

This Annual Operational Plan (AOP) 2011–12 presents ACIAR's planned research and development priorities and investments, corporate expenditures and key performance indicators for the year ahead. This year the AOP has been redesigned to align more closely with the strategic directions contained in ACIAR's Corporate Plan, and provides forward operational detail for implementation of the overarching corporate strategies. The AOP is therefore an essential accountability and management document, which is integrated into the government's broader rural development objectives and the individual partner-country and regional development priorities.

During 2011–12 the AOP will comprise a mixture of maintaining and improving the momentum of previous and ongoing research programs and projects, while also providing for new initiatives and endeavours to meet the changing research and aid assistance challenges and aspirations of our developing-country partners and Australia. In particular, ACIAR will be working with AusAID and other government agencies in implementing the relevant outcomes of the government's Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness. ACIAR will also be securing closer coordination with AusAID and other development partners to enable upscaling of agricultural research results into the broader aid initiatives and programs at both national and regional levels.

As an integral part of Australia's aid program, ACIAR's unique role in agricultural research-for-development partnerships will be an active component of the government's wider food security agenda in 2011–12. The global food security challenges and risks, particularly for less-developed countries, are well known. Identifying and progressing the solutions in scientific, policy and socioeconomic terms will require significantly more attention.

There is widespread acknowledgment that, with population growth and rising incomes, the world will need to double food and fibre production in the next 40 years. Ongoing commodity price and input volatility, as well as weather variability, can be expected to continue alongside water constraints and land degradation in many parts of the world. These new pressures will place an additional burden on the food security of the most vulnerable groups—the poorest and the hungry. Poverty and food insecurity are mutually reinforcing.

With its well-developed agricultural science and systems research base, Australia is well positioned to contribute to the development and application of essential technologies to raise productivity in the smallholder farming settings of developing countries. In 2011–12 ACIAR has identified opportunities to build onto Australia's globally recognised agricultural research and capacity-building partnerships by targeting three research themes:

- agricultural productivity growth in smallholder systems
- developing market integration for improving smallholder livelihoods
- human and institutional capacity building for developing-country national research institutions to enable sustainable follow-up research and adoption capabilities.

These thematic initiatives will be addressed in 2011–12, both in bilateral and regional projects, as well as in multilateral undertakings in concert with the reformed Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and its constituent research centres.

This AOP provides detail on ACIAR's proposed programs and projects together with the costings necessary to deliver on the above themes and partnerships in 2011–12.

If you need more information about any aspect of ACIAR's activities, please contact us. Details are in the corporate directory at the end of this report. Our website <aciarc.gov.au> is also a key gateway to our operations.



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ACIAR Chief Executive officer

(right) **Joanna Hewitt, AO**
Chair, ACIAR Commission