

Evidence and lessons from the Virtual Irrigation Academy for improving the sustainability of scaling agricultural innovations



Key details

Location

Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe

Duration

Start Jun 2025

End Sep 2026

Budget

AUD 479,558

Commissioned organisation

[International Water Management Institute](#)

Partners

The Virtual Irrigation Academy

Project Leadership

Dr Petra Schmitter

ACIAR Research Program Manager

Dr Jack Hetherington

Program

[Agribusiness](#)

Project code

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irrigators. The VIA has helped farmers make better decisions to manage irrigation water more effectively, resulting in increased crop yields. Despite strong results, the VIA has not determined a self-sustaining business model and remains dependent on external funding. This is a common challenge for many agricultural innovations, which often struggle to grow due to issues such as financing, market access and policy support.

This research activity will use the VIA as a case study to develop practical and sustainable business strategies for scaling innovation. It will identify the conditions and partnerships needed for success, with the goal of reducing reliance on donors. The research will also gather insights that can help other organisations design effective strategies for scaling agricultural innovations and guide future research and development initiatives.



Research need

This small research activity explores how the [Virtual Irrigation Academy](#) (VIA) and similar innovations can become self-sustaining businesses that deliver long-term benefits to farmers and agriculture.

Since 2015, ACIAR and DFAT have invested in the VIA – a suite of affordable water-sensing tools, water literacy and data systems to empower smallholder