

Partnerships in the Pacific

The agricultural economy, both for basic food security and cash incomes, affects the livelihoods of the vast majority of Pacific Islanders. It has the potential above all other economic sectors to broadly raise incomes and economic growth.

Many smallholders live in isolated rural communities dependent on household food production and intermittent crop, fish and small livestock sales. Improving and transforming these systems into consistent income-generating activities through raised productivity and better marketing will enhance self-reliance and reduce poverty. Exports of commodities such as sugar, fruits and vegetables, spices, forestry products and fish and other marine resources are valuable sources of income. But the Pacific Islands face major challenges in developing markets for these products.

Research supported by ACIAR in the Pacific is focusing on implications of World Trade Organization (WTO) accession, quarantine and biosecurity issues, product quality, scales of production and remoteness of export markets.

Fishing and marine resources are vital sources of income and nutrition for many Pacific Islanders. ACIAR has supported a number of fisheries projects over the years in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the WorldFish Center. On page 16, Janet Lawrence looks at some of this fisheries research.

A pearl aquaculture industry is being developed in Kiribati, following on from a successful harvest of cultured pearls (page 4). This precious resource, which grows naturally in many parts of the Pacific, could become a good source of income for other islands.

Crops provide the bulk of staple food in the Pacific Island countries; taro and yam are two of these important food staples. ACIAR is working with SPC on a number of projects to tackle pests and diseases of taro (pages 6 to 9). Another recently completed project has identified positive yield responses in yam crops to soil fertiliser (page 14).

ACIAR's projects in the Pacific will continue to emphasise technologies that are suited to smallholders or have application at a community level. Projects are focusing more on past research to encourage adoption, and the exploration of opportunities for closer links with industry and NGOs.

Pacific Island countries

4 PACIFIC PEARLS: Cultured black pearls have the potential to be a significant source of income for Pacific Islands.



6 FIGHTING TARO DISEASES & PESTS: A multinational research effort to characterise taro viruses and develop reliable detection tests bears fruit, and a four-year project on taro beetle management in PNG and Fiji investigates biocontrol.

10 THE MISSING LINK: Ensuring that information about pre- and post-harvest management of fruit and vegetables reaches the people who need it.

12 TESTING TASTY FISH: Taste-testing of wild-caught and farmed reef fish shows aquaculture to be a viable way forward for a sustainable Asia-Pacific live reef fish trade.

14 YAMS BACK ON THE MENU: Can falling Pacific yam yields be elevated using soil fertility management techniques to correct imbalances?

16 MAKING A SPLASH: An update on more than a decade of joint research on capture and culture of reef fish and invertebrates in the Pacific by ACIAR and WorldFish.

18 OFF TO A FLYING START: Identifying alternative forms of poultry feed for farmers in the Solomon Islands.

Other features

20 RURAL POVERTY IN CHINA: Assessing the impact of current policies and public investments on improving the livelihoods of the rural poor in China's western provinces.

PARTNERS IN RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

Partners in Research for Development presents articles that summarise results from ACIAR-sponsored research projects, and puts ACIAR research initiatives into perspective.

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

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Sunset over Tarawa Atoll lagoon in Kiribati, site of the ACIAR pearl project hatchery.

