

ACIAR tackles pests and diseases

Research into disease and pest management is crucial for reducing poverty and providing food security in developing countries. An important subset of this research is concerned with *containment* of pests and diseases—otherwise known as biosecurity. It involves the development of policies and mechanisms to stop pests and diseases spreading within a region, or from one region into another.

Pests and diseases have no respect for national boundaries, and in today's increasingly inter-connected world, the movement of unwanted organisms is not difficult. Trade is a common way to introduce pests and disease. With animals it is through the marketing of stock; with plants it is through accidental import (on the bottom of shoes, tyres, etc) and poorly regulated trade. However, to gain access to markets countries must prove themselves free of pests and disease.

The principal purpose of all ACIAR-funded biosecurity projects is to secure farmers' livelihoods by finding solutions to the problems in the partner countries, and to enable these countries to become participants in the international trading community. However, there is a legitimate spin-off from this type of research, which is in line with one of Australia's national research priorities, that is, protecting Australia from invasive diseases and pests. By studying a biosecurity problem in-country, Australia is well placed to attack the problem should it reach our shores and, better still, to prevent it from reaching here in the first place.

Most of our biosecurity projects involve collaboration with our most immediate neighbours—Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Pacific island countries. The closer a country is, the greater the chance of pest

and disease spread. Although collaboration provides mutual benefits, Australia has an important self-interest in helping regional countries on biosecurity matters, driven largely by a desire to facilitate trade. So by helping our partner countries, we are also helping ourselves. The late Professor Derek Tribe, who was instrumental in the establishment of ACIAR, summed this up eloquently in the title of his 1991 book *Doing Well by Doing Good*.

In this issue of *Partners* we provide a small sample of the collaborative biosecurity research that ACIAR has funded. This includes projects on animal health (avian influenza, classical swine fever, foot-and-mouth disease, disease surveillance), forestry (guava rust of eucalypts), crop protection (banana wilt diseases and potato late blight) and fisheries (shrimp diseases). And our profile this issue is a man with a passion for agricultural research and biosecurity—Dr Luis Rey Velasco, newly appointed chancellor of the University of the Philippines, Los Baños campus.

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partners
IN RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

Partners in Research for Development is the flagship publication of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). *Partners* presents articles that summarise results from ACIAR-sponsored research projects, and puts ACIAR research initiatives into perspective.

Technical enquiries will be passed on to the appropriate researchers for reply. Reprinting of articles, either whole or in part, is welcomed provided that the source is acknowledged.

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Executive Editor: Georgina Hickey, ACIAR, +61 2 6217 0500
Managing Editor: Brad Collis
Associate Editor: Rebecca Thyer
Coretext Pty Ltd, +61 3 9670 1168

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Letters from readers are welcome, and should be addressed to:

The Editor
Partners in Research for Development
ACIAR
GPO Box 1571
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

Email: comms@aciar.gov.au

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The newly appointed chancellor's affinity with the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, dates back decades. He is entering a new chapter in this history, with the hope that hard work and focus will see his research dreams turn into reality.



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