
WORKING WITH ACIAR, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

**ACIAR's response to the results of a survey
of Australian stakeholders**

Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research

February 2006

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) operates as part of Australia's international development cooperation program, with a mission to achieve more-productive and sustainable agricultural systems, for the benefit of developing countries and Australia. It commissions collaborative research between Australian and developing-country researchers in areas where Australia has special research competence. It also administers Australia's contribution to the International Agricultural Research Centres.

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Foreword

Periodic independently conducted external stakeholder surveys are an important component of ACIAR's appraisal and partnership approach to the management and delivery of effective agricultural research programs designed to assist developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable growth.

In the second half of 2005, Professor Tim Reeves and Professor Graeme Robertson undertook a semi-structured dialogue survey of 61 Australian stakeholders from the government, industry and research sectors, using a pre-designed questionnaire. ACIAR's objective in commissioning this survey was to reach out to our Australian partners to gauge how well we are performing and whether we can improve our performance in terms of operations, priorities and directions.

The timing of this important survey also coincided with the development of ACIAR's new 2006–2010 Corporate Plan, a copy of the draft of which was provided to each stakeholder in preparation for the interviews. The questions and related discussions were based on six key strategic themes:

- ACIAR's role and performance
- operating environment
- developing and managing projects
- prioritisation of R&D agenda
- ACIAR's resource allocations
- research adoption and communication.

The feedback generated from the survey, together with a range of recommendations for the improvement of future directions and operations under the above themes, was delivered to ACIAR in November 2005 for the consideration of the Board and management. ACIAR has addressed the views and recommendations provided in a positive and receptive manner, and has designed an action plan in response. The action plan and the survey report are presented in this publication.

The overall assessment in the report was that stakeholders believe that ACIAR has developed an outstanding reputation for achieving project outcomes that have not only made a positive impact in developing countries, but at the same time contributed significantly to Australia's interests. Its management, staff and project development processes are



widely commended and there was a strong view that ACIAR continues to be seen as an important organisation generally held in high regard.

The above positive reflections on ACIAR were combined with some areas of adaptation and change which were identified as requiring attention for the future. These were primarily focused on improving the transparency of the project selection process and communication with Australian stakeholders in setting strategic directions and priorities.

It is these suggestions and recommendations which form the basis of the management action plan as a response to the report and as part of the continuous improvement process in ACIAR. These actions constitute a way forward not only for the Centre's interactions with our research partners, but also as a contribution to future strategic planning, priority-setting and operational management for the organisation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Core". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'P' and 'C'.

Peter Core
Director
Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research



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Acknowledgments

The contribution of a wide array of Australian stakeholders in government, industry and research sectors is very much appreciated. The stakeholders identified in the survey report willingly gave valuable time and provided insights into ACIAR's strategic directions, priority-setting and operational management. Their observations and suggestions have been fully considered in the development of the action plan presented here.

ACIAR gratefully acknowledges the roles of Professor Tim Reeves and Professor Graeme Robertson, who managed and undertook the external survey with Australian stakeholders. They were also the authors of the survey report and provided very useful follow-on commentary to ACIAR in the development of the action plan.

Simon Hearn and Trish Andrew at ACIAR headquarters worked closely with the survey authors in the development and delivery of the survey report. They also prepared the subsequent action plan in consultation with Dr John Williams, on behalf of the ACIAR Board of Management.



MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

I Introduction

The authors of the Survey of Australian Stakeholders presented their report and key findings from the survey to the Board of Management on 24 November 2005. Following Board deliberations, ACIAR management was asked to prepare an action plan that considers and takes account of the recommendations arising from the survey.


In developing this action plan, ACIAR is openly endeavouring to build on its strengths and to adopt the useful suggestions for improvements. These improvements are focused at the strategic and operational levels and, most importantly, are designed to improve the interactions and partnerships with our Australian stakeholders. These partnerships remain crucial to maintaining and enhancing ACIAR's performance in the future, particularly in the context of implementing the new 2006–2010 Corporate Plan, based on six key strategies to meet the challenges ahead.

The proposed actions from this survey will also help to capitalise on Australia's wide-ranging comparative advantage in agricultural research, to secure critical mutual benefits from ACIAR's international partnerships.

The overall assessment in the report was that ACIAR has developed an outstanding reputation for successful delivery of projects that have not only made a positive impact in developing countries, but at the same time contributed significantly to Australia's interests. Its management, staff and project development processes are widely commended and there was a strong view that the Centre continues to be seen as an important organisation generally held in high regard.

It was expected that ACIAR will continue to have an important role to play in the foreseeable future and ACIAR was considered to have an excellent knowledge of the changing operating environment in developing countries.

ACIAR has an impact in partner countries well in excess of resources applied, and communicates very well with those overseas partners.



Many Australian stakeholders benefited from their partnership with ACIAR, through development of an international perspective and associated staff development and science linkages.

Notwithstanding the above very positive reflections on ACIAR, some areas of adaptation and change were identified as requiring attention for the future. These were mainly focused on selection process transparency and communication with Australian stakeholders in setting strategic directions and priorities. Specific issues raised included:

- more attention to strategic dialogue with ACIAR amongst Australian stakeholders at the senior organisational level
- more transparency in the process from project identification to project approval, and greater outreach to potential new collaborators in Australia
- a greater need to demonstrate clear local/national benefits in Australia, which is increasingly important for collaborators such as state departments
- greater emphasis on strategic co-investment alliances rather than small project-based collaborations
- recognition that Australian organisations that work with ACIAR have undergone or are undergoing major changes that will affect their relationship with ACIAR in the future such that the availability of staff for ACIAR projects cannot be assumed
- a view that ACIAR's partners often contribute in-kind resources and should therefore be more involved in the priority-setting process
- resource allocations are considered about right but the basis for priority-setting and subsequent resource allocation could be made clearer
- pathways to market should be included in all ACIAR projects
- a need for ACIAR to reflect broader policy settings rather than just the poverty alleviation and development priorities of AusAID in terms of achieving necessary changes—AusAID could contribute more actively to turn ACIAR project outputs into beneficial outcomes
- concerns over possible leakage of intellectual property through ACIAR projects and competition of such projects with technology-exporting organisations.



2 Recommendations and action plan

The survey report provided 17 recommendations. ACIAR's actions and responses to them are discussed under the six broad categories of activity or themes discussed with stakeholders in the survey. (The key actions to be taken are summarised in Attachment 1.)

In developing this action plan, ACIAR has given full consideration to the overarching emphases on enhancing the transparency of the project-selection process to facilitate a wider engagement of research providers, and the need to more actively engage key Australian partner organisations in strategic planning and the priority-setting process. Many stakeholders are also co-investors and, as such, seek a level of inclusion in the mapping of research and development (R&D) pathways from inputs to impacts. It is felt that such inclusion would also facilitate an increased understanding of the changing research policy and operational environment in Australia, and influence ACIAR's overall strategy to attain poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth in developing countries.

In line with the survey questions and in sequence with the report's recommendations the requisite actions are outlined below:

2.1 ACIAR's role and performance

Survey question

Is ACIAR's R&D role in the regional development process, and its contribution to Australia's wider and policy objectives being well explained and effectively communicated to your organisation? If so, can your organisation work effectively in this policy environment? If ACIAR's role is not being well communicated to you, how could the process be improved?

Recommendation 1: ACIAR further develop its relationship with key Australian partner organisations by providing the opportunity for better communication and more engagement at the *strategic* level.

Recommendation 2: ACIAR establish a program of regular national and/or regional meetings with the senior management of key organisations in order to promote ACIAR and discuss major issues such as priorities, operating environments and strategic collaboration.

Recommendation 3: ACIAR's Board of Management uses the opportunity of its regional meetings to schedule formal discussions with key stakeholders on strategic organisational issues.



Action

Commencing in 2006, ACIAR will host an annual strategic/operational meeting with key stakeholders, including state departments of agriculture, CSIRO and the university sector, to consider progress against the Corporate Plan and to facilitate direct input into the Annual Operational Plan. This will be conducted as a single workshop in Canberra or as a 'roadshow' by ACIAR executives at major centres across Australia. External agencies will be consulted at the director/deputy director/deputy vice-chancellor levels.

Senior ACIAR managers will also selectively meet with a range of R&D agencies not included at the above annual meeting to discuss current issues/approaches and to receive active feedback on ACIAR's role, performance and directions as a partner/potential partner agency. A target of 15 agencies per year will be set.

The proposed meetings could most usefully be undertaken during the early preparations of ACIAR's Annual Operational Plan. Such direct communication would not, however, substitute for the regular communications currently undertaken with agencies by ACIAR's research program managers. Discussion of priorities and collaboration in such meetings will be largely at a thematic and strategic level rather than project-specific details. Scope for multi-agency collaboration will be actively considered in such discussions to achieve critical mass and wider partnerships.

Invitations will be regularly issued to senior executives of research and other relevant agencies to meet with the ACIAR Board at its meetings, to provide an exchange of views and feedback on strategic issues to Board members. This would be included as a Board agenda item, to cover operating environments, strategic collaboration and other major issues as required.

2.2 Operating environment**Survey question**

How effectively are your organisation's members being included in the change process as ACIAR adapts to meet the changing requirements of developing countries (mainly in the Asia-Pacific region)? What key directions do you anticipate in the region over the next five years and how do you believe your organisation will respond to such changes?



Recommendation 4: ACIAR take into account the increasing connectivity between aid, trade, market access and biodiversity in setting country priorities and developing projects.

Recommendation 5: ACIAR develop strategies to work more closely with the International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) in responding to emergency situations. ACIAR should continue to use its current approach to project development, approval and implementation.

Action

Country priority-setting must continue to be a joint exercise that considers Australian and partner country preferences and capabilities. This is essential for successful participatory research and adoption. In this setting, the relationship between aid, trade, market access and biodiversity is now being further developed by ACIAR in the project selection process and through the recent formation of the Policy Linkages and Impact Assessment (PLIA) program. PLIA's goal is to foster greater cross-program collaboration and an enhanced multidisciplinary character to ACIAR's research investments. This will be periodically enhanced by an expert advisory panel.

ACIAR will continue to foster and improve its links and collaboration with IARCs. Over the past five years ACIAR has increasingly been involved in responses to emergency situations with both IARCs and Australian research providers. *Examples* include:

- World Fish and the Asian Vegetable Research and Development Center as leading components of ACIAR's post-tsunami response in Indonesia; the Maize and Wheat Improvement Center has undertaken ACIAR's Afghanistan projects; a consortium of IARCs has played a central role in the East Timor 'Seeds of Life' program. These and other multilateral linkages will be actively used to meet future challenges.

2.3 Developing and managing projects

Survey question

Is ACIAR's present project selection process suitably designed and managed to meet key objectives and targets? By what means (if any) could this be enhanced?

Recommendation 6: ACIAR should continue to use its current approach to project development, approval and implementation.



Recommendation 7: The transparency of the project-selection process could be enhanced by calling for registration of capacity or interest against country priorities.

Recommendation 8: ACIAR should consider ways to reduce the time taken to develop and approve projects.

Recommendation 9: The workload and resourcing of program managers needs to be monitored against the business outcomes expected.

Action

ACIAR invites expressions of interest from IARCs, and has also widely sought proposals in the Philippines and Indonesia. More recently, it has sought registration of capacity for a new initiative in Pakistan.

In response to recommendation 7, action will be taken in 2006 on a trial basis with the Papua New Guinea (PNG) program. PNG country priorities will be actively disseminated to relevant parties and communicated through press and electronic media. All potential providers will be encouraged to submit 'concept proposals' for consideration. The concept proposals will also include a statement of capability and details of proposed adoption pathways, as well as indications of the collaborating PNG and Australian institutions.

The expressions of interest would be reviewed by a small, mainly external, committee serviced by the ACIAR PNG Country Manager to nominate those proposals most suitable for further development by ACIAR through the established in-house review process.

The ACIAR website will continue to disseminate R&D information including priorities and application of contractual processes across the wider portfolio. Other means of effective communication with suppliers are being reviewed by ACIAR as part of a new communication strategy.

Sign-off by partner agencies in Australia and, more particularly, in partner countries, is usually a major source of delay. Improved understanding of processes in overseas central planning agencies, and possible parallel decision-making processes, will be further investigated. Research program managers will need, as far as possible, to initiate project 'in principle' approval processes with overseas agencies early in the development process.

ACIAR will work to strengthen the relationship between the commercial/business/ administrative sections of our key Australian

partners to minimise delays, including those arising from concerns about ownership of intellectual property (IP). ACIAR will also work to enhance the understanding of overseas partner approval processes amongst Australian project providers, and will encourage such providers to consult with overseas partners early and often.

A recently signed relationship agreement with CSIRO will be monitored as a template for other R&D providers to expedite processes.

Workloads and resourcing will be periodically reviewed in the annual planning, performance appraisal and staff workshop forums, including reallocation of functions and roles when necessary within agreed budget parameters. In 2006 a new project information management system will be introduced to enhance productivity within reasonable staff and budget limits.

2.4 Prioritisation of R&D agenda

Survey question

*How well are ACIAR priority-setting procedures aligned to the dynamic nature of economic, rural and environmental settings in our partner countries and the changes in the Australian research sector?
Can these procedures be improved to achieve mutual benefits for partner countries and Australia?*

Recommendation 10: The transparency of country priority-setting processes to Australian stakeholders could be enhanced, perhaps by involving Australian research providers in setting country priorities.

Recommendation 11: The process and criteria applied in making resource allocation decisions between countries should be communicated to stakeholders, in addition to the outcomes.

Recommendation 12: ACIAR needs to engage more with Australian stakeholders in considering the nature and quantum of research benefits which should, or could, flow to Australia from ACIAR investments.

Action

As part of the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio, ACIAR is required to consider country priorities and resource allocations within the framework of the Australian Government's aid and development program and priorities. This may limit the extent to which domestic stakeholders can influence some aspects of ACIAR's priorities. Nevertheless, in line with the proposed actions in response to recommendations 1–3, country

priority-setting and resource allocations will be included as part of the enhanced interaction with Australian stakeholders. These can also be taken up in the context of government policy development processes.

Adoption and impact-assessment studies now need to separately identify, where possible, Australian benefits as well as those to partner countries. Stakeholders in Australia will be more extensively used in this process, which is not new but will be re-examined in the context of mapping and communicating on research projects from input to impact. ACIAR considers stakeholder information on research-capacity development and capabilities, as well as adoption and impact, as highly important.

2.5 ACIAR resource allocations

Survey question

Given that ACIAR's current expected bilateral resource outlays are PNG–Pacific (25%); Southeast Asia (50%); North Asia (10%); South Asia (10%) and Southern Africa (5%), how effectively can your organisation work within this framework? Do you believe, from the perspective of your organisation, that the current expected resource outlays are appropriate?

Recommendation 13: ACIAR should consider whether it has a potential role in applying the ‘ACIAR model’ more broadly in international programs for poverty alleviation and economic development. This may include assessment of the feasibility of considering issues in addition to poverty alleviation as a reason for investment.

Recommendation 14: The level of future investment in Australian partner organisations and expected onshore benefits need to be reviewed and well articulated.

Action

Demonstrated compatibility with Australian aid and development priorities will continue to be a condition of multilateral and bilateral international partnerships with ACIAR. The essential role of agricultural R&D in development will continue to be assessed and promoted by ACIAR.

It is unlikely that poverty alleviation and broad-based sustainable economic growth will be reduced as a driver in the Australian Government’s development cooperation program, but indirect contributions such as environmental management, capacity-building and extension will be further emphasised in future partnerships.

Linkages between aid and trade will also be underlined, as well as the identification, through research, of best-fit policy frameworks in particular countries to secure science-based R&D benefits and productivity gains.

ACIAR will continue to seek assessment and measurement of benefits to Australia from individual projects in its impact assessment series and at the selection stages. Measurement of Australian benefits will increasingly include both direct and indirect returns to Australia, including economic, capacity-building, and environmental and biosecurity benefits.

ACIAR will complete a generic study in 2006 of the returns to Australia (economic, social and environmental) from its overall research investment portfolio.

2.6 Research adoption and communication

Survey question

How can the future communication and adoption pathways for ACIAR projects be effectively improved to further stimulate adoption and utilisation of research outcomes in partner countries while also securing advantages for Australia? Does ACIAR communication of directions and priorities meet Australian stakeholder needs?

Recommendation 15: ACIAR's approach that includes a 'pathway to market' in all of its projects is strongly supported, and ongoing commitment is required to ensure that all of the stakeholders needed to map such pathways are involved from the outset of project development.

Recommendation 16: ACIAR's post-project emphasis should be on monitoring and evaluation, while encouraging AusAID, where appropriate, to support the ongoing extension and adoption of key project outputs.

Recommendation 17: ACIAR gives high priority to the conduct of impact evaluation studies that detail the benefits flowing to Australia from ACIAR projects. These should be conducted in consultation with Australian partners to ensure that their needs are being met.

Action

ACIAR has enhanced the need for a pathway-to-market system by the redesign of the ACIAR project-selection proformas to emphasise the requirement for such pathways to be described at the outset. ACIAR will seek improvement in market pathways in the context of its bilateral or multilateral partnerships, and commercial partnerships and joint ventures



will be exploited wherever this is feasible to improve market opportunities.

Post-project monitoring and evaluation is being substantially enhanced and refined. The scope of assessment now includes project reviews, adoption studies, economic impact assessments and thematic studies/meta-analyses. The data and results generated by these evaluation tools will be used to improve accountability and to guide the design of future investment priorities and plans. Assessments of capacity-building and community and environmental returns (in addition to economic returns) are also being made in impact studies where this is feasible.

Improved integration of ACIAR's projects with AusAID commitments has been an important emphasis for ACIAR over the past five years. Recent examples include interventions in PNG, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, East Timor and Pakistan. Discussions on the role of AusAID in agricultural adoption and extension activities will be ongoing and may be further refined in the context of the Australian Government's White Paper on aid in 2006.

Delineation of Australian benefits will be more rigorously examined at both project selection and assessment stages, by evaluating ex-post and ex-ante information and data from providers and partner organisations. Research project leaders already take a lead role in adoption studies wherever possible. Closer communication and consultation with Australian partners at formal and informal levels will be combined with action to ensure the use of up-to-date and best-practice methodologies for impact assessments.



Attachment I

Summary of key actions to be taken by ACIAR



RECOMMENDATION	KEY ACTION
<p>1. ACIAR's role and performance</p> <p>Recommendation 1: ACIAR further develop its relationship with key Australian partner organisations by providing the opportunity for better communication and more engagement at the strategic level.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: ACIAR establish a program of regular national and/or regional meetings with the senior management of key organisations in order to promote ACIAR and discuss major issues such as priorities, operating environments and strategic collaboration.</p> <p>Recommendation 3: ACIAR's Board of Management uses the opportunity of its regional meetings to schedule formal discussions with key stakeholders on strategic organisational issues.</p>	<p>Commencing in 2006, ACIAR will host annual strategic/operational meetings with key stakeholders to consider progress against its Corporate Plan and obtain direct input into the Annual Operational Plan. Meetings will be conducted as a single workshop in Canberra or as a 'roadshow' by ACIAR executives at major centres.</p> <p>Senior ACIAR managers will selectively meet with a range of R&D agencies not included at the abovementioned annual meeting to discuss current issues/approaches and to receive active feedback on ACIAR's role, performance and directions as a partner/potential partner agency. These meetings will supplement, not replace, the regular research program manager interactions with partner agencies.</p> <p>Invitations will be regularly issued for individual research and other relevant agencies to meet with ACIAR Board members at Board meetings to enable mutual exchange of views and feedback. This would be included as a Board agenda item to cover operating environments, strategic collaboration and other major issues as required.</p>
<p>2. Operating environment</p> <p>Recommendation 4: ACIAR take into account the increasing connectivity between aid, trade, market access and biodiversity in setting country priorities and developing projects.</p> <p>Recommendation 5: ACIAR develop strategies to work more closely with IARCs in responding to emergency circumstances. ACIAR should continue to use its current approach to project development, approval and implementation.</p>	<p>The relationship between aid, trade, market access and biodiversity is now being further developed by ACIAR in the project-selection process and through the recent formation of the Policy Linkages and Impact Assessment program (PLIA) to foster greater inter-program collaboration and multidisciplinary measures in ACIAR.</p> <p>In addition to current close working relations with a range of IARCs to support ongoing and emergency research responses (e.g. post-tsunami Indonesia, Afghanistan and East Timor), multilateral linkages will be actively used to meet future challenges. Lessons from previous formal and informal partnerships are being used to improve future ventures.</p>
<p>3. Developing and managing projects</p> <p>Recommendation 6: ACIAR should continue to use its current approach to project development, approval and implementation.</p> <p>Recommendation 7: The transparency of the project-selection process could be enhanced by calling for registration of capacity or interest against country priorities.</p>	<p>Subject to adjustments nominated in recommendation 7, ACIAR will continue to build on the strengths of its current project management and business model system to achieve continuous improvement and enhanced delivery of results.</p> <p>Action will be taken in 2006 on a trial basis with the PNG program. PNG country priorities will be actively disseminated to all relevant parties and all potential providers will be encouraged to submit 'concept proposals' for consideration, including information on capability, adoption pathways and collaborating partners. The expressions of interest will be reviewed by a small, mainly external, committee to nominate proposals for further development in the in-house review process.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	KEY ACTION
<p>Recommendation 8: ACIAR should consider ways to reduce the time taken to develop and approve projects.</p>	<p>A focus on improved understanding of processes with overseas central planning agencies, and possible parallel decision-making processes, will be further investigated. Managers will need, as far as possible, to initiate 'in principle' approval processes with overseas and Australian agencies early in the development process. The recent relationship agreement with CSIRO will be monitored as a template to expedite processes.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: The workload and resourcing of program managers needs to be monitored against the business outcomes expected.</p>	<p>Workloads and resourcing will be periodically reviewed in the annual planning, performance appraisal and staff workshop forums. In 2006, a new project information management system will be introduced to enhance productivity within reasonable staff and budget limits.</p>
<p>4. Prioritisation of R&D agenda</p>	<p>Bearing in mind the need to operate within the framework of the Australian Government's aid and development priorities, country priority-setting will be included as part of the enhanced interaction with Australian stakeholders. Priority-setting and resource allocation can also be taken up in the context of government policy-development processes.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: The transparency of country priority-setting processes to Australian stakeholders could be enhanced, perhaps by involving Australian research providers in setting country priorities.</p>	<p>As with recommendation 10, resource-allocation issues will be included in both the formal and informal interactions with key stakeholders and other partners.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11: The process and criteria applied in making resource-allocation decisions between countries should be communicated to stakeholders, in addition to the outcomes.</p> <p>Recommendation 12: ACIAR needs to engage more with Australian stakeholders in considering the nature and quantum of research benefits which should, or could, flow to Australia from ACIAR investments.</p>	<p>Adoption and impact-assessment studies now need to separately identify, where possible, Australian benefits as well as benefits to other partner countries. Stakeholders in Australia will be extensively consulted in this process, which is not new but will be re-examined in the context of mapping and communication on research projects from input to impact. ACIAR considers stakeholder information on research capacity development and adoption as highly important.</p>
<p>5. ACIAR resource allocations</p>	<p>Demonstrated compatibility with Australian aid and development priorities will continue to be a condition of multilateral and bilateral international partnerships with ACIAR. While poverty alleviation and economic growth are unlikely to be reduced as drivers, the essential role of agricultural R&D in development will continue to be assessed and propagated by ACIAR.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13: ACIAR should consider whether it has a potential role in applying the 'ACIAR model' more broadly in international programs for poverty alleviation and development. This may include assessment of the feasibility of considering issues in addition to poverty alleviation as a reason for investment.</p> <p>Recommendation 14: The level of future investment in Australian partner organisations and expected onshore benefits need to be reviewed and well articulated.</p>	<p>ACIAR will continue to seek improved assessment and measurement of benefits to Australia from individual projects in its impact assessment series and at the project-selection stages. Measurement of benefits will include both direct and indirect benefits where possible. ACIAR will complete a generic study in 2006 of the returns to Australia from its overall research portfolio.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	KEY ACTION
<p>6. Research adoption and communication</p> <p>Recommendation 15: ACIAR's approach that includes a 'pathway to market' in all of its projects is strongly supported and ongoing commitment is required to ensure that all of the stakeholders necessary to address such pathways are involved from the outset of project development.</p> <p>Recommendation 16: ACIAR's post-project emphasis should be on monitoring and evaluation while encouraging AusAID, where appropriate, to support the ongoing extension and adoption of key project outputs.</p> <p>Recommendation 17: ACIAR gives high priority to the conduct of impact evaluation studies that detail the benefits occurring to Australia from ACIAR projects. These should be conducted in consultation with Australian partners to ensure that their needs are being addressed.</p>	<p>ACIAR has enhanced the need for a pathway-to-market system by the redesign of project selection proformas which identify such pathways. This approach will be extended to bilateral and multilateral partnerships, and commercial joint ventures will be exploited where this is feasible to improve market opportunities.</p>
	<p>Improved integration of ACIAR's projects with AusAID commitments will continue to be emphasised, such as in the current context of Indonesia, East Timor and Pakistan. Discussions on the role of AusAID in agricultural adoption and extension will be ongoing and may be further refined in the context of the Australian Government's White Paper on Aid in 2006.</p>
	<p>Delineation of Australian benefits will be more rigorously examined at both project-selection and assessment stages by addressing ex-post and ex-ante information and data from providers and partner organisations. In addition to current role by project leaders in adoption studies, closer consultation and communication with partners will be combined together with up-to-date and best practice methodologies for impact assessments.</p>

SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN STAKEHOLDERS

A report prepared by

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based on interviews with key stakeholders

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Executive summary

ACIAR is an important and effective organisation, highly regarded by its partners in Australia and overseas. It has been planning, managing and investing in research and development (R&D) for the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors of developing countries for over 30 years. In this time, it has developed an outstanding reputation for achieving project outcomes that have not only made a positive impact in developing countries, but at the same time contributed significantly to Australia's interests. ACIAR is regarded by Australian research providers as more a research partner than a funding body. Its management and staff and project development processes were widely commended and it is considered a privilege to work with ACIAR on a project.

It is expected that ACIAR will continue to have an important role to play in the foreseeable future. However, ACIAR's Australian stakeholders believe that some changes will be needed if they are to continue to work effectively with the Centre. While the Australian stakeholders are of the view that ACIAR communicates very well with its partners in developing countries, and rapidly adapts to meet their changing needs and priorities, they believe that its communication with, and responses to, onshore partners could be improved, and indeed will need to be improved to meet the changing research and policy environment.

The vast majority of ACIAR's partner organisations within Australia have undergone or are in the process of undergoing major changes that will affect their capacity to partner with ACIAR in the future. These changes include:

- a greater need to demonstrate clear local or national benefits in Australia, in order to justify involvement with ACIAR (an increasing issue in some state departments and CSIRO)
- greater emphasis on strategic co-investment alliances rather than small, project-based collaborations (e.g. CSIRO and some state departments)
- availability of staff and resources to participate in ACIAR projects (an increasing issue in some universities)
- strong direction from organisations to export their own knowledge-based technologies to countries where ACIAR operates, raising concerns of leakage of intellectual property (IP) through ACIAR projects and direct competition in the marketplace.



It is essential that ACIAR take these and other changes into account as it develops its strategy for the next 5–10 years.

There was a strong consensus amongst Australian stakeholders that an adequate response to the changes will require a more *strategic* dialogue with ACIAR at the senior organisational level. This would provide the opportunity for a much better mutual understanding of the changing operating environments for both ACIAR, in relation to international development and aid priorities, and its Australian partners in the context of the domestic imperatives. Several recommendations were made on how to progress this dialogue.

It was also felt that benefit would be achieved by improved communication in a number of other areas, including finding ways to more effectively make contact with the next generation of ACIAR researchers. This enhanced communication needs to extend to the processes of project identification, project approval and promoting opportunities for potential new collaborators.

ACIAR was considered to have an excellent knowledge of the changing operating environment in developing countries, but Australian researchers were not well informed as to the processes ACIAR applies to garner this knowledge, or how it used it in responding. Most respondents held the view that ACIAR knew much more about the regions and the issues than they did. One trend identified by stakeholders is that aid, trade, market access and biosecurity are becoming more closely interlocked and that new types of research engagement by ACIAR may be necessary. Australian stakeholders understood that ACIAR operates largely in areas of priority for AusAID, but responding to the convergence of issues may require a more flexible approach.

The majority of Australian stakeholders valued their partnership with ACIAR. This relationship benefited each organisation's staff development and satisfaction and, in particular, helped to engender an international perspective. While some institutions observed that there was a growing shortage of the type of researchers that ACIAR needed for its projects, others thought that there was significant resource available; it just needed to be engaged.

The development and management of projects was an area of great interest to most respondents. Some who were closely involved with projects thought ACIAR's process '*the very best we deal with*'. However, those not so closely involved had a strong view that the ACIAR project-selection process was not understood and, in the absence of a predictable submission round,



they were not sure how to participate. There was very strong support for ACIAR program managers and the project development process. Their role in developing true partnership approaches was highly appreciated. Some concerns were expressed over the length of time taken for the development and approval of projects, although it was noted that this was, to some extent, an inevitable result of the process applied. Several recommendations were made about projects, including consideration of an ‘expression of interest’ mechanism, the desirability of larger thematic projects on issues such as water, and the consideration of multilateral projects.

ACIAR’s priorities and resource allocations are understood by most stakeholders and most were comfortable that the current allocation was ‘about right’. There was, however, a frequent request that the basis for priority-setting and subsequent resource allocation be better communicated. Stakeholders were unsure as to whether poverty mapping and modelling were used, or whether ACIAR’s ex-post impact evaluation studies fed into future priority-setting. Some expressed the view that issues other than poverty alleviation—such as trade and investment—should also be included in the drivers of ACIAR strategy. Many stakeholders felt that, as they are usually expected to contribute in-kind resources to ACIAR’s work, they should be more involved with the priority-setting process, and could contribute to better outcomes. There was significant comment on working with China and India and the impacts of their economic development on future ACIAR investment.

Respondents were unanimous that all ACIAR projects should include a ‘pathway to market’ whatever that ‘market’ may be—farmers, other researchers, extension services, industry or policy-makers. ACIAR’s main role was seen to be ensuring the inclusion of such pathways in all proposals and ensuring the participation from the outset of all appropriate stakeholders in the project development process. The involvement of Australian scientists in downstream adoption activities was generally not thought to be appropriate, and was considered to have little scope for flow-back benefits to Australia. It was felt that AusAID could have a larger and more coordinated role in helping to turn ACIAR project outputs into beneficial outcomes for the host countries.

In conclusion, ACIAR is a needed and highly respected research partner for many Australian organisations, and the respondents to the survey were very positive and supportive towards it. It is doing most things very well, but the environment is dynamic and changes in ACIAR’s approaches will be required in the future to ensure continuing strong partnerships for the benefit of developing countries and Australia and its institutions.



A number of recommendations are listed below that address the areas of response required.

Recommendations

1. ACIAR further develop its relationship with key Australian partner organisations by providing the opportunity for better communication and more engagement at the *strategic* level.
2. ACIAR establish a program of regular national and/or regional meetings with the senior management of key organisations in order to promote ACIAR and discuss major issues such as priorities, operating environments and strategic collaboration.
3. ACIAR's Board uses the opportunity of its regional meetings to schedule formal discussions with key stakeholders on strategic organisational issues.
4. ACIAR take into account the increasing connectivity between aid, trade, market access and biodiversity in setting country priorities and developing projects.
5. ACIAR develop strategies to work more closely with IARCs in responding to emergency situations.
6. ACIAR should continue to use its current approach to project development, approval and implementation.
7. The transparency of the project-selection process could be enhanced by calling for registration of capacity or interest against country priorities.
8. ACIAR should consider ways to reduce the time taken to develop and approve projects.
9. The workload and resourcing of program managers needs to be monitored against the business outcomes expected.
10. The transparency of the country priority-setting process to Australian stakeholders could be enhanced, perhaps by involving Australian research providers in setting country priorities.
11. The process and criteria applied in making resource allocation decisions between countries should be communicated to stakeholders, in addition to the outcomes.
12. ACIAR needs to engage more with Australian stakeholders in considering the nature and quantum of research benefits which should, or could, flow to Australia from ACIAR investment.



13. ACIAR should consider whether it has a potential role in applying the ‘ACIAR model’ more broadly in international programs for poverty alleviation and economic development. This may include assessment of the feasibility of considering issues in addition to poverty alleviation as a reason for investment.
14. The level of future investment in Australian partner organisations and expected onshore benefits need to be reviewed and well articulated.
15. ACIAR’s approach that includes a ‘pathway to market’ in all of its projects is strongly supported and ongoing commitment is required to ensure that all of the stakeholders needed to address such pathways are involved from the outset of project development.
16. ACIAR’s post-project emphasis should be on monitoring and evaluation while encouraging AusAID, where appropriate, to support the ongoing extension and adoption of key project outputs.
17. ACIAR gives high priority to the conduct of impact evaluation studies that detail the benefits accruing to Australia from ACIAR projects. These should be conducted in consultation with Australian partners to ensure that their needs are addressed.



I Introduction

ACIAR has been planning, managing and investing in research and development for the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors of developing countries for over 30 years. It has developed an outstanding reputation for achieving project outcomes that have made a positive impact in developing countries, and at the same time contributing significantly to Australia's interests.

During this period, change has been continuous. Australia's interests in our region have evolved and, in particular, ongoing development in the region has altered both the needs and the expectations of partner countries. Indeed, some of the countries which have been important partners in ACIAR projects over many years have now developed to an extent that ongoing participation in ACIAR projects will decline significantly.

At the same time, research and development (R&D) for agriculture, fisheries and forestry within Australia has also changed. Public organisations have significantly reduced their investment in industry research, and the rural industry R&D Corporations are now major funders. The private sector is increasingly involved in research, and particularly in technology transfer. In addition, the resources that are invested in research for agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries are increasingly moving into the high-technology end of the business.

ACIAR is committed to achieving more productive and sustainable agricultural systems for the benefit of developing countries and Australia, through international and agricultural research partnerships. Clearly, in the light of the above changes, ACIAR must continue to adjust both its focus and delivery systems.

In order to provide input into its future strategic priorities and directions, ACIAR commissioned a survey to obtain from its Australian stakeholders feedback on its performance. The survey was approached as a strategic dialogue with key Australian stakeholders. It was designed as a semi-structured, open-ended survey with the intent to canvass views, opinions and suggestions on ACIAR and its performance against six key areas of interest. Respondents were provided with a statement on each key area and some prompting questions, plus a copy of a draft of ACIAR's Corporate Plan 2006–2010. The interviews took place in August and September 2005.

Professor Tim Reeves and Professor Graeme Robertson undertook the interviews. The emphasis was on listening to informed views on ACIAR,



its role and performance, and encouraging suggestions on future responses. Those interviewed were a selection of senior managers of research providers, and project managers across a wide range of organisations.

Without exception, those interviewed expressed very strong support towards ACIAR, considered it a well-run organisation that did a great job, and were very pleased to contribute.

2 Survey questions, stakeholder responses and recommendations

2.1 ACIAR's role and performance

Question

Is ACIAR's R&D role in the regional development process, and its contribution to Australia's wider and policy objectives being well explained and effectively communicated to your organisation? If so, can your organisation work effectively in this policy environment? If ACIAR's role is not being well communicated to you, how could the process be improved?

Issues to be addressed in this context may cover:

- *the understanding and dissemination of information on regional country needs*
- *consultation with research providers and other Australian stakeholders*
- *the inclusion of relevant players in designing program priorities*
- *the clear enunciation of R&D priorities*
- *means of communication of R&D priorities, processes and results to relevant parties*
- *efficiency and skills of ACIAR staff*
- *the usefulness of R&D outputs in achieving results in practice, with particular reference to poverty alleviation and food security*
- *the achievement and understanding of mutual benefits for Australia and partner countries*
- *participants view of their agency's working relationship with ACIAR*
- *appropriate roles of ACIAR's bilateral and multilateral programs*
- *appropriate role for ACIAR's training programs.*

The majority of respondents stated that they were generally aware of ACIAR's role in regional development, its goals in relation to poverty alleviation and food security, and its 'core business' of research collaboration to produce mutually beneficial outcomes. All respondents had a high to very high regard for ACIAR as an organisation, with praise for its management, staff and the research processes it applies. An interesting point of praise was that 'ACIAR provided access to people'; that is, it provided access to research partners, rather than just funding and equipment—the latter more common in the aid sector.

Many respondents, however, believed that while communication at the project level was outstanding (program managers were commended for their excellent communication), the communication between ACIAR and the respondents' organisations could be improved significantly. There was acknowledgment that ACIAR has a good website and that its publications were informative and available, but the majority felt that there would be benefit to all parties by improving the *strategic communication* at the organisational level.

Essentially, the vast majority of that ACIAR's partner organisations have undergone, or are in the process of undergoing, major changes that will affect their future relationships with ACIAR. These changes include:

- a greater need to demonstrate clear local/national benefits in Australia in order to justify involvement with ACIAR (an increasing issue in some state departments and CSIRO)
- greater emphasis on strategic co-investment alliances rather than small, project-based collaborations (e.g. CSIRO and some state departments)
- declining availability of staff and resources to participate in ACIAR projects (increasingly an issue in some universities)
- strong direction from organisations to export their own knowledge-based technologies to countries where ACIAR operates, raising concerns of leakage of intellectual property (IP) through ACIAR projects and direct competition in the marketplace.

Respondents who were senior managers felt that it was very important that the relationship with ACIAR was at the organisational level and not just the project level. Many believed that better projects would result from ACIAR engaging with organisations, rather than individuals, as additional options and resources may be identified for mutually beneficial areas of R&D.



There was a very strong interest in ACIAR, its strategic directions and its views of the future, and respondents were keen to engage more with ACIAR. Many respondents said that would appreciate being visited by ACIAR senior management more regularly. Some indicated that they had attended regional dinners hosted by the ACIAR Board and, while greatly appreciating these opportunities, felt that more could be made of them if time was set aside for the Board to engage in strategic discussions with the regional participants. Many said that they would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Board for up to half a day, before the dinner, or instead of a dinner, in order to discuss strategy and directions. This would, in their opinion, greatly add to the value of the regional visits.

The holding of annual meetings or workshops at a national and/or regional level, to discuss the operating environments, strategic collaboration and other major issues, was proposed by a number of respondents. They felt that if ACIAR held such meetings regularly this would greatly enhance mutual understanding and future collaboration. Nearly all said that they would welcome the opportunity to participate in such meetings and contribute to ACIAR's formulation of its strategic directions.

Regional country needs

Respondents had very favourable views of ACIAR's processes for determining country needs and believed that these were highly regarded by partner countries, who appreciated the involvement of senior ACIAR management in priority-setting and planning. The communication of country needs to Australian stakeholders was seen as less effective, however, and most respondents became aware of these needs only through the interactions between themselves or their colleagues and ACIAR program managers in the process of seeking to develop new projects.

Suggestions for improving these communication processes included:

- the regular distribution of electronic updates on new priorities on a country by country basis
- a call for expressions of interest to discuss country priorities.

It seemed that many respondents were used to being reminded of the calls for research funding by organisation administrators and followed-up by reviewing the funding body's priorities. In the case of ACIAR, which does not have a predictable funding cycle, there is no trigger for the researcher to actively seek information. While most respondents believed that the information needed was probably available on ACIAR's website, they also thought that a more direct communication process would help.



An expression-of-interest stage would also help to reach a new cadre of researchers.

Inclusion of relevant players in designing program priorities

A number of respondents addressed this issue, although by no means the majority. Two points of importance to ACIAR were emphasised:

- the potential benefits from the involvement of the R&D Corporations
- the involvement/consultation with all appropriate stakeholders.

A number of respondents commented on the overlap and potential synergies between the rural R&D Corporations and ACIAR projects. Some respondents felt that there was an opportunity to enhance some projects through consultation at an early stage with the R&D Corporations. This interaction would contribute to better projects and would also ensure that research proponents were not ‘trading off’ projects between ACIAR and the appropriate R&D Corporation. One respondent cited a project rejected by a R&D Corporation that was—after modification—supported by ACIAR. The second important issue related to the multiple research collaborations of many institutions that work with ACIAR. An example was given that related to the need for enhanced consultation and communication in the development and conduct of ACIAR projects. This example involved Australian organisation A collaborating with Australian organisation B under a R&D Corporation project. This work had then been associated by organisation A with an ACIAR project. There was no suggestion of any impropriety, but there were some concerns that basically the same area was a focus for both a R&D Corporation project and an ACIAR project, with implications for management of IP.

Efficiency and skills of ACIAR staff

There was universal praise for the efficiency and skills of ACIAR staff. Many respondents said that being involved with ACIAR was, because of the high quality of its staff, like working with a research partner rather than a funding body. Senior management, program managers, regional representatives and head office administrative staff were all specifically mentioned in positive light. There was frequent reference to the role of program managers, and almost invariably the comments were positive: professional, helpful, supportive, being frequent descriptions. There were no negative comments but rather some suggestions to be kept in mind:

- there would be benefit in greater transparency in the processes from project identification to project approval



- a more formal or inclusive process for identifying potential new collaborators
- a higher turnover rate of program managers would ensure organisational ‘freshness’ and new networks
- the workload of program managers, often involving long absences from Australia, may be too heavy.

In relation to the project development role of program managers, questions were raised about the mechanisms in place to allow for cross-program involvement where this would enhance the achievement of desired outcomes. Given that the greater need for systems research was recognised, the question as to whether ACIAR has processes in place to foster cross-program collaboration was raised on several occasions.

Usefulness of R&D outputs in achieving results

Most respondents were of the view that ACIAR projects were generally very successful in contributing towards poverty alleviation and food security in developing countries, but the issue of the level of benefits flowing to Australia was raised by some. While some respondents indicated strong benefit flows to Australia, others suggested that the benefits flowing to Australia were mainly secondary, such as personal development of staff, enhancement of Australia’s image, the development of an international perspective and contacts for the organisations. In the changing operating environment for research in Australia, this had become a bigger issue than it was in the past. Whilst every respondent personally felt that poverty alleviation and food security outcomes were of the very highest priority, they also stressed that the importance of local (Australia/state) benefits and benefits to Australian and state agencies (less so to universities) should not be underestimated. It was felt that more strategic consultation with Australian institutions could help to ensure the continuance of the win–win philosophy.

Appropriate roles of ACIAR’s bilateral and multilateral programs

While all respondents were knowledgeable on ACIAR’s bilateral program, most were less well informed about the multilateral program. The most frequent questions related to resource allocation:

- How does ACIAR decide on the split between bilateral and multilateral?



- Within the multilateral program, how does ACIAR decide on its allocations to the various International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs)?

The prioritisation processes and resultant resource allocations in both programs could and should be more transparent and based on objective criteria, if this is not currently the case.

Reaching out

Another significant concern was the role of ACIAR in making contact with the next generation of ACIAR researchers. Many felt that this was an important issue requiring greater attention as ACIAR communicated with its national stakeholders. There were several suggestions as to how this could be achieved, including regular presentations by program managers and project managers in regional locations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ACIAR further develop its relationship with key Australian partner organisations by providing the opportunity for better communication and more engagement at the *strategic* level.
2. ACIAR establish a program of regular national and/or regional meetings with the senior management of key organisations in order to promote ACIAR and discuss major issues such as priorities, operating environments and strategic collaboration.
3. ACIAR’s Board uses the opportunity of its regional meetings to schedule formal discussions with key stakeholders on strategic organisational issues.

2.2 Operating environment

Question

How effectively are your organisation’s members being included in the change process as ACIAR adapts to meet the changing requirements of developing countries (mainly in the Asia–Pacific region)? What key directions do you anticipate in the region over the next five years and how do you believe your organisation will respond to such changes?

Issues to be addressed in this context may cover:

- *the key medium term, scientific, economic and environmental requirements in the Asia–Pacific region*



- *the importance of on-farm and off-farm activities in meeting food demands*
- *the importance of capacity-building and the relevant disciplines for impacting on community requirements*
- *the relevance of future collaborative relationships with research providers in Australia to maximise ACIAR R&D delivery and results*
- *the effectiveness of ACIAR partnerships and collaboration to achieve technology adoption*
- *the integration of ACIAR programs into the whole-of-government agenda for development*
- *best means of addressing 'emergency' requirements in developing countries*
- *main benefits from Australian agency perspectives (for the agency, state or Australia) from working with ACIAR*
- *agency strategic vision for working with ACIAR (or is engagement on a project-by-project basis).*

While most respondents were aware of the dynamic nature of development in the regions surrounding Australia and felt some involvement with the change process, most had little knowledge of how ACIAR is adapting to the situation. Some considered that the rates of change in developing countries were such that research could, in some cases, be bypassed given the generally long-term nature of projects. This needed to be factored into ACIAR's thinking when responding to individual developing country needs.

Medium-term scientific, economic and environmental requirements

There was a generally good knowledge of the likely regional developments in the foreseeable future. Issues identified included:

- urbanisation
- industrialisation
- rising incomes
- widening gap between rural poor and urban populations
- increasing labour costs
- increasing education
- water management
- environmental concerns including climate change and water quality.

The vast majority of respondents felt that ACIAR had very good knowledge of these issues, and of other changes occurring, and was confident that the organisation would continue to be relevant in the region for the foreseeable future. There was a divergence of views as to how much emphasis should be placed on poverty reduction in setting priorities and if ACIAR should take into account other issues. The changes in the region are such that aid, trade and biosecurity have become more closely interlinked and new types of research engagements may be necessary. For example, whereas Australian organisations may, in the past, have provided technologies and expertise to countries in the region only through ACIAR projects, some now have overt targets for boosting commercial exports of improved germplasm and diagnostics and knowledge-based products generally. For the first time, this raises questions of direct competition from ACIAR's activities rather than the potential indirect competition arising from countries' increased capacity that is usually considered. In other instances, Australian stakeholders may wish to use networks forged through ACIAR projects for future trade opportunities. While respondents understood the relationship between ACIAR and Australia's aid program framework, there was a consistent view that these other issues should be considered in its strategic planning.

Capacity-building

Capacity-building in regional countries was considered by most to be a key outcome of their involvement with ACIAR. Given the 'access to people' that is a feature of ACIAR projects, the ability to build capacity at both the institutional and personal levels was seen as a key element of the operating environment in which ACIAR works, and one where ACIAR does very well. Given that capacity-building is the major aim of many development agencies in the region, there was a feeling that ACIAR may be able to work better with other donors in-country to achieve enhanced capacity-building. Some respondents felt that there needed to be better collaboration between ACIAR and AusAID in this area, although more opportunities were seen for this in research adoption and development (see later in report).

The effectiveness of ACIAR partnerships and collaboration to achieve technology adoption

As previously stated, most respondents felt that ACIAR projects were generally successful and delivering meaningful impacts in developing countries. This implies significant adoption of the technologies arising from projects. However, in the current and foreseeable operating environment for some Australian organisations, it was foreshadowed that



there would be little mutual benefit in them being involved in downstream activities in a developing country. This is further discussed in section 2.6.

The integration of ACIAR programs into the whole-of-government agenda for development

ACIAR's role in the whole-of-government agenda for development is well known by most respondents, if not fully understood. Most, however, acknowledged the importance of ACIAR's unique role in development and the need for this to be largely aligned with AusAID priorities. Some felt that ACIAR should have more flexibility in its mandate, as some countries did not have the research infrastructure to be as effective as others in their work with ACIAR. Others questioned whether ACIAR should more reflect Australia's broader policies with regional countries, including market access, trade, biosecurity etc., rather than just the poverty alleviation and development priorities of AusAID.

Emergency requests

ACIAR's role in addressing 'emergency' requirements in regional countries was questioned by some, but supported strongly by others. Those with concerns felt that ACIAR's role was to facilitate collaborative R&D and that it should not be involved until well into the recovery phase after emergencies. Others, however, believed that ACIAR, with its expertise and excellent networks, had a major role to play in assessment, diagnosis and recovery planning. A particular strength lay in its ability to access expertise and genetic resources important for rural recovery programs. It was suggested that ACIAR could work more closely with the IARCs when responding to emergencies, as the centres were often involved in the same work and had people available in most regions.

Benefits to Australian agencies

Most respondents understood that ACIAR projects should deliver direct benefits to Australia as well as to the partner country. There was a range of opinions on the main benefits accruing to Australian organisations from their work with ACIAR. Benefits emphasised included:

- staff development and satisfaction
- experience for younger staff
- opportunities to attract overseas students
- opportunities for further non-ACIAR follow-ups in R&D, training, trade etc.



- access to vital research environments and resources for those working in biosecurity and related areas
- access to genetic resources.

The majority response, however, related to staff development and motivation, particularly the development of an international perspective and the beneficial impacts this could have on overall staff performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. ACIAR take into account the increasing connectivity between aid, trade, market access and biodiversity in setting country priorities and developing projects.
5. ACIAR develop strategies to work more closely with IARCs in responding to emergency situations.

2.3 Developing and managing projects

Question

Is ACIAR's present project-selection process suitably designed and managed to meet key objectives and targets? By what means (if any) could this be enhanced?

Issues to be addressed in this context may cover:

- *any steps to shorten the time frame and simplify processes in project development*
- *methods of project selection to reach a suitable mix of proactivity and reactivity in project selection*
- *communication of project-selection criteria to research providers in Australia and partner countries*
- *the most suitable size and duration of research projects*
- *suitability of recent monitoring and evaluation to assess the quality, benefits and development impacts of research programs and projects as a contribution to the planning and delivery of future projects*
- *the selection of projects that are mutually beneficial to Australia and partner countries while meeting the development priorities of the partner countries*
- *effectiveness of current country consultation process in the prioritisation of ACIAR investments.*

The development and management of projects was an area of great interest to most respondents. Senior managers had not usually been directly



involved with project development and management but had strong views on the project-selection process. Those involved in projects were very positive towards ACIAR and the view that working on an ACIAR project was a privilege was strongly promoted. The following outlines the key areas addressed.

Project selection

While there was very strong support for the view that ACIAR selected projects well, there is little understanding as to how it is done. While projects are directed at country priorities, the process of defining a project and the criteria for selecting researchers to work with ACIAR to develop a project proposal are not clear. Senior managers were of the view that this aspect of ACIAR needs to be improved. Many project leaders also supported this view and indicated that there does not seem to be a predictable way to participate in an ACIAR project, with many project leaders indicating that they had become involved through an accidental or serendipitous encounter; for example, a discussion at a conference or workshop, a chance meeting with a program manager in-country or through another person involved in an ACIAR project. The role of program managers in making the first contact was critical. While those with ACIAR projects were quite happy with the process, several indicated that they had colleagues who had not been able to get involved who were less happy. There is a need to communicate project-selection criteria more widely and seek broader participation from the research community.

The view was that project selection was driven by the judgment of the program manager as to what was needed in the focus country, and there was considerable confidence that this judgment was usually very good. The impact of Australian research priorities or needs on project selection was questioned.

Project development

There was very strong support from researchers for the ACIAR project-development process. It allowed good ideas to be turned into projects that would work. The role of the program managers in supporting the process and developing a true partnership approach was highly appreciated. In addition, the identification and development of in-country linkages by the program managers and country managers also added greatly to the efficacy of the process. Descriptors such as rigorous, comprehensive and detailed were used to describe the project-development process and there was a very strong view that the process allowed issues and problems to be identified in the planning phase and as a consequence the success rate of projects was very high.



Without exception the ACIAR process was considered far superior to the ‘anonymous lottery’ that is used by many funding bodies. However, the view was often expressed that the process should be more transparent and that other providers should be given more opportunity to participate. While the partnership project development approach should be maintained, it was suggested that a call against country priorities for expressions of interest would add value and create opportunities for new researchers to participate.

Senior managers and project leaders all thought the process took far too long and, while exhaustive, was exhausting. Some senior managers suggested that this put off many potential providers participating in ACIAR projects. Reasons were offered for the long process, including the difficulty in dealing with in-country institutions and multiple partners. It was suggested by some that this long process may be inevitable and, indeed, provided benefits during the project implementation phase, as the comprehensive reviewing and involvement resulted in most constraints being identified early and strategies put in place to manage them.

Most project leaders accepted that the project-development phase required a significant input and felt that this was balanced by a high level of certainty of a positive outcome in terms of project approval. Many indicated that the rate of progression is very much related to the capacity of the program manager to carry the project forward. The process relies very much on them as individuals. While there was strong support for the program managers, it was often stated that they carry a very heavy workload and, if they are out of the country on other activities or are indisposed, the project development phase is suspended. This problem needs to be addressed.

Project management

There was high regard for ACIAR’s project management skills, once projects are commissioned. The program managers clearly do an excellent job. They are viewed as partners, communicate well and provide valuable support and advice. The program managers and country managers are very responsive to problems that may arise and need to be solved. In addition, ACIAR is able to be flexible and respond to challenges and opportunities that become evident during the project. Mention was also made of the excellent support provided by the administrative staff at ACIAR.

ACIAR projects are appropriately resourced. This is not the experience with many other research funding bodies whose budget allocations are invariably less than what is required. The ACIAR project-development process identifies the budget required, and it is usually provided.



Project duration

Project leaders were comfortable with the duration of ACIAR projects. It was indicated that if, during the implementation of a project, a new opportunity arose, there was the flexibility and process to extend the project or develop a follow-up activity. There was also support for the approach often taken of a short, scoping project which may lead to a longer, more comprehensive project.

There was also a view that a more integrated, thematic approach could be applied; for example, a regional or sub-regional program on water management or farming systems. It was raised on several occasions that, while ACIAR program management is excellent, there had been some instances in which more communication and interaction across or between programs could have improved outcomes.

Project scope

It was suggested on several occasions that there would be benefits in more emphasis on multilateral projects for both donors and recipients. It was also suggested that the involvement of international centres such as the International Rice Research Institute (Philippines), the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (Syria) and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (Mexico) on a project basis could add value and allow ACIAR access to a multilateral mode of operation. These suggestions were often tempered by an understanding that multi-country projects would be more complex and much harder to plan and implement.

Monitoring and evaluation

The view was that ACIAR projects are well monitored and there is swift action by the program managers if an emerging problem is identified. The program managers communicate well with the project leaders and respond quickly. Most respondents were aware of ACIAR's benefit-cost analyses but were of the view that the monitoring of outcomes could be improved. In particular, the difficulty of attribution was raised, without any suggestions as how to improve its assessment. The time delay between project completion and adoption complicated the evaluation of benefits.

The evaluation of the benefits accruing to ACIAR projects within Australia was an area identified as requiring more attention. While many benefits to Australia from specific projects were noted by the respondents, their view was that the benefit flows were not well quantified or promoted.



RECOMMENDATIONS

6. ACIAR should continue to use its current approach to project development, approval and implementation.
7. The transparency of the project-selection process could be enhanced by calling for registration of capacity or interest against country priorities.
8. ACIAR should consider ways to reduce the time taken to develop and approve projects.
9. The workload and resourcing of program managers needs to be monitored against the business outcomes expected.

2.4 Prioritisation of R&D agenda

Question

How well are ACIAR priority-setting procedures aligned to the dynamic nature of economic, rural and environmental settings in our partner countries and the changes in the Australian research sector? Can these procedures be improved to achieve mutual benefits for partner countries and Australia?

Issues to be addressed in this context may cover:

- *need to relate priorities to each country's stage of development, scientific and extension capacity*
- *responses to political imperatives; addressing emergencies that require R&D input; interactions with government and industry representatives (in Australia and overseas)*
- *the essential features of effective cooperation techniques in addressing priorities for both Australian and partner country stakeholders*
- *how effectively are R&D priorities related to Australia's capacity to delivery*
- *best means of developing priorities that receive mutual benefits for Australia and partner countries*
- *areas of R&D that are under-subscribed in ACIAR portfolio (from discussant's view).*

There was a range of views expressed on the ACIAR priority-setting process, coloured very much by the personal exposure and experience of individuals to the process. On one hand there was a view that the in-country process appeared to be rigorous and well set and that it established the tone for the R&D program. Amongst research providers, the priorities are well read, but it was suggested by some that they are very broad and

not overly useful. Others were either not aware of the process or, in cases where they had observed the process, felt that the results were very much dependent on the particular individuals who were participating. It was alleged that, from time to time, this can result in anomalies, with core areas omitted because there was no-one present with an understanding of that particular area. Some senior managers believed that the size of the ACIAR budget was so small that one could rely on the expertise and experience of the program and country managers to identify projects that would give very good returns; that is, ACIAR is very much a niche funder and setting overall country priorities is less important than picking projects with high returns. The following sections outline the key areas addressed.

The alignment of projects to country needs

There was general confidence that the projects were aligned to the economic, social and environmental settings in the partner country, although there was very little knowledge of the process by which this had been achieved. Significant reliance was put on the judgment of the program managers. There was an occasional comment that, in some cases and with particular reference to biotechnology, the technology applied by the Australian researchers may be beyond the country's ability to use. This view was not shared by organisations with expertise in these areas, which thought that there was capacity in many countries to use this technology and that capacity-building was important. Moreover, most respondents thought that a lot of effort went into ensuring that the project and technology were relevant to the country and the sector targeted. Much of this was achieved during the project-development phase and people were not clear on how or if this was considered at the priority-determining phase.

Priority drivers

Most were comfortable with the fact that the main driver of ACIAR priorities was poverty alleviation and that the agenda was influenced by policy directions of the Australian Government. However, organisations and project leaders would like these drivers to be more transparent and communicated so they can understand how they influence the priorities. At this stage, priorities are simply taken as given. Some expressed the view that issues other than poverty alleviation, such as trade and investment, should be included in the drivers for setting priorities.

Participation in priority-setting

Onshore research providers are able to participate in the priority-setting process by informal discussion and interaction with program managers. Most of the respondents wished to participate more fully in the priority-setting process and expressed a desire to be engaged formally. Many



organisations and individuals believed that they could add value to the priority-setting process. In addition, it was often noted that ACIAR relies very much on in-kind contribution from research providers to implement projects and that, as they were thus co-funders, the research providers should contribute to the priority-setting process.

The alignment of priorities to the changes in the Australian research sector

The Australian agricultural research sector has changed significantly since ACIAR was established, and is continuing to change. It was not clear to respondents whether ACIAR is considering these changes and reflecting them in developing its research priorities. Some of the changes raised include: a movement to investment in the high-technology areas, away from field based R&D; greater involvement of the private sector; significant decline in public sector R&D; commercialisation and protection of IP; and a focus by state agencies on delivering direct outcomes for the economic benefit of their industries and state.

It was noted that ACIAR relies on the program managers to keep track of developments in Australian R&D, linking them to research opportunities in partner countries. They do this well and attend most major research conferences and workshops. However, it was often noted that the program managers and senior managers of ACIAR seldom meet with senior managers of research providers to ensure that they are abreast of the significant strategic changes occurring.

The view was expressed on a number of occasions that research providers are running out of the type of researchers that ACIAR requires in developing countries. However, the counter view that there was plenty of capacity—ACIAR just needs to engage it—was also consistently put. It was often suggested that ACIAR needs to communicate more with organisations and better understand their specific capabilities and interests.

The consensus was that, although ACIAR projects can have benefits that accrue within Australia, the research priorities of Australia were not usually taken into account by ACIAR in setting its priorities. Indeed, it was considered that there was limited scope to incorporate Australian research priorities into the ACIAR program, with the exception of quarantine and biosecurity projects. However, in-country projects do need to consider the benefits which flow to Australia. These may be in terms of staff development, potential trade opportunities and the development of international perspectives by staff, as well as the higher-order national objectives. It was generally felt that the original objectives of ACIAR that

it invest in and manage agricultural research that would benefit both Australia and the partner country is becoming less and less feasible and needs to be redefined.

The universities have a different perspective on benefits of research to the public research providers. The latter are mandated to deliver benefits to Australia or a particular state, and their involvement in overseas R&D that has no clear benefits to Australia is difficult. However, universities encourage staff to undertake research for its own sake, regardless of how or where the benefits are captured.

Future directions

Most respondents were comfortable with the needs of recipient countries and Australia's strategic interests being the key drivers of R&D investment and there were few areas suggested for increased focus. Water in its broadest sense—including catchment management, use of water, management of wastewater, pollution and contaminants—was seen as an important emerging issue and one that affects and is affected by many land uses. The suggestion was that this is an example of R&D which should be picked up in broad themes. Similarly, there is a case for more emphasis on integrating R&D across sectors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The transparency of the country priority-setting process to Australian stakeholders could be enhanced, perhaps by involving Australian research providers in setting country priorities.
11. The process and criteria applied in making resource-allocation decisions between countries should be communicated to stakeholders, in addition to the outcomes.
12. ACIAR needs to engage more with Australian stakeholders in considering the nature and quantum of research benefits which should, or could, flow to Australia from ACIAR investment.

2.5 ACIAR resource allocations

Question

Given that ACIAR's current expected bilateral resource outlays are PNG–Pacific (25%); Southeast Asia (50%); North Asia (10%); South Asia (10%) and Southern Africa (5%), how effectively can your organisation work within this framework? Do you believe, from the perspective of your organisation, that the current expected resource outlays are appropriate?

Issues to be addressed in this context may cover:

- *the suitability of the allocations to meet Australia's aid priorities and objectives*
- *the adequacy of the mix between bilateral and multilateral programs for the present objectives*
- *the degree of flexibility that should be built into annual allocations to meet emergency requests*
- *the future directions that should be envisaged for ACIAR funding in Asia–Pacific or elsewhere*
- *the level of resources and skills allocated to stakeholder relations in Australia and overseas*
- *the desirable balance of resource allocations between partner countries and Australia.*

There was a general understanding that ACIAR's resource allocation is driven by Australia's strategic interest, with a strong focus on poverty alleviation and economic development. Within this framework, most respondents were comfortable that the current allocation was 'about right', with a strong view expressed that Australia concentrate on its near neighbours. However, while this general support was very evident, there was considerable comment on specific countries, such as India and China, the emphasis on near neighbours versus other areas of need and/or strategic interest and if there was potential to extend ACIAR's mandate beyond poverty alleviation.

Australia's aid priorities and objectives

While the view was that the resource allocation between regions and countries is about right, it was often raised that it is not clear how it is established. While it is stated that the allocations closely reflect Australia's country and regional priorities, most were at a loss to describe how or why these might be set. The emphasis on poverty alleviation was acknowledged, but several other policy objectives were raised that might be incorporated in Australia's interests, such as current and future trading relationships, developing scientific linkages and collaboration, facilitating commercial opportunities and investment, and biosecurity and terrorism preparedness. Moreover, a number of respondents were of the view that if poverty alleviation was a priority, there was a strong case for increased investment in Africa. This was countered by others who felt that Africa was very much dominated by European programs and any Australian effort would be insignificant, although there was a view expressed that the ACIAR/Australian approach would be very beneficial in Africa.

Some research providers indicated that a combination of the lack of transparency in the allocation process and the long project development process had resulted in organisations and individuals spending considerable time and resources developing projects, only to find that the country or regional priorities had changed before the project was commissioned.

China and India

The transitional economic status of India and China and its impact on future ACIAR funding was raised by many. Scientists who had been involved in projects in these countries, and senior managers, were of the view that projects in India and China were usually very successful and more likely to involve true research collaboration and provide a return to Australia than projects in many other countries. It was well understood that the economic development of these two countries had resulted in them becoming of less interest to ACIAR, but it was often put that there is still poverty in both of these countries, and that while there is enhanced capacity of the country to pay, many of the projects that ACIAR is involved with would either not occur or be less well done without ACIAR investment. It was suggested that there may be a process whereby ACIAR could initiate and manage projects with contributions from other funding sources such as the partner country. It was stressed by many that ongoing relationships with India and China are important for both scientists and Australia, and that thought should be given to building on the impact that ACIAR has made in this area. However, most accepted the view that China and India were no longer priorities for Australian-funded aid programs.

Multilateral versus bilateral projects

A number of respondents indicated that there was opportunity to increase the proportion of funds invested in multilateral projects. Some of the benefits would include: being able to involve countries outside the current focus countries; accessing greater international expertise; developing stronger project links with the centres of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research, including accessing some of their multilateral projects and using expertise or capacity developed by ACIAR in one country in a neighbouring country. The latter point was raised particularly in the context of PNG and the Pacific Islands, where expertise and capacity developed in one project could be very beneficially used elsewhere in the region. It was noted, nevertheless, that multilateral projects would usually be more complex and difficult to develop and manage than bilateral ones and this may be a reason to limit them. Bilateral projects are in themselves difficult and slow to develop.

A broader scope

While research providers with tropical scope or experience were very supportive of the current allocation of 50% of the resources being directed at Southeast Asia, PNG and the Pacific Islands, research providers based in or focused on Australia's southern states would like to see ACIAR's purview broadened to include West Asia, North Africa and Southern Africa. To some extent these suggestions were promoting self-interest, and were occasionally made in the context of accepting the current allocation, but indicating their own organisation would have liked it to be different. However, a number of respondents indicated that the dual objectives of poverty alleviation and advancing Australia's interests could be achieved by investing outside the current focus. Examples given included forestry in South Africa, farming systems in the Middle East, animal husbandry in North Africa and climate change in Mediterranean-type environments.

Future directions

There was some concern that the focus on poverty alleviation, and in particular the emphasis on Indonesia, PNG and the Pacific Islands, was moving the business of ACIAR away from collaborative research towards technology transfer and development. Research organisations focused at the high-technology end of R&D were finding it less and less attractive to participate in ACIAR projects. Notwithstanding this view, the majority of respondents were comfortable with the implications of this focus and were of the view that there would be plenty of providers willing to participate in the future. Nevertheless, ACIAR does need to acknowledge that the current priorities are moving the organisation away from its original charter as understood by Australian research organisations.

Biosecurity and pest and disease identification and management were areas of research where the providers were very comfortable with the directions being implemented by ACIAR, and those working in these areas felt that there was a strong coincidence with poverty alleviation objectives and Australia's interests in Southeast Asia, PNG and the Pacific Islands.

Stakeholder relations

The view that ACIAR has had an impact in partner countries much greater than the resources applied was promoted by many respondents. These ranged from senior managers who had seen or heard of the offshore impact of projects, through to researchers who were very impressed at the knowledge of ACIAR within partner countries and the goodwill that ACIAR projects engendered towards Australia and Australians. This knowledge and respect was not only at an institutional level, but also



extended to regional communities and villagers. It appears that the presence of ACIAR projects, the performance of country managers and the excellent communication by program managers ensures a widespread and positive image for ACIAR in other countries.

The view of stakeholder relations and the resources put towards enhancing them in Australia was less flattering. While the role of, and communication by, program managers at the project level were very positively viewed, there was universal concern expressed at ACIAR's poor communication and involvement with onshore stakeholders at the strategic level. Most senior managers had not spoken to senior managers in ACIAR for some years and few researchers were aware of any recent formal presentations to research organisations. In addition, many senior managers thought that there could be significant benefit from more strategic involvement. It was thought, for example, that more dialogue between ACIAR and other national agencies could result in better linkages and in improved understanding of Australia's priorities in the regions, particularly over issues such as trade access and biosecurity. A number of senior managers felt that their organisations had skills and linkages offshore that could benefit ACIAR; for example, there appeared to be little communication between ACIAR and state agency sections responsible for overseas activities such as trade, investment and commercial projects. The recent involvements by ACIAR in Indonesia post-tsunami, and in Iraq, were raised as examples of activities that occurred without consultation or communication with research-providing organisations. In the case of the Iraq projects, it was suggested that linkages between existing AusAID training programs and the ACIAR project were important but not obvious.

There seemed to be a view that the traditional 50:50 split between research carried out within Australia and the partner country was being phased out and a number of new projects have most of the research carried out in the partner country, with the 'Australian' investment being used to fund Australian researchers to work offshore. This is particularly the case with university-based researchers.

Resource allocation between Australia and partner countries

It was widely understood that the allocation by ACIAR of resources for a project was intended to be 50% in Australia and 50% in the partner country. A range of views was expressed on this. Some indicated that there had been significant returns to Australia from many projects. Others indicated that in most projects 50% of the investment in Australia only buys 20% of the research input, largely because research is much more expensive to carry out in Australia. This was not considered a negative, just a reality, and even an advantage in some cases.



In discussing this issue, the respondents generally did not express concern at the trend, although respondents from state agencies did note that, unless there was real investment in building capacity within the Australian partner organisation, or there were benefits accruing to the state, it would be more difficult for researchers from state agencies to participate in ACIAR projects in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. ACIAR should consider whether it has a potential role in applying the ‘ACIAR model’ more broadly in international programs for poverty alleviation and economic development. This may include assessment of the feasibility of considering issues in addition to poverty alleviation as a reason for investment.
14. The level of future investment in Australian partner organisations and expected onshore benefits need to be reviewed and well articulated.

2.6 Research adoption and communication

Question

How can the future communication and adoption pathways for ACIAR projects be effectively improved to further stimulate adoption and utilisation of research outcomes in partner countries while also securing advantages for Australia? Does ACIAR communication of directions and priorities meet Australian stakeholder needs?

Issues to be addressed in this context may include:

- *monitoring and evaluating the quality, benefits and development impacts of research programs and projects*
- *developing supportive policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks*
- *project selection for adoption*
- *the implementation of training and extension schemes and their role in research programs*
- *the management and communication of information externally and internally to foster awareness of use of ACIAR funded research results*
- *the development and maintenance of good working relationships with stakeholders (is feedback to Australian researchers from ACIAR consistent and useful)*
- *suitable project selection and partnerships to achieve adoption and utilisation of results*

- *the extent to which resources should be allocated to achieving an adoption culture within ACIAR and in partner countries*
- *measurement of returns to Australia and partner countries from R&D investments*
- *incentives for users of R&D to adopt the research*
- *overall impact of ACIAR research, and main users of results.*

Respondents were unanimous that all ACIAR projects should include a ‘pathway to market’ whatever that market may be—farmers, other researchers, extension officers, industry, policy-makers etc. There were, however, widely differing views on the role of Australian research organisations in the adoption and utilisation processes. At one extreme, some respondents thought that we were not always proficient in these processes in Australia and therefore would have little to offer in another country. Others argued that while ACIAR could, in principle, help to identify pathways to adoption and utilisation, for cultural reasons the actual transfer of technologies should be handled only by locals. There were also concerns that, by being too rigid in adoption plans, conflicts could arise in the host countries—between organisations, communities and individuals. ACIAR’s main role is seen to be the inclusion of ‘pathways’ in all proposals, and the participation from the outset of all major stakeholders in the project-development process.

Monitoring and evaluating

Most respondents felt that comprehensive monitoring and evaluation should be part of ACIAR’s core business and some believed that this had a higher priority for investment than did support for ongoing extension efforts that may be better supported by AusAID. Whilst many respondents were familiar with the published impact studies by ACIAR, there was little knowledge of how evaluation and impact results fed back into ACIAR’s priority-setting processes, both within and between programs.

Developing supportive policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks

Few respondents commented on this, but those who did felt that this was a key role for ACIAR and AusAID, particularly in issues related to national resource management, such as forests. There was also concern that some of ACIAR’s planned project outcomes could not be achieved fully because of a combination of conflicting policy settings, or failure of policies to be accepted or implemented at the regional level. It was considered that a key ‘market’ for some ACIAR project outputs were policy-makers and that by working more effectively with them the impact of some projects could be greater. In similar vein, it was pointed out that, if ACIAR projects were

likely to have wider implications for issues such as quarantine, biosecurity and market access, then it would be important to consult with the relevant agencies both in-country and in Australia from the outset.

Management and communication of information externally and internally

A clear message from this survey is that this is an area that needs to be improved. While many acknowledged that you could never do enough communication and that, due to their own busy lives, they may miss key messages from ACIAR, the large majority felt that better communication of the type of information that they (their organisations) need is essential. The priorities for this communication could be a topic for discussion at the strategic meetings recommended earlier in the report. Much of the communications need revolved around the next topic.

Measurement of returns to Australia and partner countries

Impact studies that detail returns to Australia as well as to developing countries are of great interest to many organisations. Given the increasing pressure—particularly in some state-based organisations—to focus on local benefits, the ability to measure such benefits is vital. Studies need to be conducted regularly at the project, program and overall portfolio levels. Consultation with key Australian organisations during these studies is essential to ensure that the studies are designed in such a way as to meet the requirements of key stakeholders. There is a strong, intuitive belief amongst most respondents that many ACIAR projects do have significant benefits to Australia. There is, however, a growing need to back this belief with high-quality impact data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. ACIAR's approach that includes a 'pathway to market' in all of its projects is strongly supported and ongoing commitment is required to ensure that all of the stakeholders needed to address such pathways are involved from the outset of project development.
16. ACIAR's post-project emphasis should be on monitoring and evaluation while encouraging AusAID, where appropriate, to support the ongoing extension and adoption of key project outputs.
17. ACIAR gives high priority to the conduct of impact evaluation studies that detail the benefits accruing to Australia from ACIAR projects. These should be conducted in consultation with Australian partners to ensure that their needs are met.



Appendix

List of stakeholders interviewed

Mr John Allen
Manager
AgWest International
Department of Agriculture
Western Australia

Dr Geoff Auricht
Research Officer
South Australian Research and
Development Institute

Dr Bill Bellotti
Senior Lecturer
University of Adelaide

Professor Bernie Bindon
CRC for Cattle and Beef Quality
University of New England

Dr Jeremy Burdon
Division Chief
Plant Industry
CSIRO

Dr Heather Burrow
Chief Executive Officer
CRC for Cattle and Beef Quality
University of New England

Assoc. Professor Keith Christian
Charles Darwin University

Professor Rob Clark
Director, TIAR/Head of School of
Agricultural Sciences
University of Tasmania

Dr Bob Clements
Executive Director
The Crawford Fund

Dr Shaun Coffey
Division Chief
Livestock Industries
CSIRO

Professor Les Copeland
Dean
Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural
Resources
University of Sydney

Professor David Coventry
Chair in Agronomy
University of Adelaide

Dr Mike Curl
Deputy Director General
Science and Research
NSW Department of Primary Industries

Dr George Curry
Senior Lecturer
Curtin University of Technology

Dr Joanne Daly
Division Chief
Entomology
CSIRO

Professor Geoff Fincher
Director
Waite Institute
University of Adelaide

Dr Brian Fisher
Executive Director
Australian Bureau of Agricultural and
Resource Economics

Dr Clive Francis
Deputy Director
Centre for Legumes in a Mediterranean
Environment
University of Western Australia

Dr Phil Glatz
Research Officer
South Australian Research and
Development Institute

Mr Rod Gobbey
General Manager
Plant Industry Group
Department of Business, Industry and
Resource Development
Northern Territory

Mr Kevin Goss
Chief Executive Officer
CRC for Plant Based Management of
Salinity
University of Western Australia

Dr Colin Grant
A/Chief Executive Officer
Bureau of Rural Sciences

Dr Tony Gregson
Chairman
CRC for Molecular Plant Breeding

Professor Rod Griffin
Director
CRC for Sustainable Production
Forestry

Mr Jim Hallion
Chief Executive
Primary Industry and Resources
South Australia

Mr Roger Hartley
Executive Director
Industry Development and Ministerial
Liaison
Primary Industries and Resources, South
Australia, Member PSIC Working Group
on Agricultural R&D

Dr Peter Hayman
Research Officer
South Australian Research and
Development Institute

Professor John Irwin
Chief Executive Officer
CRC for Tropical Plant Protection

Dr Andrew Johnson
Chief
Sustainable Ecosystems
CSIRO

Dr Peter Kanowski
Head of School
Australian National University

Dr Rod Keenan
Program Leader
Bureau of Rural Sciences

Dr Bruce Kefford
Deputy Secretary
Department of Primary Industries –
Victoria

Dr Steve Kennelly
Chief Scientist
NSW Department of Primary Industries

Professor R.J. (Bob) Lawn
Professor of Tropical Crop Science
James Cook University

Dr Roger Leakey
Professor of Agroecology, Agroforestry
and Novel Crops Unit
James Cook University

Dr Laurie Lewin
Director
CRC for Sustainable Rice Production

Dr Rob Lewis
Director
South Australian Research and
Development Institute

Mr Ian Longson
Director General
Department of Agriculture Western
Australia

Dr Bronwyn McDonald
Department of Primary Industries –
Victoria

Dr Rachel McFadyen
Chief Executive Officer
CRC for Australian Weed Management

Dr Paul Morris
Executive Manager
Market Access
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries
and Forestry – Australia

Dr Steve Morton
Group Executive
Environment and Natural Resources
Group
CSIRO



Dr Gardner Murray
Executive Director, Chief Veterinary
Officer
Product Integrity, Animal and Plant
Health
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries
and Forestry – Australia

Mr Scott Mitchell
National Farmers' Federation
Canberra

Ms Tania Paul
Lecturer
Program Leader VET
Charles Darwin University

Dr Tony Peacock
Chief Executive Officer
CRC for Biological Control of Pest
Animals

Professor Stephen Prowse
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Biosecurity
CRC for Infectious Diseases

Dr Simon Reid
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Professor Alistair Robertson
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Professor James Rowe
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Mr Henry Steingiesser
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