam's socioeconomic development. Despite a structural shift away from agricultural employment, these sectors remain vital to rural livelihoods, food security and climate adaptation.

In 2025, agriculture, fisheries and forestry contributed close to 12% of gross domestic product (GDP), employed 25% of the workforce and provided livelihoods for most rural households engaged in agriculture and related activities. From 2021 to 2025, these sectors grew by around 3.5–4.0% annually, contributing about 5–6% to national value-added growth. Over the same period, agriculture, fisheries and forestry exports expanded by about 10% per year, reaching a record US\$70.09 billion in 2025, around 12% higher than in 2024.

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

Sustainability and climate resilience are now central to Vietnam's agricultural development strategy. Government policy prioritises innovation and digital transformation, together with a shift towards high-value, low-emission production systems and improved resource management. These reforms aim to meet increasingly stringent global market standards while supporting Vietnam's commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. This transformation aligns with Vietnam's broader 'New Era of Development', which 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 progressed strongly, with substantial poverty reduction and increasingly diversified rural economies. The government's New Rural Standards 2026–2030 emphasise sustainable and inclusive growth, with a stronger focus on climate adaptation and digitalisation.

However, demographic shifts are presenting new challenges. The rural population accounted for 61% of the national population in 2025 but is steadily declining because of urbanisation. Agricultural labour is shrinking, driven by vocational training that supports transitions into non-farm sectors and a growing preference for non-agricultural employment. Youth migration, especially among people aged 18–35, is contributing to labour shortages and an ageing population in many regions.

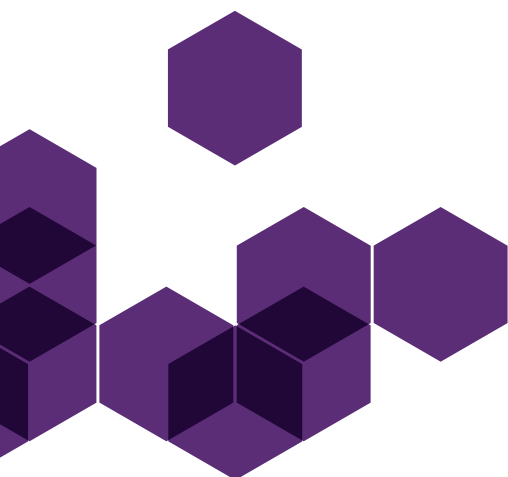
In addition, deep-rooted challenges remain. Pockets of extreme poverty persist, particularly in upland and ethnic minority communities. Rural girls and ethnic minorities face lower rates of educational completion, while climate vulnerability continues to constrain livelihoods in many areas.

Political and economic environment

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

In 2026–27, Vietnam enters the 'new era' marked by substantial administrative restructuring. The country streamlined governance by abolishing district-level tiers and merging provinces to improve efficiency. The 14th National Congress in early 2026 reinforced this centralised leadership and set ambitious double-digit growth targets. This restructuring also creates an opportunity to modernise agriculture and rural development through larger production zones, improved infrastructure and stronger value chains. To realise this potential fully and ensure equitable benefits, strong oversight and inclusive planning will be required.

As Vietnam deepens global integration, trade agreements such as the European Union–Vietnam Free Trade Agreement and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership have raised the bar for quality and sustainability standards. In addition, emerging tariff risks highlight the need for market diversification and upgraded standards across agrifood supply chains.



Climate change

Vietnam is highly vulnerable to climate change, ranked 53rd of 190 countries, in order of vulnerability, by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. Vietnam faces rising temperatures, sea-level rise, salinity intrusion and more frequent storms. The Mekong Delta is especially exposed, with salinity intrusion now reaching up to 50 kilometres inland and threatening to displace 6 to 12 million people from the region in coming decades.

In response, Vietnam has committed to achieving 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. Vietnam's domestic carbon market, scheduled for full operation by 2028 following a pilot phase in 2025, aims to incentivise private sector participation and catalyse innovation in low-emission agriculture by monetising carbon sequestration and emission reductions.

One flagship initiative is the 'one million hectares of high-quality, low-emission rice program', which uses 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 nutritional terms. Poor and near-poor households, including those in urban areas, struggle to afford nutrient-rich foods. Child malnutrition remains a concern in vulnerable regions. The government has committed to maintaining 3.5 million hectares of rice land to ensure domestic food security while upgrading 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 2 countries elevated their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, making Australia a top-tier partner of Vietnam.

ACIAR has worked with Vietnam since 1993. As Vietnam enters a new era of development, ACIAR is well placed to support its goals through research-for-development partnerships. The ACIAR–Vietnam collaboration strategy aligns with 4 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, now the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen collaboration in agriculture and promote the leadership and proactive direction of local partners in Vietnam. The memorandum reflects a shared commitment 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 help shape 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 faces significant human resource constraints. These include an ageing rural workforce, limited interest in agriculture as a career among young people, 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, scholarships and institutional partnerships. These programs support the development of skilled scientists, extension officers and farmers. The ACIAR alumni network also plays a key role in building research leadership and fostering multidisciplinary collaboration.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 15 agricultural research-for-development projects in Vietnam during 2026–27. 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, Vietnam

Mr Tran Nam Anh

Research Program Managers

Visit aciarc.gov.au for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Vietnam, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Agribusiness				
Integrating smallholder households and farm production systems into commercial beef supply chains in Vietnam AGB/2020/189	Vietnam	1/07/2023	30/06/2027	\$2,780,003
Digital monitoring of VietGAP compliance for high-value domestic markets and potential export in smallholder fruit value chains from the northwest of 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	1/11/2025	30/06/2027	\$538,463
Strengthening a climate-smart premium rice value chain with smallholders in the Mekong Delta AGB/2025/154	Vietnam	1/07/2026	31/07/2027	\$497,298
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				
Enabling high-quality low-emissions rice in Vietnam using real-time remote sensing-based field-level monitoring tools CROP/2025/143	Vietnam	1/07/2026	30/06/2027	\$331,700
Addressing key technical bottlenecks in the grouper supply chain in Vietnam (and Australia) through manufactured feed and hatchery developments that aim to improve SME sector profitability FIS/2022/148	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	31/12/2026	\$478,224
Fishtech plus: growing capacity of Mekong subregion countries to implement technical fisheries solutions into river development programs FIS/2024/141	Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam	1/07/2026	30/06/2030	\$9,045,454
Supporting development of the mabé pearl sector in Khánh Hòa, Vietnam FIS/2025/117	Vietnam	1/01/2027	31/12/2031	\$2,795,913
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				
Scaling low-emission rice in Vietnam through circular economy innovation SSS/2025/146	Vietnam	12/01/2026	30/06/2027	\$499,963
Soil & Land Management				
Expanding climate resilient farming systems in Vietnam's Mekong River Delta region SLAM/2025/114	Vietnam	12/11/2025	31/12/2026	\$500,000
Water				
Water for rice and fish: co-design & piloting of water management interventions for enhanced productivity of rice–fish systems in the Mekong floodplains WAC/2022/153	Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	1/07/2026	30/06/2029	\$2,100,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.

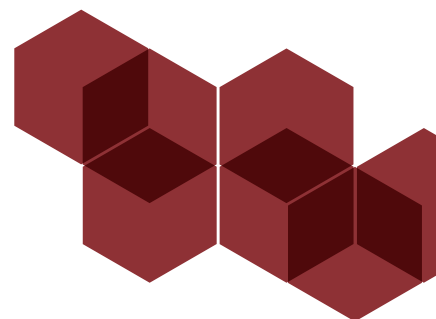


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4



ACIAR in South Asia



Regional program 2026–27



Partner countries

Bangladesh
India
Nepal
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

A\$11.25 million

Investment in agricultural research
for development



18 projects

South Asia is an immensely diverse and densely populated region. It is home to about 2 billion people – about one-quarter of the world's population.

Strong economic growth and social transformation have led to a substantial reduction in poverty throughout South Asia. While changes to the World Bank measures of poverty have become more stringent, poverty rates have declined, from approximately 40% in 2005 to 4% in 2024. Based on World Bank data for 2024, 2.4% of the population of Nepal, 5.3% for India, 5.9% for Bangladesh and 16.5% for Pakistan, live in extreme poverty.

Poverty is declining, however the region remains classified as 'developing'. South Asia had a United Nations' Human Development Index of 0.672 in 2023. By comparison, the Human Development Index for developing countries was 0.712, for least developed countries 0.560, and for OECD countries 0.916, in 2023.

Although every country has made long-term gains in reducing hunger since 2000, the region's trajectory has recently slowed. The prevalence of undernourishment has risen since 2016, and international indices for hunger are rising in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Malnutrition rates are high, with poor diet quality being a major contributor. High levels of undernutrition (stunting and wasting) and micronutrient deficiencies persist even as the prevalence of overweight, obesity and related noncommunicable diseases rises.

Half of the population of South Asia depends on agriculture for their livelihoods. 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.

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 factors that influence the nature and potential for agriculture. India has 15 distinct agroecological zones. Nepal has 3 distinct topographical zones. Pakistan has 10 agroecological 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 and parts of India and Sri Lanka are frequently affected 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 climate change is expected to compound the challenges facing 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. These technologies aim to optimise irrigation, manage groundwater depletion (particularly in India and Pakistan) and improve soil health to increase productivity in farming systems.

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. Shared pressures on land, water and natural resources, including climate variability and falling watertables, require region-wide solutions.

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. Crop diversification beyond cereals is a growing priority throughout the region for improving resilience in smallholder farming systems. India is the world's largest producer and consumer of pulses. However, the average per capita consumption is approximately 50% of the recommended daily intake.

Fish consumption varies widely across South Asia. Fish is a particularly important source of animal protein in Bangladesh and in coastal and north-eastern areas of India, where freshwater fisheries and aquaculture are well established. Southern Indian states and Sri Lanka consume marine species. More sustainable aquaculture and improved cold chains and market access could increase the availability of fish for more communities across the region.

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 are 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. Despite having some of 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 watertables are falling across the region. 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 but is hampered by geopolitical tensions.

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 agricultural and natural resource 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 ACIAR investments in the region, contributing to the sustainability of research outcomes and community resilience.

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 Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

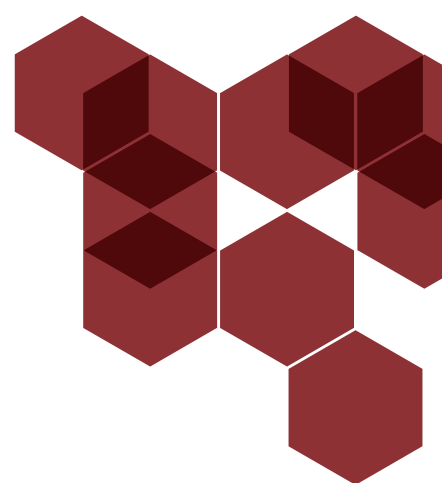
Research in these areas looks to improve productivity and livelihoods in marginalised communities, sustainably improve the productivity and resilience of crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry systems, identify appropriate policy reforms and increase adoption of technology (including post-harvest management).

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 significant issues in the region. Addressing these could play a key 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 research areas that ACIAR supports include climate-smart agriculture, water conservation, sustainable pest and disease management, the development of climate-resilient crops, and modern agricultural technologies, such as biotechnology and robotics to improve productivity. Research is also 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, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Crops				
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	30/06/2027	\$2,000,000
Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan CROP/2020/167	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/12/2021	31/12/2026	\$2,397,261
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
Horticulture				
Improving smallholder well-being through participation in modern value chains: sustaining future growth in the Pakistan citrus industry HORT/2020/129	Pakistan	1/01/2022	30/06/2027	\$1,890,000
Agroecological management for resilient smallholder banana systems in Asia HORT/2025/126	Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, Philippines	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$6,000,000
Livestock Systems				
Moving further towards formalised sheep and goat value chains in Pakistan and Ethiopia through business-oriented breeder and producer groups LS/2023/132	Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/09/2024	31/12/2028	\$2,400,000

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
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
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				
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
Climate adaptive livelihoods in Sindh: locally led pathways for inclusive transformation CLIM/2022/136	Pakistan	1/06/2026	30/11/2030	\$3,200,000
Cropping system intensification in the salt-affected coastal zones of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India LWR/2014/073	Bangladesh, India	1/11/2015	30/09/2026	\$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
Water resilient rural communities in the southern Indus Basin, Pakistan WAC/2021/134	Pakistan	1/09/2026	28/02/2031	\$3,400,000
Spring water management, agriculture and resilient livelihoods in the mid-hills 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	\$4,269,000
Evaluating effectiveness of water infrastructure investments in Pakistan WAC/2024/146	Pakistan	3/11/2025	2/11/2026	\$497,342
Sustainable groundwater management for food security and livelihood in the Eastern Gangetic Plain WAC/2025/152	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	1/10/2026	30/09/2030	\$4,900,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.



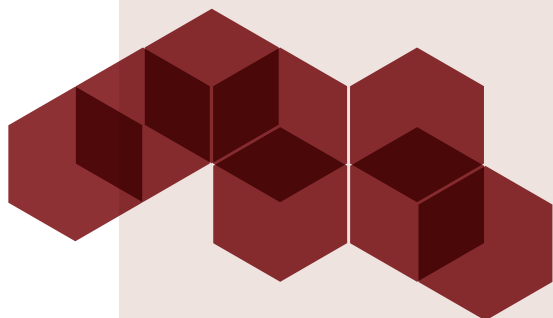
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Bangladesh

A\$4.50 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development



10 projects



10

Bilateral and regional research projects



0

Small projects and research activities



4

Projects specific to Bangladesh

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27



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 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 in livestock production and related activities. The total forested area of Bangladesh is 17% of the total land area of the country, and the forestry sector accounts for about 3% of 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. The country has a complex political and economic environment, with significant political instability and the need for structural reforms to maintain development momentum.

Rural communities

Bangladesh is urbanising at a much quicker rate than other countries in South Asia. In 2023 it was the most densely populated country in South Asia, with 1300 people per square kilometre, compared with India at 483.

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 farmers to volatile global markets and intensified competition.

Diversification of agricultural practices is needed, as well as the development of value-adding opportunities and non-agriculture enterprises to improve livelihoods in rural areas. However, social inequity also contributes to poverty, such as lack of education and access to infrastructure and resources.

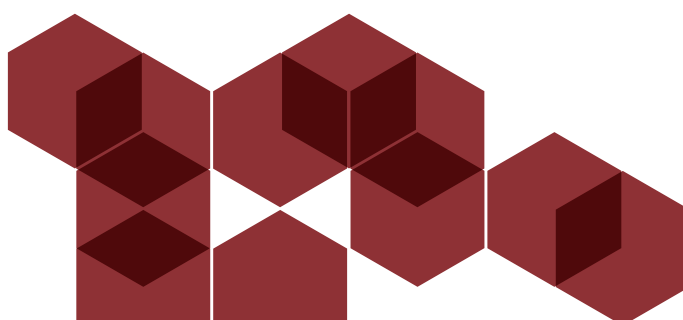
Political and economic environment

The immediate imperatives of the new Government of Bangladesh, elected in February 2026 after an 18-month interim government, are to deliver on structural reforms, address human rights and manage foreign relations. The previous government maintained a concerted effort to support development of the agriculture sector. There were many strategies, policies and plans developed to guide this effort, including Vision 2041, the 8th Five-Year Plan, the Master Plan for Agricultural Development in the South, The Perspective Plan 2021–2041, the 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.

Bangladesh faces a complex mix of economic challenges, including slowing economic growth (projected at 3.9% in the financial year ending June 2026), persistent high inflation, a stressed banking sector and high levels of income inequality.

Climate change

Bangladesh is ranked 30th of 190 countries, in order of climate change vulnerability, by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. Adaptation to 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 the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, which focuses on developing approaches to the sustainable management of water, environment and land resources. Bangladesh plays a vital and active role in international and regional forums, particularly the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations and the South Asian Association for 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, improve the productivity of low-lying areas and rainfed cropping systems, and increase rural incomes. This 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, more than one million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar have taken shelter in the Cox's Bazar area of Bangladesh, adding to the country's strain on food resources.

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 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's pulse production systems, conservation agriculture technologies and related mechanisation, saline land management and adaptation to climate change. ACIAR-supported programs in Bangladesh have focused on 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 considering 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 ACIAR's contribution to regional collaboration.

The principle underpinning the strategy 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 of the Bangladesh National Agriculture Policy 2018 that align with ACIAR objectives and the ACIAR–Bangladesh Collaboration Strategy 2021–2030 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.

ACIAR-supported research focuses on crop production (particularly pulses), farming system diversification, conservation agriculture and natural resource management. Research is centred on agricultural systems of north, north-west and coastal Bangladesh, with an emphasis on developing climate change adaptation strategies and capacity development. Often, projects are part of regional projects across the Eastern Gangetic Plain, with sites also in India and Nepal.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 10 agricultural research-for-development projects in Bangladesh during 2026–27. Of these, 4 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, South Asia

Dr Pratibha Singh

Research Program Managers

Visit aciar.gov.au for contact details



Current and proposed projects in Bangladesh, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Crops				
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	30/06/2027	\$2,000,000
Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan CROP/2020/167	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/12/2021	31/12/2026	\$2,397,261
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
Social Systems, Policy & Economics				
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
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				
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
Cropping system intensification in the salt-affected coastal zones of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India LWR/2014/073	Bangladesh, India	1/11/2015	30/09/2026	\$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
Sustainable groundwater management for food security and livelihood in the Eastern Gangetic Plain WAC/2025/152	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	1/10/2026	30/09/2030	\$4,900,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.



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\$1.13 million

2026–27 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 2026–27.

India is 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 and allied activities are a major source of employment and account 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

India is the world's 5th-largest economy. With almost half the population deriving its primary livelihood from agriculture, rural prosperity is at the core of India's development agenda. The political landscape remains highly sensitive to agricultural issues, with the government frequently using fiscal support and price mechanisms to maintain rural stability. The government uses various schemes to provide income support to landholding farmer families, such as minimum support prices. The National Budget 2026 envisions an AI-enabled platform for farm advisory, dedicated programs for high-value crops and credit support for livestock, horticulture and fisheries value chains. The budget also prioritises women in agriculture through technological empowerment and financial support.

Climate change

Climate change presents a significant challenge to India's long-term food security. Rural India is highly vulnerable to climate change, with 70% of the rural population reliant on climate-dependent agricultural activities for their livelihoods. Climate is the most important determinant of crop productivity, and about 60% of the cultivated area is rainfed agriculture. Without implementation of adaptation measures, rainfed rice yields in India are projected to fall by 20% by 2050 and 47% by 2080. The main adverse impacts of climate change on agriculture are increased temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, weather hazards, declining soil and water quality, intrusion of sea water on land, and biotic and abiotic stresses arising from climatic extremes.

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 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. Consistent with *A New Roadmap for Australia's Economic Engagement with India*, ACIAR will explore the next generation of partnerships with India based on south-south and triangular relationships. Current ACIAR engagement focuses on regional issues of natural resource management and climate change.

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 from those in Australia, there are common technical challenges that 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.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 4 agricultural research-for-development projects in India during 2026–27, 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 \(2nd Edition\)](#).

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- » equitable research benefits and outcomes for all community members
- » increased scientific and policy capability of individuals and partner institutions.

Regional Manager, South Asia

Dr Pratibha Singh

Research Program Managers

Visit aciarc.gov.au for contact details

Current and proposed projects in India, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Crops				
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
Water				
Cropping system intensification in the salt-affected coastal zones of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India LWR/2014/073	Bangladesh, India	1/11/2015	30/09/2026	\$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
Sustainable groundwater management for food security and livelihood in the Eastern Gangetic Plain WAC/2025/152	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	1/10/2026	30/09/2030	\$4,900,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.

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

Nepal

A\$1.69 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development

3 projects



3

Bilateral and regional research projects



0

Small projects and research activities



1

Project specific to Nepal

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27.

Agriculture is the largest sector of Nepal's economy, and remarkably diverse due to the range of climates and geographies in the country.

Agriculture in the lowland terai rice–wheat farming systems (part of the Eastern Gangetic Plain) is vastly different to those in the mixed crop–livestock–tree farming systems of the hill and mountain areas. However, there are common challenges including the need for seed system improvements; degradation of natural resources; underdeveloped agricultural institutions and policies; declining availability of labour; and access to productive technologies and mechanisation to improve farm household livelihoods.

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

Nepal is very prone to natural disasters, ranking in the top 20 disaster-prone countries in the world. This exacerbates the impact of underlying poverty and food insecurity and compounds the effects of climate change.

Rural communities

The agriculture sector is dominated by subsistence farming, with the country relying heavily on imports of agricultural commodities, mainly from India. The mountainous terrain of much of Nepal limits the access that rural people have to services, jobs and markets. Due to limited income and employment opportunities, many members of rural households migrate to work overseas, and remittances have become a major part of the national economy.

Political and economic environment

The new government elected in March 2026 has a strong mandate for institutional reform and has outlined its commitment and plans to reduce government interference in bureaucracy, judiciary and educational institutions. Another challenge for the government will be employment creation and economic growth while focusing on its commitment to reduce the individual tax burden while expanding the tax base.

Climate change

The impact of climate change is diverse and complex. Nepal's mountainous regions have experienced glacial melt and extreme rainfall, making the region susceptible to flash floods, soil erosion and landslides. On the floodplain region – the Terai – impacts alternate between severe riverine floods and landslides after intense monsoon downpours, to post-monsoon drought and reduced seasonal runoff due to rising temperature and less snow and glacial melt in the Himalayas. Climate change is a serious threat for agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. Infrastructure and crops are physically affected by extreme events, but incremental changes in temperature and water availability can change growing seasons for crops and favour new pests and diseases.

Food insecurity

While about 20% of the population in Nepal lives in poverty and affected by malnutrition, 13% is described as food insecure. Rural populations in the mountain and hill regions are the most food insecure in the country, as are populations who rely on rain fed agriculture, cropping cycles and weather for food production. Nepal's domestic agricultural output falls short of consumer demand, making the nation vulnerable to global food price fluctuations and supply chain disruptions.

Partnering with Australia

Australia and Nepal celebrated 65 years of diplomatic relations in 2025. The Nepal Agricultural Research Council has been an ACIAR partner in many projects. 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 for Nepal's collaboration with ACIAR to improve the food and nutrition security of rural communities.

Country priorities

Nepal's Agriculture Development Strategy 2015–2035 outlines a vision for a self-reliant, sustainable, competitive and inclusive agriculture sector that drives economic growth and contributes to improved livelihoods and food and nutrition security. The 20-year strategy aims to halve poverty in less than 10 years through an agriculture-led economy achieving improved governance, higher productivity, profitable commercialisation and increased competitiveness. It also guides policies that include women, and states that all agricultural programs will be designed to benefit women. It promotes women's organisations and agri-enterprises led by women through specific programs and recommends equal wages for women labourers. The strategy also promotes action to raise awareness of women's rights to land, and builds the capacity of women to manage irrigation, water resources and finances.

The ACIAR program during 2026–27 focuses on sustainable food production systems through effective water management in the Eastern Gangetic Plain. Through cooperative research linkages between Nepal, India and Bangladesh, the projects address priorities of determining pathways to crop diversification that are equitable and sustainable. A project on springwater management in the mid-hills region addresses priorities of climate change, nutrition and 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 2026–27, ACIAR will engage alumni from Nepal in regional alumni activities to focus on meaningful engagement and knowledge exchange.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 3 agricultural research-for-development projects in Nepal during 2026–27, of which one is 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, South Asia

Dr Pratibha Singh

Research Program Managers

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Current and proposed projects in Nepal, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
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
Springwater management, agriculture and resilient livelihoods in the midhills of Nepal WAC/2022/151	Nepal	1/10/2024	30/09/2028	\$2,800,000
Sustainable groundwater management for food security and livelihood in the Eastern Gangetic Plain WAC/2025/152	Bangladesh, India, Nepal	1/10/2026	30/09/2030	\$4,900,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.

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

Pakistan

A\$3.94 million

2026–27 investment in agricultural research for development

8 projects



7

Bilateral and regional research projects



1

Small projects and research activities



5

Projects specific to Pakistan

Note: Additional projects may be commissioned during 2026–27.



Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of Pakistan and underpins national food security and export performance.

Pakistan has a population of 260 million people and is the second largest economy in South Asia. Growth of GDP in 2025 was below 3.0%, with the agriculture sector contributing around 24% of GDP. The agriculture sector employs about 36% of the workforce, with the majority being women, and remains a primary source of livelihoods in rural areas.

Agriculture also supports allied industries including textiles, food processing, fertiliser production and livestock (meat processing and packaging, and feed manufacturing). Growth in farming stimulates demand for inputs, increases factory production and boosts rural incomes, strengthening the economy from the ground up. It provides 70–80% of the country's total export earnings, including raw materials for major industries like textiles and rice processing. Livestock production is a critical income source for more than 8 million rural families, contributing substantially to household livelihoods.

Rural communities

About 60% of Pakistan's population lives in rural areas, despite rapid urbanisation of the nation. Rural communities underpin the economy through agriculture, but many face entrenched poverty, heightened exposure to economic and environmental shocks, and limited access to essential services and infrastructure. In 2023–24, about 60.4 million people in Pakistan lived below the national poverty line, and an estimated 44% of rural households experienced poverty. Inflation has further intensified hardship in rural areas, deepening poverty and limiting access to basic necessities. Smallholder farmers often lack reliable access to storage facilities and markets, and may depend on agents in the value chain, weakening their bargaining power and reducing profits. More than 95% of the rural poor work in the informal sector, including agricultural jobs, typically for daily wages without job security or benefits.

Political and economic environment

Pakistan faces a complex social and political environment, with gradual economic stabilisation occurring alongside political instability and social discontent. Although macroeconomic indicators have shown improvement, including lower inflation and stronger foreign exchange reserves, persistent challenges remain, particularly high public debt and the need for structural reform. GDP growth fell sharply from around 6% in the early 2020s to approximately 0.3% in 2023. However, there has been modest recovery despite continuing political instability and reform efforts.

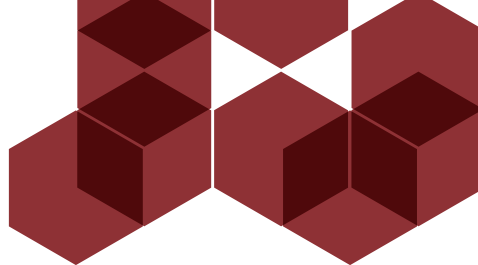
The cost of living crisis in recent years has significantly increased the national poverty rate, which was estimated to be 23% of the population in 2024. More than 26 million children remain out of school, primarily due to economic hardship, perpetuating malnutrition and limited educational attainment that constrain future employment opportunities. Climate change is compounding these pressures by intensifying food and water insecurity, highlighting the need for international cooperation.

Climate change

About 60% of Pakistan is arid, and declining glacial melt and changing rainfall patterns have led to chronic water shortages for irrigation. The country is predicted to reach absolute water scarcity – when the region's total renewable water resources are inadequate to supply its population's demand – by 2035. Rural areas are particularly affected by climate-related hazards, including severe floods and recurrent drought. More frequent and intense heatwaves are also reducing crop yields, particularly for staple crops such as wheat. India is ranked 40th of 190 countries, in order of climate change vulnerability, by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. Average temperatures have risen by approximately 1.5 °C over the past 6 decades, leading to shorter growing seasons, increased evapotranspiration and declining soil fertility. These pressures threaten an estimated 40 million people who are dependent on the land to derive their livelihoods and increase the wider population's reliance on food imports, contributing to inflation. Farmers' capacity to adapt is constrained by limited financial resources, low levels of technology adoption and inadequate infrastructure.

Food insecurity

As a lower-middle-income country, Pakistan's rural communities are being heavily affected by climate change and land degradation, leaving many smallholder farmers facing acute challenges. A steady decline of farm income due to inefficient, traditional farming practices and lack of modern technology is constraining domestic food production. At the same time, rising food importation and global energy shocks are making basic, nutritious food unaffordable for many households, with almost half of average household income spent on food. Food insecurity in Pakistan is a severe, multifaceted crisis affecting 20–25% of the population, driven by economic instability, climate-driven natural disasters (floods and droughts), and high inflation. Nearly 40% of children are stunted, while millions lack access to nutritious food because of low incomes and high food prices. An estimated 44% of children under 5 years of age experience stunting, reflective of deep and persistent poverty.



Partnering with Australia

The relationship between Australia and Pakistan is longstanding and built on Commonwealth ties, shared security interests, and strong people-to-people links. Bilateral cooperation focuses on trade, agriculture, development, counterterrorism and education. Agricultural research for development is central to this relationship, and ACIAR has played a key role in it for more than 4 decades. These partnerships strengthen economic opportunities in Pakistan's rural communities and strengthen institutional linkages between research organisations, universities and government agencies in both countries.

ACIAR's partnership with Pakistan has evolved around a shared goal of strengthening food security, economic development and climate resilience and adaptation by extending and applying Australia's agricultural science and technology. Australian innovations have helped Pakistani collaborators to better address challenges in agricultural productivity, water management and food security.

ACIAR's in-country collaborators includes the Ministry of Water Resources, provincial agriculture and irrigation departments, the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, agricultural universities, agribusinesses, ACIAR alumni and smallholder farmers. These partnerships support robust knowledge sharing and encourage the development of solutions to Pakistan's agricultural challenges, with a strong commitment to involving women and girls in every stage of research and implementation. Advancing gender equality and social inclusion remains central to ACIAR work, helping ensure that women and other marginalised groups have equitable access to training, resources and leadership opportunities in agricultural research and innovation.

The collaborative framework between ACIAR and in-country partners not only addresses immediate agricultural challenges but also supports Pakistan's long-term resilience to climate change and food insecurity. Through joint projects, both countries are promoting sustainable practices and building capacity among Pakistani researchers and farmers, with a focus on innovation, inclusivity and adaptability for future generations.

Country priorities

Pakistan's agricultural sector is undergoing a significant transformation, with current national priorities focused on improving productivity, strengthening climate resilience and increasing exports.

These objectives are being pursued through strategic frameworks such as the Green Pakistan Initiative and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), both of which aim to modernise the nation's agri-food system. The Green Pakistan Initiative focuses on increasing exportable surpluses, reducing dependence on food imports, and supporting sustainable agriculture. Meanwhile, the SIFC, chaired by the Prime Minister, provides a streamlined, single-window mechanism for international investors, allowing 100% foreign equity in corporate farming. This council is overseeing 26 public sector projects in the agrifood sector, valued at US\$2.5 billion, underscoring the government's commitment to agricultural development and innovation.

Investment and modernisation are at the heart of Pakistan's agricultural revival. There is a strong push to adopt smart farming technologies, such as agricultural drones and advanced seed development, along with corporate farming models that promote efficient resource use. These interventions are designed to modernise irrigation practices, support climate-smart agriculture, and improve water management, particularly in regions affected by floods and other climate-related disruptions. Rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure and water management reforms are essential, given Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change and water scarcity.

Another priority is improving value chains and productivity, especially for high-value fruits like mangoes and citrus, as well as vegetables and livestock. Efforts are underway to develop improved seed technologies and strengthen the livestock and dairy industries through genetic improvement. These initiatives support higher yields and better-quality produce while also contributing to food security and export potential. Timely provision of seeds and fertiliser, alongside technical training in modern agricultural practices, will help farming communities benefit from these advances.

Supporting farmers through timely provision of seeds and fertilisers, alongside technical training in modern agricultural techniques, helps ensure that farming communities can fully benefit from these advancements.

Policy reforms are also being prioritised to better align agricultural policies with farmer livelihoods, strengthen research institutions, and promote gender inclusion across the sector. By focusing on the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups, Pakistan aims to foster a more inclusive agricultural ecosystem. The holistic approach combines innovation, investment and inclusivity, positioning Pakistan's agriculture to address current challenges and embrace new opportunities for sustainable growth and resilience in the face of climate change and global economic pressures.

2026–27 research program

ACIAR is supporting 8 agricultural research-for-development projects in Pakistan during 2026–27. Of these, 5 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 aciarc.gov.au for contact details

Current and proposed projects in Pakistan, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Crops				
Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan CROP/2020/167	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/12/2021	31/12/2026	\$2,397,261
Horticulture				
Improving smallholder well-being through participation in modern value chains: sustaining future growth in the Pakistan citrus industry HORT/2020/129	Pakistan	1/01/2022	30/06/2027	\$1,890,000
Agroecological management for resilient smallholder banana systems in Asia HORT/2025/126	Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, Philippines	1/11/2026	30/10/2031	\$6,000,000
Livestock Systems				
Moving further towards formalised sheep and goat value chains in Pakistan and Ethiopia through business-oriented breeder and producer groups LS/2023/132	Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/09/2024	31/12/2028	\$2,400,000
Water				
Climate adaptive livelihoods in Sindh: locally led pathways for inclusive transformation CLIM/2022/136	Pakistan	1/06/2026	30/11/2030	\$3,200,000
Water resilient rural communities in the southern Indus Basin, Pakistan WAC/2021/134	Pakistan	1/09/2026	28/02/2031	\$3,400,000
Climate resilient and adaptive water allocation in Pakistan WAC/2022/152	Pakistan	4/11/2024	8/06/2029	\$4,269,000
Evaluating effectiveness of water infrastructure investments in Pakistan WAC/2024/146	Pakistan	3/11/2025	2/11/2026	\$497,342

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.



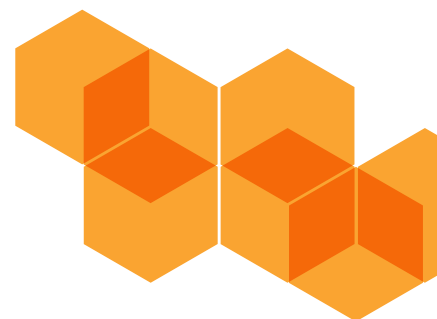
More information about our projects is available on the ACIAR website. Search for the project title or project code.

www.aciarc.gov.au

5



ACIAR in Africa



Regional program 2026–27



Partner countries

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

A\$7.5 million

Investment in agricultural research for development

ACIAR will manage additional funds through the Africa–Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture initiative (see page 86).



27 projects

Across its 54 countries, agriculture in Africa ranges from smallholder farms for subsistence and cash cropping, through to large scale production of commodities for export. The scale of fisheries and forestry is similar.

ACIAR works with countries and partners who seek to reduce poverty and improve smallholder livelihoods, as well as enhance natural resource management and climate change adaptation, through agricultural research for development.

The African continent supports food production systems in arid, tropical and sub-tropical climates. These systems also vary with culture, access to land and water, and livelihood and economic development opportunities. The smallholder farmers who potentially benefit from ACIAR-supported work include herders and pastoralists in rangeland areas, grain producers on dryland and irrigated plots on private and communal land, forest farmers who integrate fruit and timber tree species with food crops, and fishers of inland and coastal waters.

Population growth and economic transformation are increasing the pressure on Africa's food production systems and agricultural ecosystems, and climate change is exacerbating these challenges.

With a total population of 1.6 billion people and an expected doubling of the population by 2050, Africa's demand for food is expected to more than double. This is driven not only by population growth, but also by rising incomes, rapid urbanisation, changing national diets towards greater consumption of higher-value fresh and processed foods, and more open intra-regional trade policies.

The Africa region is characterised by high levels of food insecurity and rising demand for land and water. If the current trends in population growth and economic development continue, Africa will not meet the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goal 1 of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030.

World Bank data for 2024 shows that 45% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa lives in extreme poverty. Globally, Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest regional value for the United Nations Human Development Index, at 0.568 in 2023. For reference, in 2023, the aggregate Human Development Index was 0.712 for developing countries, 0.560 for least developed countries and 0.916 for OECD countries.

Africa's demographics are changing significantly with the rapidly growing population. About 60% of the continent's population is less than 25 years of age, making Africa the continent with the world's youngest population. However, rural populations are ageing, many farms are getting smaller and rural youth are seeking for more lucrative livelihoods in urban areas rather than in traditional farming.



Currently, 46% of Africa's people live in urban areas and the urban population is projected to reach 56% of the total population by 2050. Africa's food systems are therefore required to feed the world's youngest, fastest growing and increasingly urban consumer base. If agriculture does not modernise, the result will be that cities will need to import more food, rural poverty will persist, and governments will spend more foreign exchange stabilising food markets.

In addition to local pressures on agriculture and food production systems, and increasing demand for land and water, global shocks are exacerbating concerns about food security. Geopolitical tensions in Africa, Europe and the Middle East continue to affect agricultural supply chains and imported food supplies. The current Middle East conflict is contributing to higher prices and uncertain supplies of fuel and fertiliser.

Climate change and the associated higher frequency of extreme weather events have a serious impact on agricultural productivity and food security. Many ACIAR partner countries in Africa rank in the 40–50th range of 190 countries for vulnerability to climate change, as ranked by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. Climate change stressors are intensified in 2026–27 with the very of strong El Niño event.

Despite the pressure on agriculture and food production systems, and overlapping global shocks, the governments of African countries are committed to seeking solutions for economic resilience and development. To achieve true transformation of food systems in Africa, there is growing recognition that the whole food production system needs to be considered in terms of the true value and full cost of 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 across the continent.

Agriculture, including crop cultivation, livestock production, forestry, hunting and fishing, employs a substantial proportion of the adult population – typically 50–70% in Sub-Saharan Africa – but the sector only accounts for 20–30% of GDP in the region. While agriculture remains a key driver of economic growth, agricultural productivity and production have broadly stagnated over the past decade. Unlocking the potential of Africa's agricultural and food systems requires substantial investment in the sector and in research to provide the knowledge needed to underpin growth in agricultural productivity, especially for commercialising smallholder farming.

Drivers of regional collaboration

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of the African Union, working with the Regional Economic Communities of the Union, provides the core policy framework for mobilising political commitment to agricultural transformation across Africa. This commitment was reinforced through successive high-level declarations, particularly the 2014 Malabo Declaration, which reaffirmed agriculture as a central pillar of economic growth and development. The 2025 Kampala CAADP Declaration on Building Resilient and Sustainable Agrifood Systems in Africa builds on the commitment and sets the strategic direction for the 2026–2035 CAADP agenda, with a stronger focus on food systems transformation, resilience and sustainability.

The African Union has established a biennial review and scorecard mechanism under CAADP to promote mutual accountability and track country progress toward continental agricultural and food systems commitments. Under the Kampala CAADP Declaration, this mechanism is being updated through a revised CAADP Results Framework and new Biennial Review Indicators. Progress and learning linked to CAADP implementation and broader food systems transformation are regularly reflected and discussed at the annual Africa Food Systems Forum, a leading pan-African platform that convenes leaders from government, the private sector, research and development partners to advance coordinated action and investment aligned with the post-Malabo and Kampala CAADP agenda. The Forum 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. ACIAR will continue to partner with the forum over the coming year.

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, who are important strategic partners and play a key role in extending our impact to a regional scale, especially the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa, the West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development, and the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network.



Regional ACIAR program

African and Australian agricultural environments share many characteristics, ranging from wet tropics to arid and semi-arid rangelands. The 2 continents are exposed to comparable climate stresses, including increasing climate variability, more frequent droughts and floods, and rising temperatures and heat stress. Long-standing collaboration between Australian and African research institutions has built strong synergies, supporting the adaptation of technologies and practices that address key production constraints and strengthen the resilience of agricultural systems and farming communities on both continents. Elements of Australia's agricultural research and innovation system, including its market-oriented approach and institutional arrangements, offer lessons relevant to African agricultural transformation.

ACIAR has a long and productive relationship with partners in eastern and southern Africa, having worked in the region for 4 decades. ACIAR has been the key agricultural research-for-development agency working in the region, reflecting the synergies in agricultural production systems between Australia and eastern and southern Africa.

In 2024, the Africa–Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture (the Partnership) was announced. The Partnership builds on the expertise and reputation of ACIAR's work in eastern and southern Africa, which is highly regarded and relevant due to its research-for-development focus and ability to enable projects with a trans-disciplinary and cross-institutional approach, extends ACIAR's work into western and northern Africa.

During 2026–27, ACIAR will partner with 17 countries in Africa. ACIAR research investments in Africa are delivered primarily through bilateral country research partnerships (linked to regional impact pathways) and regional collaborations coordinated with sub-regional organisations. The portfolio of ACIAR-supported research 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.

ACIAR has a strong element of engagement with CGIAR research centres in Africa, particularly through our Multilateral and Strategic Partnerships Program (see page 95). We also work with other international agricultural research centres such as CABI, WorldVeg and *icipe*, throughout Africa.

ACIAR has worked in partnership with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) on programs of shared interest and goals for more than a decade. While programs such as the Cultivate Africa's Future Fund (CultiAF) have finished, ongoing opportunities arise for smallholder farmers, 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, and out scaling the results to West Africa and the Pacific Islands through commercialisation of safe and culturally acceptable insect-based products for animal feed. ACIAR and IDRC continue to investigate and discuss opportunities for future collaboration.





Australia's expanded footprint in Africa

The Africa–Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture is a co-funded initiative that expands the reach of Australia's investment in agricultural research for development in Africa.

Aligning with Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade regional development priorities in Africa, ACIAR is establishing research partnerships in West and North Africa, bringing Australia's agricultural expertise to dryland and semi-arid farming and grazing systems that face increasing climate variability.

Co-funded by ACIAR and DFAT, the Partnership is a 6-year initiative (2024–30) managed by ACIAR, that will focus on Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and Ghana. The vision of the Partnership is that farming communities across Africa are climate resilient, leading to increased food security and agriculture-led development. During 2026–27 the Partnership will continue to deepen collaboration in West and North Africa, strengthen engagement with regional bodies, and reinforce links between African and Australian researchers and institutions.

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. The Partnership has a key focus on Gender Equality Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) and prioritises research that addresses gender challenges, focuses on strengthening women's leadership in agricultural research and improving inclusion of people with disabilities.

Integrated research themes that address the core drivers of climate vulnerability and food insecurity across African farming systems will be a focus for the Partnership. These challenges cut across productivity, natural resource degradation and increasing climate variability, requiring system-level solutions rather than isolated interventions. Research direction will also ensure alignment with African sub-regional and continental development plans including the African Union CAADP Strategy and Action Plan and the CAADP Kampala Declaration. Overarching policies and partner-country priorities will guide commissioning of new investments and partnership development.

The Partnership has commissioned or approved to commission a suite of activities in West and North Africa:

- » Five research investments addressing pollination security and climate resilient livelihoods, scaling improved crop varieties, indigenous food systems, and promoting climate-smart aquaculture.
- » Six knowledge exchange investments supporting the sharing of research evidence and local knowledge to inform uptake and scaling through partnerships and existing systems.
- » Six capacity development initiatives focused on research, leadership and innovation capability
- » Four major events supporting networks and communities intended to build durable relationships and platforms that enable ongoing collaboration, peer learning and system-level influence beyond individual projects.



Key investments in West and North Africa

In Ghana, a partnership supports the Start Up Discovery School Africa, to help young African 'agripreneurs' to further develop their innovative solutions for climate resilient agriculture. The project will then scale across the western African corridor to Nigeria 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.

ACIAR is supporting a cohort of 100 women fellows through the African Women in Agriculture Research and Development 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 to identify challenges and opportunities and make policy recommendations to enhance participation and socio-economic empowerment of African women in agriculture.

Responding to the decline of pollinators due to climate change, pests like *Varroa destructor*, pesticide exposure and habitat degradation, a new project will address critical knowledge gaps and foster regional collaboration in Morocco, Ghana and Australia. The project seeks to contribute to safeguarding pollination services, enhancing beekeeping viability, strengthening honeybee research capacity and increasing food systems' resilience.

Cowpea is essential for food security in western Africa, but the supply and delivery of seed for pod borer-resistant cowpea is threatened by labour shortages, and weak value chain links. A new research investment aims to accelerate the release, adoption and sustainable cultivation of resistant varieties in Ghana and Nigeria, through strengthening seed systems and promoting complementary improved agronomic practices that enhance productivity and farmer benefits.

2026–27 program

ACIAR is supporting 27 agricultural research-for-development projects in Africa during 2026–27.

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, 2026–27

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
Africa–Australia Partnership				
Scaling up release of pod borer resistant cowpea varieties and associated improved agronomic practices in Ghana and Nigeria AAP/2025/147	Ghana, Nigeria	1/04/2026	31/03/2028	\$500,000
Pathways for supporting climate resilient indigenous food systems in Ghana AAP/2026/109	Ghana	1/07/2026	30/06/2028	\$500,000
Promoting climate-smart aquaculture in Egypt and Nigeria AAP/2026/112	Egypt, Nigeria	1/07/2026	30/06/2028	\$500,000
Climate resilient feeding systems for livestock in Ghana AAP/2026/135	Ghana	1/11/2026	31/10/2028	\$500,000
Climate resilient feeding systems for livestock in Nigeria AAP/2026/136	Nigeria	1/11/2026	31/10/2028	\$500,000
Building partnerships for sustainable tree commodity agroforestry systems in Ghana AAP/2026/138	Ghana	1/10/2026	31/01/2028	\$450,000
Identifying approaches for scaling conservation agriculture across crop–livestock systems in Morocco AAP/2026/137	Morocco	1/10/2026	31/12/2027	\$500,000
Enhancing beekeeping and pollination industry research and partnerships in Ghana and Morocco LS/2025/129	Ghana, Morocco	1/02/2026	31/08/2027	\$500,000
Agribusiness				
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	30/09/2026	\$479,558
Regreening for the future: integrating climate change adaptation pathways into community-led regreening in eastern Africa CLIM/2022/140	Kenya	16/12/2024	30/10/2028	\$3,449,846
Crops				
Protecting Ethiopian lentil crops CROP/2020/164	Ethiopia	1/07/2021	31/12/2026	\$2,339,463
Accelerating genetic gain in wheat through hybrid breeding in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan CROP/2020/167	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan	1/12/2021	31/12/2026	\$2,397,261
Village-based biological control of fall armyworm in Zambia CROP/2022/112	Zambia	1/05/2023	30/06/2027	\$1,589,630

Project title & code	Country	Start	End	Total investment
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
Rapid cooking beans - Phase 2 CROP/2025/106	Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda	1/07/2026	30/06/2031	\$6,270,000
Oilseed brassicas in Ethiopia: removing disease and quality constraints to construct productive and sustainable farming systems CROP/2025/130	Ethiopia	1/07/2026	30/06/2031	\$3,100,000
Objectively evaluating effect of adopting virtual agronomist and enhancing its capabilities CROP/2026/100	Kenya, Uganda	1/07/2026	30/06/2027	\$500,000
Targeted biological nitrogen fixation improvements in cowpea and common bean for eastern and western Africa CROP/2026/119	Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda	1/08/2026	31/01/2028	\$500,000
Forestry				
Management of pests and diseases of forest crops in Ethiopia FST/2022/122	Ethiopia	15/05/2024	14/05/2029	\$2,900,000
Favouring forests through increased value FST/2025/119	Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda	1/11/2026	30/10/2032	\$4,600,000
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	31/12/2026	\$726,904
Livestock Systems				
Strengthening adaptive capacity of extensive livestock systems for food and nutrition security and low-emissions development in eastern and southern Africa LS/2020/152	Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe	22/09/2022	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	30/06/2028	\$2,200,000
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
Water				
Food and water security in Sub-Saharan Africa – Phase 2 WAC/2024/102	Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe	1/10/2026	30/09/2030	\$4,900,000
A scalable approach to water security in eastern and southern Africa: from plot to basin-wide impact WAC/2025/157	Tanzania, Zimbabwe	1/07/2026	30/11/2027	\$495,000
Groundwater resources and assessment for agriculture in eastern and southern Africa WAC/2026/102	Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe	3/08/2026	1/10/2027	\$500,000

Note: Additional projects may be proposed or commissioned during 2026–27.



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

6



ACIAR operational model

Australian economist, Sir John Crawford, had a vision that Australia's expertise and knowledge in agricultural sciences could contribute to global efforts to address food insecurity and poverty.

The establishing legislation of ACIAR, the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982*, sets out 6 functions for the agency:

- a) to formulate programs and policies with respect to agricultural research for either or both of the following purposes:
 - identifying agricultural problems of developing countries
 - finding solutions to agricultural problems of developing countries
- b) to commission agricultural research by persons or institutions (whether the research is to be conducted in Australia or overseas) in accordance with such programs and policies
- c) to communicate to persons and institutions the results of such agricultural research
- d) to establish and fund training schemes related to the research programs referred to in paragraph a)
- e) to conduct and fund development activities related to those research programs
- f) to fund international agricultural research centres.

ACIAR's organisational structure is based on carrying out our functions to ensure the most effective and efficient use of public monies and to achieve long-lasting impact in our partner countries.

Our work and staff are organised into the following branches and programs:



Research Branch

- » Research Programs
- » Capacity Development Program



Partnerships Branch

- » Country Network
- » Multilateral and Strategic Partnerships Program
- » Impact and Learning Program
- » Outreach Program



Corporate Branch

- » People and Culture
- » Procurement, Legal and Contracts
- » Finance
- » Business Engagement and Assurance
- » Information and Communication Technology.



Research investment 2026–27



9%
Agribusiness



10%
Crops



19%
Fisheries



8%
Forestry



12%
Horticulture



5%
Livestock Systems



15%
Social Systems,
Policy and
Economics



10%
Soil and Land
Management



11%
Water



Agricultural research for development

ACIAR Research Programs build international science partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa to promote more productive, sustainable and resilient food systems and improve livelihoods through collaborative research.

ACIAR brings together expertise from Australia and partner countries to co-design research that responds to specific challenges and opportunities. This approach has created innovative and agile research teams that deliver positive outcomes across the Indo-Pacific region and Africa, while ensuring the research we support is relevant and capable of delivering long-term impact. By working with local stakeholders, ACIAR builds trust, strengthens capacity, leverages resources and ensures solutions address local needs, ultimately increasing the adoption of new technologies and agricultural practices.

ACIAR's research investments are guided by 6 strategic objectives (see page 2), Australia's International Development Policy, and the expertise of our commissioning organisations and international agricultural research centre partners.

The ACIAR research portfolio has 9 focus areas:

- » Agribusiness
- » Crops
- » Fisheries
- » Forestry
- » Horticulture
- » Livestock Systems
- » Social Systems, Policy and Economics
- » Soil and Land Management
- » Water.

During 2026–27, 165 projects will be active across 37 countries. These research collaborations bring together Australian and international scientists to develop solutions, generate knowledge and foster innovation in partner countries. The program also strengthens the 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 deliver programs and projects with shared goals. Our largest partnership is with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), our portfolio partner. Through this partnership, we help scale new knowledge and technology with partners across the Indo-Pacific region and Africa.

ACIAR research investments are developed through a process of consultation and collaboration. Priorities for research are established through partner-country consultation and identifying expertise within the Australian or international science innovation system.

Investments are varied in design, execution and outcomes. An investment may be a comprehensive research project conducted by multidisciplinary teams, bringing together partners from a number of organisations to work in multiple locations/countries over several years to develop new knowledge, technology or methodology. At the other end of the scale, ACIAR may invest in a small research activity where an individual agency or specialist may conduct a desktop study, a scoping study or similar, over a short period, e.g. 12 months.

The ACIAR research investment process applies clear assessment criteria to the consideration of research investment concepts and preliminary proposals and then internal and external review processes to final proposals. This process ensures we invest in rigorous, high-impact science.

Once a project is underway, we work closely with collaborators to support and manage partnerships and monitor progress against milestones through formal review and evaluation processes, to maximise impact and return on investment. This includes a mid-term review of research projects (not small research activities), which serves as a key checkpoint to ensure projects can deliver significant and sustainable outcomes on time in dynamic operating environments.



More information about our Research Programs is available on the ACIAR website.

www.aciar.gov.au

>What we do

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 27 locally engaged staff across our operating region and based at Australian diplomatic missions at 14 locations (see map on pages 4 and 5). 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. It is a vital link between Australian and international researchers and the relevant in-country research agencies. Being based at Australian missions, the Country Network also ensures coordination and complementarity with the broader Australian international development program.

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.

The nature of our relationships with partner countries changes as local research capability grows and the capacity of countries to fund research increases. The ability and extent to which some partner-country agencies can resource and participate in research collaboration is influenced by national and global economic conditions, and the ability of local economies to withstand global shocks and natural disasters.

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.

The ACIAR program of work is also shaped by the Policy Advisory Council, which is established by the ACIAR Act(see page 101). The Council comprises senior representatives across our regions who provide strategic advice to Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs and ACIAR on country and regional priorities, and about Australia's approach to agriculture research for development.



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

www.aciar.gov.au

>Where we work

Partnerships for influence and impact

The ACIAR Multilateral and Strategic Partnerships Program positions ACIAR to influence and support global and regional efforts to build more productive and sustainable agricultural systems for low-income and lower-middle-income countries, and for Australia. The program also works with Australian Government and domestic partners to ensure investments align with Australian Government priorities and national interests.

During 2026–27, we will continue to strengthen multilateral and strategic partnerships within the international agricultural research community by positioning ACIAR as:

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

Funding and supporting international agricultural research centres are roles mandated by the ACIAR Act. We foster and maintain active working relationships with these centres by providing timely, reliable and consistent funding, as well as strategic advice on research and governance.

CGIAR investment

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

Australia has invested in CGIAR since its establishment in 1971, and ACIAR has managed Australia's investment and representation since 1992. As one of CGIAR's top 15 funders with an average annual investment of A\$25 million over the past 5 years, Australia has a seat on CGIAR's governing body, the CGIAR Council.

Membership of the CGIAR Council enables ACIAR, on behalf of Australia, to influence the governance and strategic direction of CGIAR programs for the benefit of Australia and its partner countries.

ACIAR's Multilateral and Strategic Partnerships Program supports CGIAR through 2 types of funding (see table). Core funding for CGIAR is unrestricted and deployed against the agreed CGIAR priorities. Australia's contribution is reviewed annually. ACIAR also provides restricted, or designated, funding to support CGIAR science programs and accelerators. In 2026–27, ACIAR plans to contribute A\$14 million to the CGIAR Research Portfolio 2025–2030, which increasingly works with national agricultural research and extension systems, a priority for ACIAR. During this financial year we will review programs within the CGIAR portfolio alongside ACIAR's strategic priorities for investment, to determine Australia's contribution for the next funding period.

Additionally, our bilateral research program commissions and collaborates with CGIAR centres directly.

Funding for CGIAR, 2026–27

Funding type	A\$ million	Use of funds
CGIAR core funding (Window 1)	7	Funding to support CGIAR System as a whole
CGIAR research portfolio (Window 2)	14	Funding to support CGIAR science programs and accelerators

Partnering in global and regional programs

In addition to CGIAR, ACIAR has arrangements and partnerships with other international agricultural research centres and regional bodies. We support these organisations through core funding, institutional support or funding for specific programs or projects that align with ACIAR's regional or global objectives.

CABI

ACIAR maintains a longstanding and strategically important relationship with CABI by supporting Australia's membership under the CABI Treaty. This partnership focuses on initiatives that strengthen global and regional plant biosecurity across the regions where ACIAR invests in agricultural research for development. It helps build the capacity of plant protection agencies in partner countries and strengthens extension systems through digital tools such as PlantwisePlus, improving smallholder resilience. The benefits of CABI programs continue to be demonstrated across our partner countries and within the ACIAR Research Program.

The Pacific Community

ACIAR and The Pacific Community (SPC) have a longstanding partnership through which ACIAR collaborates with and supports 2 divisions of SPC: Land Resources and Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems. ACIAR will continue to partner with SPC towards a stronger strategic relationship, enhanced strategic management capacity for results, and coordinated action across the Pacific region on agriculture, climate, forestry and fisheries. The partnership will focus on amplifying the intersection of our respective mandates including supporting a Pacific-led research agenda for the wellbeing, resilience and prosperity of Pacific peoples. This collaboration will contribute to the Growing the Pacific 2050 strategy through:

- » providing program funding for Land Resources Division and Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division
- » supporting Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry and the Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Service
- » resourcing the Regional Research Symposium.

Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions

The Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) represents national agricultural research systems across a broadly defined Asia-Pacific region. The APAARI mandate is to promote, coordinate and strengthen agriculture and agrifood research and innovation systems through partnerships and collaboration, capacity development and advocacy for sustainable agricultural development in Asia and the Pacific.

As a core-country member of APAARI, Australia, through ACIAR, supports APAARI through core funding for knowledge sharing and other programs. APAARI provides a platform and forum for ACIAR to support and participate in regional collaborations.



World Vegetable Center

ACIAR partners with the World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg) to support WorldVeg's vegetable breeding activities and capacity building in the low and lower-middle income countries in Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific region. This will be achieved through:

- » maintaining and developing the gene banks and international vegetable networks of WorldVeg, including the International Mungbean Improvement Network (IMIN) and its data storage and management system
- » development of improved vegetable lines with higher yields, tolerance/resistance against pest and diseases and/or higher nutrient content
- » introduction of improved agricultural practices (pre- and post-harvest) for safe, sustainable and competitive value chains
- » collaboration with, and building capacity of partners, from the public and private seed sectors.

Strength through co-investment partnerships

ACIAR also develops and manages co-investment alliances and partnerships with organisations and funders that share similar objectives and interests. Co-investment programs enable ACIAR to draw on partners' complementary skills, leverage ACIAR funding, and engage in larger and more ambitious programs. Co-investment programs take many forms, from jointly designed and delivered suites of research to programs that support industry and build capacity.

ACIAR has a longstanding co-investment relationship with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The value of the ACIAR-IDRC partnership lies in each organisation's role as a specialist, mission-focused agency within its respective government, together contributing to the bilateral relationship between Australia and Canada. Our partnership leverages financial resources and builds on more than 10 years of trusted collaboration, as well as our respective organisation's experience, expertise, networks, outputs, outcomes and geographic reach. The current ACIAR-IDRC Partnership Framework (II) 2024–2030 sets out an agreement to collaborate on a range of initiatives of mutual interest.

Strategic domestic partnerships

ACIAR builds and maintains strategic partnerships with Australian research organisations, government agencies and development partners to advance shared objectives and maximise Australia's contribution to international agricultural research for development.

ACIAR will continue to work with the Crawford Fund for Food Security during 2026–27, under an MoU renewed in June 2026, to:

- » support public understanding of international agricultural research through communication activities, public events, conferences, media engagement and community outreach
- » provide complementary capacity development and training initiatives that strengthen research conduct, management and application of research
- » support ongoing engagement between Australian research organisations and regional partners involved in international agricultural research for development
- » continue to strengthen links with Australian research institutions with ACIAR-related research activities
- » provide ongoing support to strengthen professional networks across the international agricultural research community.

During 2026–27, ACIAR will continue to strengthen strategic alignment with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through the annual ACIAR-DFAT Strategic Dialogue. The Dialogue provides a mechanism to align ACIAR's research investments with Australian Government development priorities, deepen mutual understanding of emerging policy and programming directions, and identify opportunities for coordinated engagement at global, regional and country levels. Through this partnership, ACIAR will contribute agricultural research expertise to Australia's broader development objectives, support evidence-informed policy engagement, and help maximise the impact of Australia's investments in food security, climate resilience and sustainable agriculture.



More information about our Multilateral Partnerships is available on the ACIAR website.

www.aciar.gov.au/multilateral-partnerships

Capacity development

Collaborating with partners to strengthen capacity at the individual, institutional and system levels is central to the ACIAR Capacity Development Program.

Capacity development is a key activity of ACIAR's strategic approach to supporting livelihood development and advancing science diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa. ACIAR works with partners to strengthen technical research, knowledge-to-policy and research leadership capabilities that respond to partner needs and enhance locally led research, innovation and adoption.

ACIAR offers a well-established and highly regarded suite of capacity development programs that supports knowledge exchange and learning across the global agricultural research ecosystem. These are:

- » **John Allwright Fellowship**, supporting scholars associated with ACIAR-supported research to undertake a Master degree or PhD in an area related to the project
- » **John Dillon Fellowship**, providing participants with short-course training in leadership, management, policy development and communication of research results
- » **Meryl Williams Fellowship**, providing women scientists an opportunity to strengthen leadership skills and build confidence, resilience and capability
- » **Pacific Agricultural Scholarships and Support**, in collaboration with the Fiji National University and the University of the South Pacific, supporting scholars from Pacific island countries to undertake agricultural research at the Master and PhD levels.

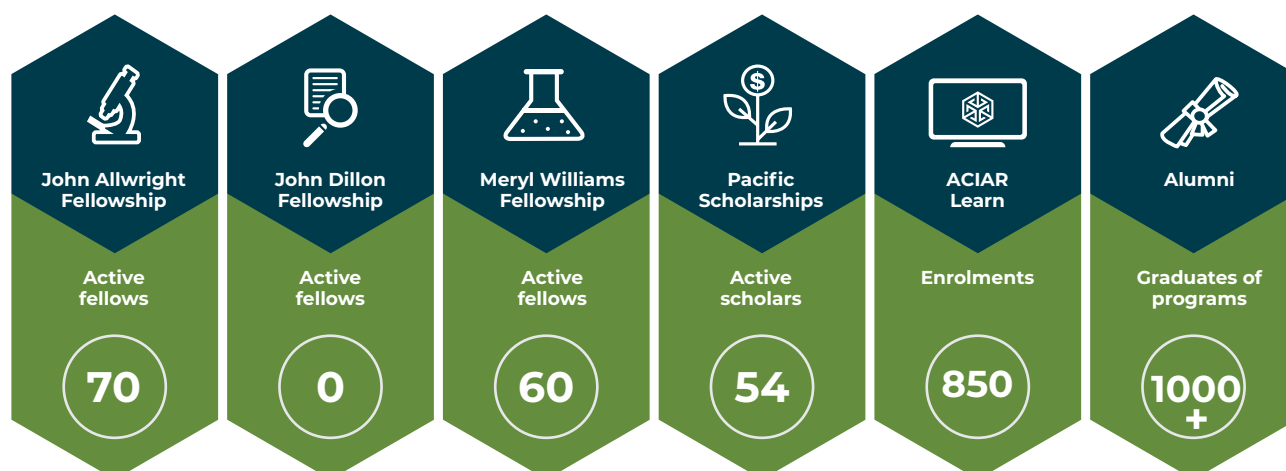
ACIAR Learn is an online learning platform that complements the fellowship and scholarship programs. The platform offers a range of bespoke short courses that are relevant to the effective and efficient management of research for development projects. ACIAR Learn is open to ACIAR alumni and team members of ACIAR-supported research projects.

The **Alumni 360** community management platform will be reviewed and updated in 2026. The platform provides alumni with access to communities of practice aligned to ACIAR research and peer-to-peer mentor matchmaking. It provides a contacts database and facilitates regional alumni chapter collaborations.

During 2026–27, the ACIAR Capacity Development Program will focus on strengthening links between capacity development initiatives that increase south–south collaboration. This will create opportunities for project partners and alumni to build networks, exchange knowledge and shape agricultural research for development. During the coming year, we will also respond to emerging capacity development needs, identified collaboratively with partners, and develop initiatives to support our research stakeholders to learn and apply new skills and adopt new technology to achieve shared research priorities.

We will also continue to work towards a stronger integration of our Capacity Development Program with research projects, as informed by partner priorities. We will embed more capacity-development initiatives at the planning stage of selected research projects and facilitate connections between our extensive alumni network and project teams of current and new research projects.

Participants in capacity development programs, 2026–27



Note: Participant numbers will change during 2026–27.



Impact and learning

The ACIAR Impact and Learning Program measures the impact of ACIAR-supported research, to understand the benefits of research investments and inform future research design.

Impact evaluation helps ACIAR refine priorities and draw lessons from current and past projects to inform the design and implementation of new investments. It also supports accountability to our partners, 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

During 2026–27, we will continue to develop and implement the monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning (MERL) framework to systematically track progress against Australian Government goals for sustainable development in our region and assess the impact of our investments at the project, program and portfolio levels.

Improving investment prioritisation and design

Our Impact and Learning Program helps improve the design and implementation of research investments by applying robust evaluation criteria and generating evidence to support decision-making. This helps ensure ACIAR's investments are well targeted, aligned with partner-country priorities and designed to maximise impact.

Understanding impact

Through the commissioning of impact assessments and other evaluations of ACIAR research investments, we seek to understand how research and capacity development can most effectively catalyse change and support more productive and sustainable agricultural development in partner countries. Impact assessments may focus on strategic topics or country-level investments, while outcome evaluations may be multidisciplinary and cross-regional, helping us understand the factors that contribute to effective agricultural research for development.

ACIAR will continue to strengthen methods for understanding and evaluating how agricultural research contributes to food security, poverty reduction, improved nutrition, reduced risks to human health, more inclusive value chains, and climate adaptation and mitigation. Consistent with our commitment to gender equity and social inclusion, we will also focus on understanding the effectiveness of our approaches to empowering women and other vulnerable groups. The lessons from our impact assessments will continue to inform future investments and help build scientific and policy capability in partner countries.



Influence and communication

ACIAR engages stakeholders and audiences in Australia and overseas through a range of platforms and products to communicate the results of ACIAR-supported research.

Through strategic and targeted communication, ACIAR makes research results, lessons and impact visible and accessible to diverse audiences.

Throughout 2026–27, we will continue to communicate research outcomes and extend our reach through the most effective channels and stakeholder engagement. We will be undertaking a strategic review of ACIAR's outreach activities, across the whole organisation, to ensure effort is directed to the audiences and areas where we can be most effective to support the core functions of ACIAR.

Communicating results and extending reach

ACIAR communicates research findings through a mix of digital and print channels that make knowledge accessible to different audiences and increases potential impact.

The ACIAR website is the central platform for this work, bringing together news and impact stories, project information, reports and scientific publications, while also supporting corporate information and reporting obligations. It is reviewed on an ongoing basis to strengthen usability and visibility and long-term value as a public resource.

With an audience of more than 130,000 in June 2026, ACIAR's social media presence increases awareness of research outcomes, promotes partner achievements and amplifies relevant content from commissioned organisations and collaborators. During 2026–27, we will continue to use these channels to strengthen visibility, test the effectiveness of different approaches and target our communication effort where it will have the greatest engagement.

ACIAR publishes project information and reports to ensure research results and technical knowledge are available to audiences in partner countries and in Australia. Scientific reports, books and manuals help researchers, practitioners and institutions apply knowledge generated through ACIAR-supported work.



Engaging stakeholders

We identify, engage and manage relationships with stakeholders to:

- » communicate the results of ACIAR-supported research with targeted audiences in person and online
- » leverage opportunities to demonstrate the outcomes and impact of ACIAR's work in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa to government, business and civil society leaders which in turn, may increase potential impact
- » increase awareness and understanding of ACIAR's value to Australia through information targeted to domestic audiences
- » 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.

In-country communication

Country Communication Officers (based in our country and regional offices) help deliver a coordinated and proactive program of communication and stakeholder engagement across the Indo-Pacific region and Africa. These officers strengthen local engagement, support the development of country- and region-specific content, and help communicate results and outcomes in ways that reflect local priorities and partnerships.

Communication officers are based in Fiji for the Pacific region, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia for Southeast Asia, Kenya for Africa, Indonesia (also supporting Timor-Leste), and Pakistan.

Governance

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 mainly 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 Commission for International Agricultural Research provides 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 ACIAR programming and funding.

Policy Advisory Council

The role of the Policy Advisory Council 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 85 (full and part-time) in 2026–27.

- » 58 people are located in Canberra, Australia
- » 27 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:

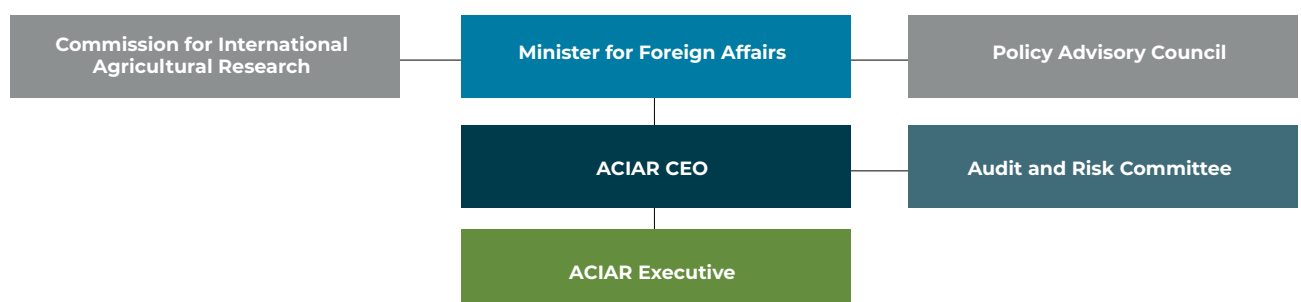
- » Research
- » Partnerships
- » Corporate



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

www.aciar.gov.au

Governance structure of ACIAR



Planned funding and expenditure

Table 1. Overview of planned funding and expenditure

Budget estimate		
Funding		A\$ million
Administered	Administered appropriation	111.00
	Special accounts	8.30
	Total administered funding	119.30
Departmental	Departmental appropriation	12.00
	s 74 Retained revenue receipts ^a	2.70
	Expenses not requiring appropriation ^b	1.40
	Total departmental funding	16.10
Total funding		135.40
Expenditure		A\$ million
Administered	Bilateral and regional research projects ^c	87.16
	Global research collaborations ^d	23.49
	Scientific and policy capacity building activities ^e	8.12
	Outreach	0.53
	Total administered costs	119.30
Departmental	Total departmental costs ^f	16.10
Total expenditure		135.40

a) Revenue from external sources.

b) Depreciation, amortisation and audit fees.

c) Includes program support and impact evaluation.

d) Includes unrestricted funding to international centres.

e) Does not include training and communication activity within projects.

f) Includes salaries, executive, Commission for International Agricultural Research, Policy Advisory Council and corporate support.

Table 2. Planned contribution to ACIAR activities by external funders or partners

Activity area	Partner funder	A\$ million
Regional and country projects	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	6.93
Postgraduate scholarships	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	3.00
Total		9.93



Table 3. Australia's funding to international agriculture research centres

	Unrestricted	Restricted (project specific)	
	A\$ million	A\$ million	A\$ million
CGIAR	7.00	14.00	21.00
Other centres	2.11	0.00	2.11
Total	9.11	14.00	23.11

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

Table 4. Planned project expenditure by country 2026–27

Region and country	Target appropriation budget allocations	ACIAR base appropriation	DFAT and other external funding	Total allocation
	%	A\$ million	A\$ million	A\$ million
Pacific region	25	18.75	0.55	19.30
Fiji		4.69	0.28	4.97
Kiribati		0.94	0.00	0.94
Samoa		0.94	0.00	0.94
Solomon Islands		2.81	0.25	3.06
Tonga		0.94	0.00	0.94
Vanuatu		2.81	0.02	2.84
Papua New Guinea		5.63	0.00	5.63
Southeast Asia	50	37.50	1.64	39.14
Cambodia		3.75	0.44	4.19
Indonesia		9.38	0.34	9.72
Laos		7.50	0.15	7.65
Philippines		5.63	0.34	5.97
Timor-Leste		3.75	0.37	4.12
Vietnam		7.50	0.00	7.50
South Asia	15	11.25	0.66	11.91
Bangladesh		4.50	0.00	4.50
India		1.13	0.00	1.13
Nepal		1.69	0.00	1.69
Pakistan		3.94	0.66	4.59
Africa	10	7.50	4.09	11.59
Eastern and Southern Africa		7.50	0.90	8.40
Western and Northern Africa		0.00	3.19	3.19
Total project expenditure		75.00	6.93	81.93

Note: Due to rounding, subtotals may not add up to the total.

Shortened forms

AAPCRA	Africa–Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ACIAR Act	<i>Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982</i>
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
COP31	The 31st Conference of Parties (COP is the decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
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)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	non-government organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PNG	Papua New Guinea
R&D	research and development
SPC	The Pacific Community
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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General Manager Partnerships

Dr Suzie Newman

General Manager Research

Position vacant at time of publishing

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