



The Director-General of the Laos National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI), Dr Bounthong Bouahom, discusses with John Lacy, rice production practices.

NAFRI delegate Vanthong Phengvichith discusses production practices with researcher Brian Dunn.



Professor Len Wade (third from left) with the NAFRI delegation at Yanco Agricultural College, NSW.



The NAFRI delegation inspects crops in the heat shelters.

LAO RESEARCHERS IN WAGGA WAGGA

Charles Sturt University (CSU) in Wagga Wagga hosted a delegation from Lao PDR as part of a large research project aimed at finding ways to alleviate the poverty of farming families in rainfed areas in southern

provinces. The \$5.1 million project, 'Developing improved farming and marketing systems in rainfed regions of southern Lao PDR', involves researchers from institutions in Laos and Australia and is funded by ACIAR and led by

CSU Professor Len Wade.

Heading the delegation was Dr Bounthong Bouahom, the Director-General of the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) in Laos. They visited research facilities

at CSU, including the new \$2.4 million underground field research laboratory known as a rhizolysimeter. They also visited rice farms and fisheries while in the NSW Riverina.

ACIAR Commission appointments

A Chair and two members were appointed to the ACIAR Commission by the Executive Council of the Australian Government on 7 April 2011. The Chair and Commissioners of ACIAR provide advice to the Minister in relation to the formulation and funding of agricultural research and development programs. The new appointees are Ms Joanna Hewitt AO (Chair), Professor Kym Anderson and Dr Conall O'Connell. They will join reappointed Commissioner Mr David Crombie and current Commission members Mr Peter Baxter

(Director-General of AusAID), Dr Joanne Daly (member of the CSIRO Executive Management Council) and Dr Nick Austin (chief executive officer of ACIAR).

ACIAR thanks retiring Commissioners the Hon. Neil Andrew AO and Mr Barry Buffier. We also thank former Chair Dr Meryl Williams for her commitment to the Commission since her appointment in 2007 and in her previous role on the ACIAR Board of Management.

Helping Tibetans keep butter tea on the table

A team of scientists from the Tibet Autonomous Region of China visited Australia in late March 2011 to meet with their Australian partners on ACIAR projects that are helping to boost milk production in Tibet through better integrated livestock cropping systems and overcoming mineral deficiencies.



Madam Sezhu, Vice Director of the Tibet Livestock Research Institute, Dr Nyima Tashi, Vice President of the Tibet Academy of Agricultural and Animal Science, and masters graduate Ms Pubu Drolma in Canberra, April 2011.



Researchers inspect field sites of an ACIAR-funded research project in Tibet aiming to boost milk production. Intercropping wheat with vetch and lucerne crops offers the opportunity to increase food for both humans and livestock.

Weather forecasts for Indian farmers

Three villages in the Warangal, Nalgonda and Mahabubnagar districts of Andhra Pradesh are receiving twice-weekly medium-range forecasts customised to weather scenarios. Farmer groups meet twice a month to discuss the seasonal effects on crops and provide feedback on the advisories and the accuracy of weather forecasts.

CSIRO researchers Zvi Hochman and Christian Roth, and their Indian colleagues Raji Reddy, Sreenivas (Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University) and Kosaraju Suresh

(from the non-government Watershed Support Services and Activities Network) recently attended meetings in the villages in India to assess how farmers are adapting to climate challenges and how they are using the weather information.

Farmers have started adopting the weather advisories to fine-tune field operations such as land preparation and sowing, and deciding when to harvest paddy or to apply insecticides to control sucking pests.



Farmer group in Nemmani village, Andhra Pradesh, discussing results of previous wet-season cotton.

Farmers happy with increased rice yields in Sulawesi

Rice farmer Mr Andi Caco from South-East Sulawesi is a project champion who is now promoting the use of natural resource management options in rice production.



PHOTO: DONNA CASARETO, IRI

Rice farmers in South and South-East Sulawesi, who have significantly boosted their rice yields, have given positive feedback on an ACIAR-funded research program that is working towards a 10% increase in irrigated rice production.

The farmers involved in the project are now 'champion' farmers promoting the use of natural resource management options, such as alternate wetting and drying for water management, using the International Rice

Research Institute drum seeder for direct seeding, coupled with better herbicides for effective weed control and using more efficient fertiliser management.

They are also using more ecologically based rodent management and integrated insect pest management by monitoring and harnessing natural enemies, use of cultural management practices and minimal use of insecticides (if needed) for stem borer control and rice bug.



PHOTO: BOB MARTIN

Mr Larano (right) gives some advice to planter operator Mr Seang Chenda on adjusting the depth of planting.

Cambodia builds first no-till seeder

The first no-tillage seed drill built by a local Cambodian equipment manufacturer successfully passed its field test at the Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) at Prateah Lang Commune, Dangkor, outside Phnom Penh in May 2011. The seed drill is one of 11 being

built by agricultural equipment manufacturer Mr Ouchhoeun Larano at Russeykeo, Phnom Penh. Six of the machines were commissioned by ACIAR as part of a project that is helping Cambodia to diversify and intensify cropping in rainfed lowland areas.