



Australian Government
Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research

ACIAR

CORPORATE PLAN 2018-19





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ACIAR Corporate Plan 2018–19

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This Corporate Plan is available through the ACIAR website www.aciar.gov.au or by contacting ACIAR by email aciar@aciar.gov.au, phone (+61 2 6217 0500) or fax (+61 2 6217 0501) to request a hard copy.

Inquiries about the Corporate Plan are welcome and should be directed to:
Eleanor Dean, General Manager Outreach & Capacity Building
Phone: +61 2 6217 0500
Email: aciar@aciar.gov.au

Editing: ACIAR Publications
Design: WhiteFox.com.au

Cover photo: Smallholder farmer and research collaborator, and his daughter, in a wheat field in Bangladesh.
Photo: Neal Dalglish

Foreword

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) envisions a world where poverty is reduced and livelihoods are improved through more productive and sustainable agriculture emerging from collaborative international research.

ACIAR has been brokering and funding research partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region since 1982. As the sixth CEO of ACIAR, it is comforting to inherit a proven business model based on collaborative prioritisation of research with partner countries, astute commissioning of expertise from Australian (mostly) research providers, and hands-on management of research programs by experienced ACIAR program managers.

In February 2018, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, launched ACIAR's 10-year Strategy 2018–2027. The strategy identifies six high-level objectives that ACIAR's research portfolio will support through building a knowledge base to enhance food security and poverty reduction, natural resources and climate change, human health and nutrition, gender equity and women's empowerment, inclusive value chains, and building durable scientific and policy capacity.

This Corporate Plan outlines ACIAR's aspirations and direction for the next four years. It is the first to be guided by the new 10-year Strategy. Our performance is demonstrated by the conception, implementation, management and review of research for development projects. All research projects developed by ACIAR will be aligned to our high-level objectives.

In 2018–19, more than 200 projects will be conducted in 35 countries. Supporting this is ACIAR's new research structure, which from July 2018 comprises 10 programs. The programs cover key agriculture sectors (crops, livestock, horticulture, fisheries and forestry), as well as the science needed to sustain the resource base (soil and land management, and water and climate) and disciplines that generate economic and social benefits (agribusiness and social sciences). An impact evaluation program will assess the achievements of research and guide future investment.

Several other strategies and programs will also guide ACIAR's core business of research for development throughout the life of this Corporate Plan. To ensure the effectiveness of the 10-year Strategy and achievement of its six high-level objectives, as well as measuring our performance against this Corporate Plan, a Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy will be developed to enable an integrated and portfolio-wide approach.

This will complement the ongoing impact evaluation program that occurs at the project level.

Our new Gender Equity Policy and Strategy 2017–2022, launched in December 2017, guides ACIAR operations, internally and externally. Within ACIAR's regions of operation, the empirical evidence is clear that women are disproportionately affected by poverty. Many ACIAR projects work towards ensuring that women have equal access to resources and decision making, as this is a direct route to reducing poverty for all. Hard evidence shows that in wealthy industrialised countries, in both the public and private sectors, organisations that draw equally on the talents of women and men at all levels outperform those that do not.

Accordingly, it is clear that ACIAR cannot credibly meet our strategic objectives around food security, poverty reduction, human health and nutrition, or climate change, unless we also vigorously promote gender equity. As a clear demonstration of our commitment to internal gender equity, the proportion of women in senior roles within ACIAR increased from 11% in 2016 to 38% by July 2018.

Partnerships with countries in our region that target mutually-agreed research priorities are at the heart of ACIAR's successful business model. Over the life of this Corporate Plan, we intend to develop new, long-term 'compacts' with Cambodia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam and countries in eastern and southern Africa. In line with our 10-year Strategy, ACIAR will also explore and develop co-investment partnerships with larger development donors, and with the private sector, particularly around issues where our research is ready to be implemented at scale. This area of our portfolio is likely to expand over the next four years, complementing our traditional bilateral partnerships, and our long-term commitment to multilateral international research partnerships, such as the CGIAR Centres.

I am proud to present ACIAR's Corporate Plan 2018–19, and share our aspirations and plans. This plan sets out our planned actions and development of capability to achieve our purpose in a dynamic operating environment over the next four years.



Andrew Campbell
Chief Executive Officer
August 2018

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Statement of preparation

I, Andrew Campbell, as the accountable authority of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), present the 2018-19 Corporate Plan, which covers the 2018-19 to 2021-22 reporting periods, as required under paragraph 35(1) (b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

The plan is prepared in accordance with the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014.

Andrew Campbell
Chief Executive Officer
August 2018

Our purpose

Reflecting our mission, the purpose of ACIAR is to amplify the impact of Australia's outstanding capabilities in agricultural science by brokering and funding agricultural research for development partnerships throughout the Indo-Pacific region.



ACIAR works with public and private research institutions to improve the productivity and sustainability of agricultural systems and the resilience of food systems in partner countries. In doing so, ACIAR contributes to poverty reduction and improved livelihoods in developing countries throughout our region.

The collaborative international programs and partnerships underpinning ACIAR-supported research also serve to improve the productivity and sustainability of agricultural systems in Australia. Improved technologies and practices identified and developed through ACIAR research programs often address the shared challenges of all farmers in the Indo-Pacific region, Australia included.

ACIAR supports Australia's broader national interests by contributing to sustainable economic growth and enhanced regional stability, with a particular focus on economic diplomacy and women's economic empowerment. Our work aligns closely with Australia's development assistance program, supporting research collaboration while emphasising individual and institutional capacity building and private sector-led development, targeted at improved livelihoods in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

ACIAR's research portfolio covers crops, livestock, horticulture, fisheries and forestry as well as water and climate, soil and land management, agribusiness and social sciences. Research programs operate in 35 countries in four key regions:

- » Pacific
- » East and South-East Asia
- » South Asia
- » Eastern and Southern Africa.

The research programs are guided by ACIAR's six strategic objectives, which are consistent with the Australian Government's development assistance policy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ACIAR's strategic objectives



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



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



Enhancing human nutrition and reducing risks to human health



Improving gender equity and empowerment of women and girls



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



Building scientific and policy capability within our partner countries

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

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



Our organisation

Since 1982 ACIAR has made a significant contribution to improve the productivity and sustainability of agricultural systems throughout the Indo-Pacific region. In order to maintain and build on success, ACIAR has developed five distinct areas of operation within its organisation.



Research Programs

ACIAR's research programs cover key agriculture sectors (crops, livestock, horticulture, fisheries and forestry), as well as the science needed to sustain the resource base (water and climate, and soil and land management) and generate social and economic benefit (agribusiness and social sciences). An impact evaluation program assesses our achievements and guides future investment.

The Research Program Managers conceive, commission, broker and assess research projects that deliver against our strategic objectives. They report to the Chief Scientist and work together on key cross-cutting issues such as gender, climate change, nutritionally-sensitive agriculture, integrated farming systems, economics and policy and the link between livestock and human health risks.

Country Programs

Country Programs oversee the development and regular recalibration of the strategic directions of ACIAR's research investments in our bilateral country relationships. The program also provides strategic and management support to each of the offices that ACIAR has in 10 countries throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

Global Program

The Global Program manages ACIAR's contributions to multilateral partnerships with a range of international and regional organisations engaged in agricultural research. It also manages the co-investment partnerships with other donors and the private sector with regional research projects.

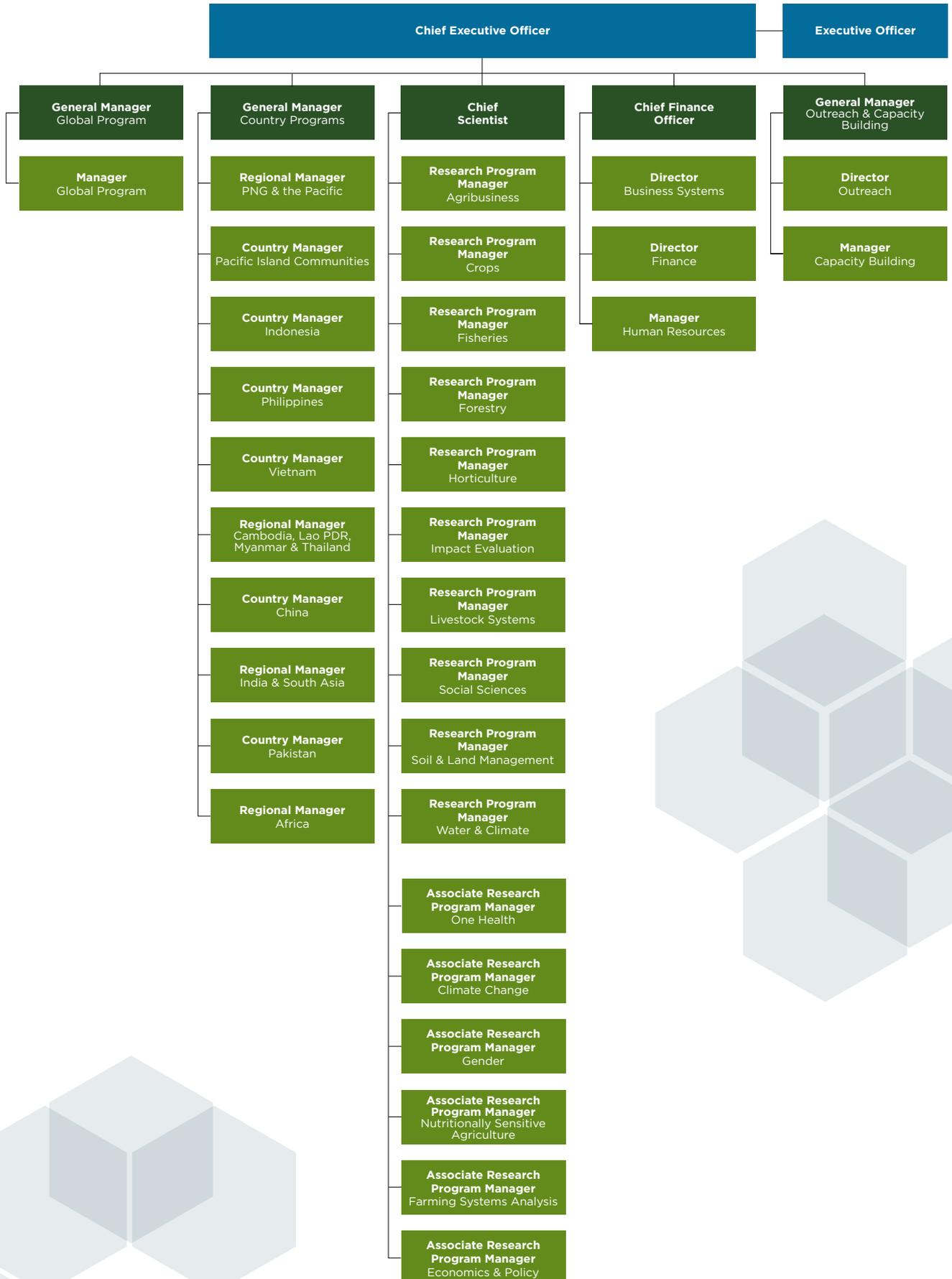
Corporate Services

Corporate Services underpin the effective and efficient project development and management function of ACIAR, which is integral to managing a diverse research portfolio across partner countries. Corporate Services comprises three departments: Human Resources; Finance, Procurement and Legal; and Business Systems.

Outreach and Capacity Building

Outreach and Capacity Building has the responsibility to increase understanding of the impact of Australia's aid investments through ACIAR and to ensure that more audiences in Australia and in our partner countries can access, understand and use ACIAR's research findings. It also manages ACIAR's capacity building programs, boosting capacity in science, management, policy and governance.

Organisational structure (July 2018)

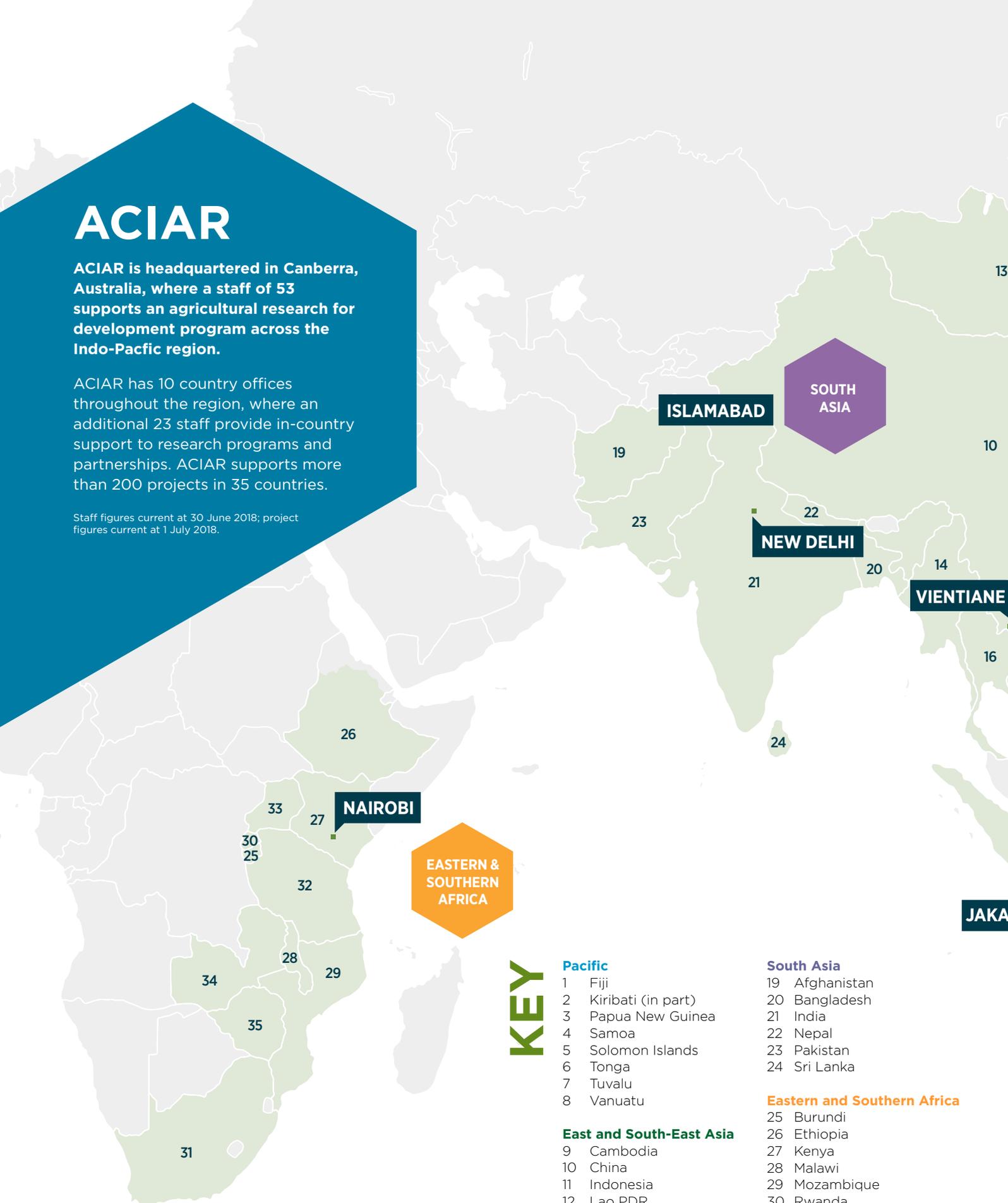


ACIAR

ACIAR is headquartered in Canberra, Australia, where a staff of 53 supports an agricultural research for development program across the Indo-Pacific region.

ACIAR has 10 country offices throughout the region, where an additional 23 staff provide in-country support to research programs and partnerships. ACIAR supports more than 200 projects in 35 countries.

Staff figures current at 30 June 2018; project figures current at 1 July 2018.



KEY

Pacific

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

East and South-East Asia

- 9 Cambodia
- 10 China
- 11 Indonesia
- 12 Lao PDR
- 13 Mongolia
- 14 Myanmar
- 15 Philippines
- 16 Thailand
- 17 Timor-Leste
- 18 Vietnam

South Asia

- 19 Afghanistan
- 20 Bangladesh
- 21 India
- 22 Nepal
- 23 Pakistan
- 24 Sri Lanka

Eastern and Southern Africa

- 25 Burundi
- 26 Ethiopia
- 27 Kenya
- 28 Malawi
- 29 Mozambique
- 30 Rwanda
- 31 South Africa
- 32 Tanzania
- 33 Uganda
- 34 Zambia
- 35 Zimbabwe



EAST AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

PACIFIC

Vision

ACIAR looks to a world where poverty has been reduced and the livelihoods of many improved through more productive and sustainable agriculture emerging from collaborative international research.

Mission

To achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems, for the benefit of developing countries and Australia, through international agricultural research partnerships.

Current at July 2018

Our operating environment

ACIAR works throughout the Indo-Pacific region where countries are grappling with complex and intersecting challenges of growing more food and reducing poverty using less land, water and energy.

Accommodating the challenging operating environment and acknowledging unique research priorities within each country, ACIAR establishes partnerships and programs to identify and respond to regional or local opportunities to participate in economic growth, support rapid growth in populations, and build capacity to develop productive yet sustainable systems in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors.

ACIAR conducts reviews and consultations with country partners, facilitated by ACIAR staff in 10 country offices across four operating regions. For the period of this Corporate Plan, 2018–19 to 2021–22, there are a number of issues that will have a significant influence on ACIAR's operating environment within each region.

Pacific

- » Stimulating growth and sustainable development of the agriculture sector remains a strong priority for Papua New Guinea.
- » Climate change remains a key focus of all of the partner Pacific island countries, with the need to identify more resilient food production systems.
- » Strengthening regional biosecurity trade protocols and capacity to support the growth of export markets, food security and conserve biodiversity is a priority throughout the Pacific region.
- » Challenges of small island states and limited research capacity will require ongoing Australian support.

East and South-East Asia

- » Economies of most ACIAR partner countries in East Asia maintain a positive outlook.
- » Agriculture remains the backbone for most countries, with a growing contribution of women in the agriculture sector.
- » Significant opportunities are emerging for co-investment and parallel investment by partner countries in agricultural research collaboration, including opportunities for trilateral collaboration.
- » Climate change mitigation is a key area of focus for all partner countries in East and South-East Asia.

South Asia

- » Agriculture is a key driver of economic growth in most partner countries in South Asia.
- » Security is a significant issue, so all ACIAR-related research requires a high degree of caution.
- » Climate change, food security, water management and human nutrition levels are key areas of focus in this region.

Eastern and Southern Africa

- » A major emphasis on the transformation of agriculture in Africa is driving the areas of small-scale mechanisation, closing the yield gap through intensification and agri-entrepreneurism.
- » Strong opportunities for co-investment with international partners exist in Eastern and Southern Africa.
- » Sustainable crop and livestock systems, climate change, plant biosecurity and stimulating commercial options for smallholder farmers are key areas of focus for ACIAR programs throughout this region.

Partnerships and collaborations

ACIAR's core business is to identify research priorities collaboratively with partner countries, and broker research partnerships and commission research to tackle those priorities. Once projects are established, ACIAR manages and monitors these investments throughout the research process to maximise impact and return on investment.

Since its inception in 1982, ACIAR has evolved three research partnership models: bilateral country partnerships; multilateral research collaborations; and co-investment with research and development partners. Each model has its own procurement pathway, governance framework, quality assurance and risk management.

Bilateral country partnerships

Bilateral partnerships between ACIAR and partner countries dominate the current research portfolio. Within these partnerships, ACIAR undertakes regular in-country consultations, and commissions research from Australian scientists (in universities, CSIRO, state government agencies or private firms) and/or international agricultural research centres to deliver research projects consistent with jointly agreed priorities.

ACIAR's 10 country offices play an increasingly important role in facilitating ACIAR's research on the ground, and keeping abreast of emerging local issues that have implications for Australian aid policy and ACIAR research investments at country and regional scales.

Multilateral collaborations

As part of our statutory mandate, ACIAR manages Australia's investment in the global agricultural research system, chief among this is CGIAR. Australia is among the larger investors in CGIAR, with ACIAR staff involved in the highest levels of governance of the CGIAR system, and Australian scientists being prominent in the leadership and governance of the 15 CGIAR Centres.

The CGIAR Centres manage the global gene banks and deliver new crop varieties for the world's most important food and fodder crops, and they undertake global research initiatives, such as climate-smart agriculture and agriculture for nutrition and health, that would be impossible for individual countries to conduct on their own. This work delivers significant direct benefits to Australian rural industries, and it is important that Australia contributes to these global public goods.

Co-investment with development partners

ACIAR invests in the development of research outputs and taking research findings to scale. ACIAR invests jointly with larger development donors in co-designed and co-managed initiatives, usually across several countries or a region. An example is the Cultivate Africa's Future program co-funded with Canada's International Development Research Centre.

ACIAR's most important partnership is with its sibling portfolio agency, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). ACIAR has a range of co-investments in which ACIAR funds and manages the research effort to build a solid knowledge base for subsequent scale-out and development funded by DFAT.

Co-investment partnerships signify strong trust between institutions. This pathway enables ACIAR to leverage its resources, access complementary expertise, as well as engage in larger and more ambitious research programs than we could fund alone. As such initiatives mature, ACIAR's focus will change from research for development, to research in development.



Our performance

ACIAR is an investor, broker, facilitator and manager of strategic partnerships in agricultural research for development. We add value to these key roles by also being an evaluator and communicator of research findings.

A banana-processing factory in Tagum, southern Philippines. ACIAR-supported research in the Philippines and Australia, developed an integrated farm management system to reduce the impact of Panama disease (tropical race 4) in banana crops. Photo: © ACIAR/Conor Ashleigh



Achieving our purpose is enhanced by our partnership model, which ensures that partner countries have input into and ownership of research priorities and delivery of research programs. This model maximises the relevance of research undertaken and increases the likelihood that research outputs and findings will be used and make a long-term difference in partner countries and in Australia.

ACIAR builds its research portfolio in the Indo-Pacific region on the basis of the organisation’s six high-level objectives. These objectives reflect ACIAR’s performance criteria and targets as described in our Portfolio Budget Statement 2018–19.

ACIAR performance criteria and targets

Performance criteria	Target
Food security and poverty reduction	Productive, sustainable and resilient farming systems
Human health and nutrition	Healthier and better nourished families
Natural resources and climate change	More resilient livelihoods in the face of climate change
Value chains and private sector engagement	Safer and more inclusive agrifood value chains
Empowering women and girls	Improved social inclusion and greater empowerment of women and girls
Capacity building	Individual and institutional level capacity built in our partner countries, in Australia and in ACIAR

Throughout the period of this plan, 2018–19 to 2021–22, ACIAR will support projects and establish relationships that work towards the targets defined by our performance criteria. In assessing the results and impact of ACIAR’s program, it is important to recognise that agricultural research has multiple levels of benefits (farm, community, regional and national) and impact can vary from within a project’s life cycle to well beyond the period of this plan.

To ensure that operations associated with ACIAR’s research program and activities remain focused on ACIAR’s objectives and targets, performance is demonstrated through several avenues of management, reporting and evaluation.

Performance will be measured by ACIAR Research Program Managers through:

- » continuous project management
- » annual project reporting
- » mid-term and end-of-project reviews of results.

Selected projects will undergo intensive evaluation through:

- » economic evaluation—return on investment (ROI) and assessment of social and environmental impacts
- » adoption studies—the extent of uptake of project outputs
- » impact pathway analysis.

During this coming year, 2018–19, we are developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy that will provide an integrated and portfolio-wide approach to assessing the effectiveness of ACIAR’s operations in achieving its six high-level objectives, as well as measuring its performance against criteria and targets set out in this Corporate Plan.

The following tables provide a framework to guide ACIAR’s operations for the period of this Corporate Plan. For each strategic objective, the operational focus is described for our research programs and activities, as well as listing examples of ACIAR’s 200 current or proposed projects (approximately, at July 2018) that support the objective throughout the period of the plan.



Performance against strategic objective



Performance criteria

Food security and poverty reduction — Improving food security and reducing poverty among smallholder farmers and rural communities

Target

Productive, sustainable and resilient farming systems

Rationale

Through research for development, ACIAR provides knowledge and tools for communities throughout the Indo-Pacific region to increase incomes, create jobs, and produce and access more and healthier food. ACIAR-supported projects help farmers become productive, sustainable and resilient. ACIAR encourages the sharing of knowledge gained from research projects with policymakers, other researchers and communities around the world. The result is innovative, lasting local solutions that bring choice and change to those who need it most.

Focus

Food security and poverty reduction will be addressed, in part, by innovation arising from research on productivity, profitability and sustainability of agricultural systems. This has been the core focus of ACIAR since it was founded in 1982. The profitability and resilience of smallholder farmers will be improved through:

- » regional cooperation on programs that address region-wide issues such as plant and animal biosecurity, water use efficiency and combatting climate change through research for development
- » a stronger focus on building resilience and understanding, and achieving livelihood outcomes through coordinated technical research
- » adoption of sustainable integrated crop management (ICM) practices
- » innovation in production systems such as addressing biotic stresses (existing and emerging plant diseases) through new crop varieties; climate risks through new crop rotations and farming systems; improved livestock nutrition through new fodder species or varieties, and new animal husbandry and feeding methods; and improved agroforestry practices and value chains.

Examples of ACIAR projects supporting this objective

- » Sustainable intensification of maize-legume cropping systems for food security in Eastern and Southern Africa II (May 2014 to 30 Jun 2019)
- » Developing technologies for giant grouper (*Epinephelus lanceolatus*) aquaculture in Vietnam, the Philippines and Australia (Jan 2014 to 30 Sep 2019)
- » Integrated management of Fusarium wilt of bananas in the Philippines and Australia (Jun 2014 to 31 Dec 2019)
- » Integrating protected cropping systems into high value vegetable value chains in the Pacific and Australia (Apr 2017 to 31 Dec 2020)
- » Profitable feeding strategies for smallholder cattle in Indonesia (Jan 2017 to 31 Dec 2020)
- » Incorporating salt-tolerant wheat and pulses into smallholder farming systems in southern Bangladesh (Mar 2017 to Feb 2021)
- » Diversifying rural poultry production in Myanmar – opportunities for small-scale farmers (Apr 2018 to 31 Mar 2019)



Performance against strategic objective

2

Performance criteria

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

Target

More resilient livelihoods in the face of climate change

Rationale

The productivity of many agricultural systems is threatened by degradation of the resource base, of which agriculture and land use can be a significant driver. Resource degradation can devastate agriculture at household and regional scales, cause financial ruin and deepen poverty in poor communities. ACIAR is helping smallholders in developing countries manage production systems as sustainably as possible and respond to the effects of climate change and other pressures on the resource base.

Focus

ACIAR has a long history of enabling research on sustainable use of soil and water resources, and their management in the context of climate variability, areas in which Australia has distinctive research expertise. Increasingly, ACIAR will focus on climate-smart agriculture, for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change impact on agriculture and land use. This will be through:

- » increased understanding of the economic and social benefits of catchment rehabilitation and remediation strategies
- » contribution to the development of land-use policies suited to transitioning to sustainable agroforestry sectors
- » development of new technologies and practices in natural resource management for ensuring healthy forestry and fisheries sectors
- » providing the incentive and knowledge for local communities to support ecosystem health and resilience
- » fostering climate-smart landscapes for promoting sustainability of agricultural systems.

Examples of ACIAR projects supporting this objective

- » Farm mechanisation and conservation agriculture for sustainable intensification (Mar 2013 to 30 Jun 2019)
- » Improving dry season agriculture for marginal and tenant farmers in the Eastern Gangetic Plains through conjunctive use of pond and groundwater resources (Sep 2014 to Jun 2019)
- » A Virtual Irrigation Academy to improve water productivity in Malawi, Tanzania and South Africa (Jun 2015 to 29 Jun 2019)
- » Strengthening incentives for improved grassland management in China and Mongolia (Sep 2015 to 31 Dec 2019)
- » Management of nutrients for improved profitability and sustainability of crop production in Central Myanmar (Jan 2016 to Jun 2020)
- » Optimising soil management and health in Papua New Guinea integrated cocoa farming systems (Oct 2016 to Jul 2020)
- » Climate-smart landscapes for promoting sustainability of Pacific Island agricultural systems (Jan 2018 to 31 Dec 2021)

Performance against strategic objective

3

Performance criteria

Human health and nutrition — Enhancing human nutrition and reducing risks to human health

Target

Healthier and better nourished families

Rationale

While global malnutrition levels declined over the last decade, a tenth of the planet's population—more than 795 million people—were chronically undernourished in 2014–16. Children are the most vulnerable facing stunting, brain damage, disease and in many cases death. Approximately three million children, mostly in developing countries, die from the consequences of malnourishment each year. On its own, increased agricultural production does not necessarily lead to better nutritional outcomes and there are risks to human health through diseases linked to livestock, agrichemical use and food safety issues. ACIAR projects are working with smallholder farmers and regional groups to develop nutritionally positive options and address health risks in smallholder and regional food systems.

Focus

Human health and nutrition is a relatively new but growing area of focus for ACIAR. Projects across several research programs work towards this strategic objective by:

- » improving the food quality of smallholder vegetables and starchy staples
- » striving to achieve wider market access for smallholders, aligning farm production to meet quality and nutritional requirements
- » improving sustainability and resilience of production systems, including livestock health and production
- » improving health, nutrition and livelihoods of rural communities through opportunities for diversified food production.

Examples of ACIAR projects supporting this objective

- » Improved postharvest management of fruit and vegetables in the southern Philippines and Australia (Dec 2013 to Jun 2019)
- » Improving the production and competitiveness of Australian and Philippines pig production through better health and disease control (Jan 2015 to Dec 2018)
- » Enhancing transboundary livestock disease risk management in Lao PDR (Feb 2015 to Jul 2019)
- » Enhanced fruit production and postharvest handling systems for Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga (Jan 2016 to Dec 2019)
- » Safe Pork: Market-based approaches to improving the safety of pork in Vietnam (Oct 2017 to Jun 2022)

Performance against strategic objective

4

Performance criteria

Gender equity and women's empowerment — Improving gender equity and empowerment of women and girls

Target

Improved social inclusion and greater empowerment of women and girls

Rationale

ACIAR projects are helping to create gender equity in developing countries. The way to gender equity is to empower women. When women are empowered, they lead more productive lives, and their families are healthier, more educated, and richer. Empowering women breaks the poverty cycle. If women had equal access to resources, their farms would be more productive, developing countries would produce more agricultural output, and they would be able to feed more hungry people.

Focus

In line with the Australian Government's aid policy, ACIAR is committed to gender equity in the design, delivery and impact of all our activities in order to bring sustained change to both women and men. ACIAR projects aim to transform the lives of women and girls, helping them to realise their potential and make their farms more sustainable, productive and profitable, to the benefit of all.

Examples of ACIAR projects supporting this objective

- » Improving the methods and impacts of agricultural extension in Western Mindanao, Philippines (Oct 2013 to 31 Mar 2019)
- » Improving opportunities for economic development for women smallholders in rural Papua New Guinea (Jul 2015 to Oct 2018)
- » Smallholder farmer decision-making and technology adoption in southern Lao PDR: opportunities and constraints (Jan 2016 to Dec 2019)
- » Uptake of agricultural technologies amongst farmers in Battambang and Pailin provinces, Cambodia (Apr 2017 to Dec 2020)
- » Integrating gender and social inclusion into agricultural value chain research in Vietnam (Jun 2017 to Dec 2018)

Performance against strategic objective

5

Performance criteria

Inclusive value chains — Fostering more inclusive agrifood and forestry market channels, engaging the private sector where possible.

Target

Safer and more inclusive agrifood and forestry value chains

Rationale

Agrifood and forestry value chains create and deliver products from the farmers who produce goods, through the markets where they are sold, to the customers who buy them. Providing opportunities for farmers to engage in commercial value chains is one of the most effective ways of reducing poverty in rural smallholder communities. ACIAR, working with the private sector and researchers, is developing approaches to better connect smallholder farmers and their families to business opportunities and markets that can help lift them out of poverty. Value chains create jobs and help economies and societies to develop.

Focus

Much of the economic development in the Indo-Pacific region is characterised by rural transformation. This includes the development of an increasingly active and dynamic private sector along value chains that can create commercial opportunities for smallholder producers. ACIAR is increasingly involved in research to support value chain development and building partnerships with the private sector including:

- » demonstrated opportunities for sustainable and inclusive agribusiness development to improve livelihoods and community resilience
- » achievement of wider market access for smallholders, aligning farm production to meet quality and nutritional requirements
- » improved health, nutrition and livelihoods of rural communities through opportunities for diversified food production
- » improved agrifood market chains—engaging the private sector where possible
- » greater access to international markets and reducing product losses through building biosecurity capacity at national and regional levels across the Pacific.

Examples of ACIAR projects supporting this objective

- » Improving smallholder incomes in the north-western highlands of Vietnam by increasing access and competitiveness in regional temperate and subtropical fruit markets (Jul 2014 to Dec 2018)
- » Improvement and management of teak and sandalwood in Papua New Guinea and Australia (Jul 2015 to 30 Jun 2019)
- » Enhancing value-added products and environmental benefits from agroforestry systems in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific (Oct 2015 to Jul 2019)
- » Policy and institutional reforms to improve horticultural markets in Pakistan (Jan 2016 to Jun 2019)
- » Enterprise-driven transformation of family cocoa production in East Sepik, Madang, New Ireland and Chimbu Provinces of Papua New Guinea (Mar 2016 to Feb 2021)
- » Improving smallholder dairy and beef profitability by enhancing farm production and value chain management in Pakistan (Apr 2017 to Sep 2021)
- » Strengthening vegetable value chains in Pakistan for greater community livelihood benefits (Feb 2018 to Dec 2021)

Performance against strategic objective

6

Performance criteria

Capacity building – Building scientific and policy capability within our partner countries

Target

Individual and institutional level capacity built in our partner countries, in Australia and in ACIAR

Rationale

ACIAR builds the capacity of individuals and institutions in developing countries and Australia to carry out agricultural research projects. ACIAR builds capacity through structured training, informal networking and learning at the project level. The benefits of formal fellowships and scholarships are high profile and easily recognised but ACIAR's informal 'on-the-job' training and research partnerships across cultures and countries also deliver significant outcomes.

Focus

Capacity building is an integral part of all projects and programs that ACIAR develops. Our capacity building programs will work with partner countries and organisations to boost local, regional and in-country capacity in scientific, management, policy and governance areas related to our research programs.

ACIAR's immediate priority areas for capacity building are developing scientific and policy capacity in partner countries through the design and implementation or facilitation of scholarships, fellowships and training activities.

Planned ACIAR programs supporting this performance criteria

- » A leadership program for female agricultural researchers to increase the number of, and empower, women scientists
- » A new cohort of John Allwright Fellows
- » An executive leadership program for John Allwright Fellows
- » Two cohorts of early-mid career partner country researchers to undertake a program in Australia to develop management and leadership skills – John Dillon Fellowship
- » ACIAR Alumni support program for country offices
- » Australian researchers program including internships and support for Researchers in Agriculture for International Development (RAID)
- » Pilot a new Australian farmers volunteering program

Our capability

ACIAR aims to be both a valued broker and partner in agricultural research through close working relationships with stakeholders, and provision of timely and consistent funding support. ACIAR will continue to promote the development and coordination of regional, national and international agricultural research systems in the Indo-Pacific region.



ACIAR's research program is guided by our six strategic objectives to ensure we achieve our mission of more productive and sustainable agricultural systems. In order to design and implement a successful research program, ACIAR's team of experienced research program managers will continue to work with partners to ensure the best possible research is designed to address priority issues. Selected research programs and their outputs will be evaluated for benefit and impact, to continue to evolve and deliver effective research.

The strength of ACIAR's partnership model will be maintained through regular strategy discussions with country partners, consultation with Australian, regional and international research agencies and continued support to the strategic capabilities of our network of 10 country offices. ACIAR will maintain active communication with DFAT, and Heads of Mission, Ambassadors and High Commissioners in partner countries, to ensure alignment with and relevance to Australia's broader aid initiatives.

A number of new capacity building programs will be implemented from 2018-19, including balanced researcher and internship programs for post-graduate students, a new fellowship program targeting women leaders, a farmers volunteering program and activities targeting the Australian agricultural research community. A program of alumni events in partner countries is being developed to maintain and strengthen relationships and continue to build capacity.

ACIAR's outreach strategy will focus on communicating and engaging with a wide range of stakeholders both internationally and domestically. Tailored communication products and programs will extend results of research to targeted groups of smallholder farmers in partner countries, the research community and decision makers internationally. Through its relaunched website and improved social media channels, ACIAR also will communicate more broadly using video and photography; as well as through reports, information sheets and publications. ACIAR will target Australian media to raise its profile with domestic audiences.

As a learning organisation, ACIAR implements both formal and informal processes to review, assess and learn from the work we do throughout the Indo-Pacific region. This learning builds individual and institutional knowledge from project outputs, as well as enhancing our understanding and building our experience to enable continual improvement of the programs that ACIAR develops and supports.

ACIAR's workplace priorities

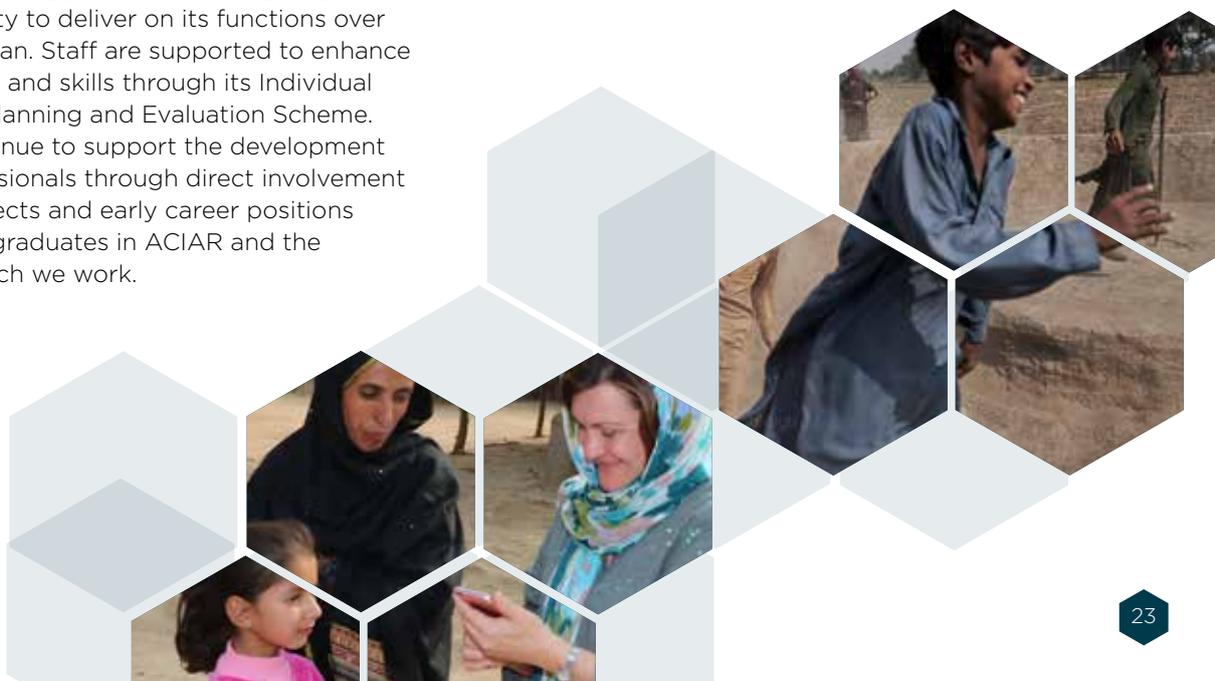
- » Enhance work health and safety systems to effectively manage risk
- » Enhance capability by developing a skilled and diverse workforce
- » Foster a culture of wellbeing to encourage engagement
- » Maintain a workplace that embeds our values and encourages participation
- » Facilitate the implementation of ACIAR's Enterprise Agreements in Australia and overseas
- » Ensure that staff are aware of ACIAR's values
- » Encourage executive management to be champions and role models
- » Ensure the integration and development of both our locally engaged staff and those who work remotely
- » Maintain ACIAR's workforce planning framework, ensuring that strategies are in place for the right people to be in the right job at the right time

ACIAR's capability also depends on the values, diversity and capability of individuals in the organisation. Within the workplace, the way staff work and the development of workplace culture and diversity are influenced by ACIAR's values of impartiality, commitment to service, accountability, and respectful and ethical conduct. These values demonstrate ACIAR's commitment to upholding the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct.

ACIAR introduced its Gender Equity Policy and Strategy in 2017 and an internal Gender Committee will continue working on the implementation of the strategy across all offices throughout the period of this Corporate Plan.

ACIAR will continue to develop its Capability Development Strategy to ensure the agency's staff have the capacity to deliver on its functions over the life of this plan. Staff are supported to enhance their knowledge and skills through its Individual Development, Planning and Evaluation Scheme. ACIAR will continue to support the development of young professionals through direct involvement in research projects and early career positions for agricultural graduates in ACIAR and the countries in which we work.

ACIAR's new cloud-based ICT platform supports global collaboration between staff, research partners and stakeholders. The platform integrates program, project, partnership, finance, procurement, communication and stakeholder management into a single system that enables ACIAR to deliver more effectively and efficiently on its international agricultural research and training partnerships. This approach will meet current and future business requirements, including areas of new research or reporting requirements. The cloud strategy accommodates the vast availability of the rapidly evolving applications in order to ensure long-term currency.





Our risk oversight and management systems

ACIAR recognises that risk management is an essential part of its functions and operations and underpins the achievement of its key objectives.



ACIAR ensures that its activities are delivered in scope within schedule, budget and quality requirements and in a way that reduces the risk of preventable risks being realised.

Given the environment in which ACIAR works, the agency's portfolio of projects includes some high risk but potentially high payoff research.

The risks outlined within its risk management document, ACIAR Risk Management Policy and Plan 2018-21, reveal the key strategic risks to ACIAR delivering on its objectives and how it plans to mitigate these risks.

The key strategic risks that may prevent ACIAR achieving its objectives are identified as:

- » **absence of adequate Records Management systems**—poor information management and recordkeeping practices resulting in an inability to fulfil organisational priorities and legal obligations
- » **ineffective business systems**—reducing the ability to effectively carry out ACIAR's role in supporting agricultural research partnerships and decreasing ACIAR's information security
- » **ineffective management of ACIAR's relationships**—including those with the Ministers Office, the Secretary and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), research partners, including those with existing and new partners, leading to poor working relationships and impacting the ability to effectively deliver on ACIAR's mandate
- » **compromised safety of ACIAR staff**—due to threats posed in its operational environments.

Noting the ongoing investment underway in improving 'back office' systems and processes, ACIAR has appropriate internal controls in place for the oversight and management of these risks, based on sound judgment and the best information available. This supports ACIAR's capacity to identify, manage and derive maximum benefits from new challenges and opportunities in international agricultural research partnerships.

ACIAR requires risk registers to be developed, maintained and owned by key functional groups within the agency. Risk registers are reviewed by the Executive Management Team and the Audit Committee and updated, as necessary, on a regular basis.

All ACIAR staff are accountable for good risk management in their workplace and base their approach on an understanding of the likelihood and consequence of risks being realised when considering the impact of uncertainty on delivering ACIAR objectives.

Within ACIAR's operational network there are deteriorating security situations in some countries, generally or in localised regions that present risks for the viability of research collaboration. These risks will be actively monitored and managed.

ACIAR will invest in the capability of ACIAR staff to ensure that they are able to manage risk, and will engage external expertise when required to assist in effectively managing risks. ACIAR will also maintain an active internal audit program to continue to improve its approach to risk management.



Pearl farm staff in Namari Bay, collaborating on an ACIAR-supported project strengthening value chains for the young pearl industry in Fiji.
Photo: © ACIAR/Conor Ashleigh





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