

# Programs and operations

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John Skerritt, responsible for our R&D Programs



Sally Moon supports John Skerritt



Michael Brown, responsible for our corporate operations

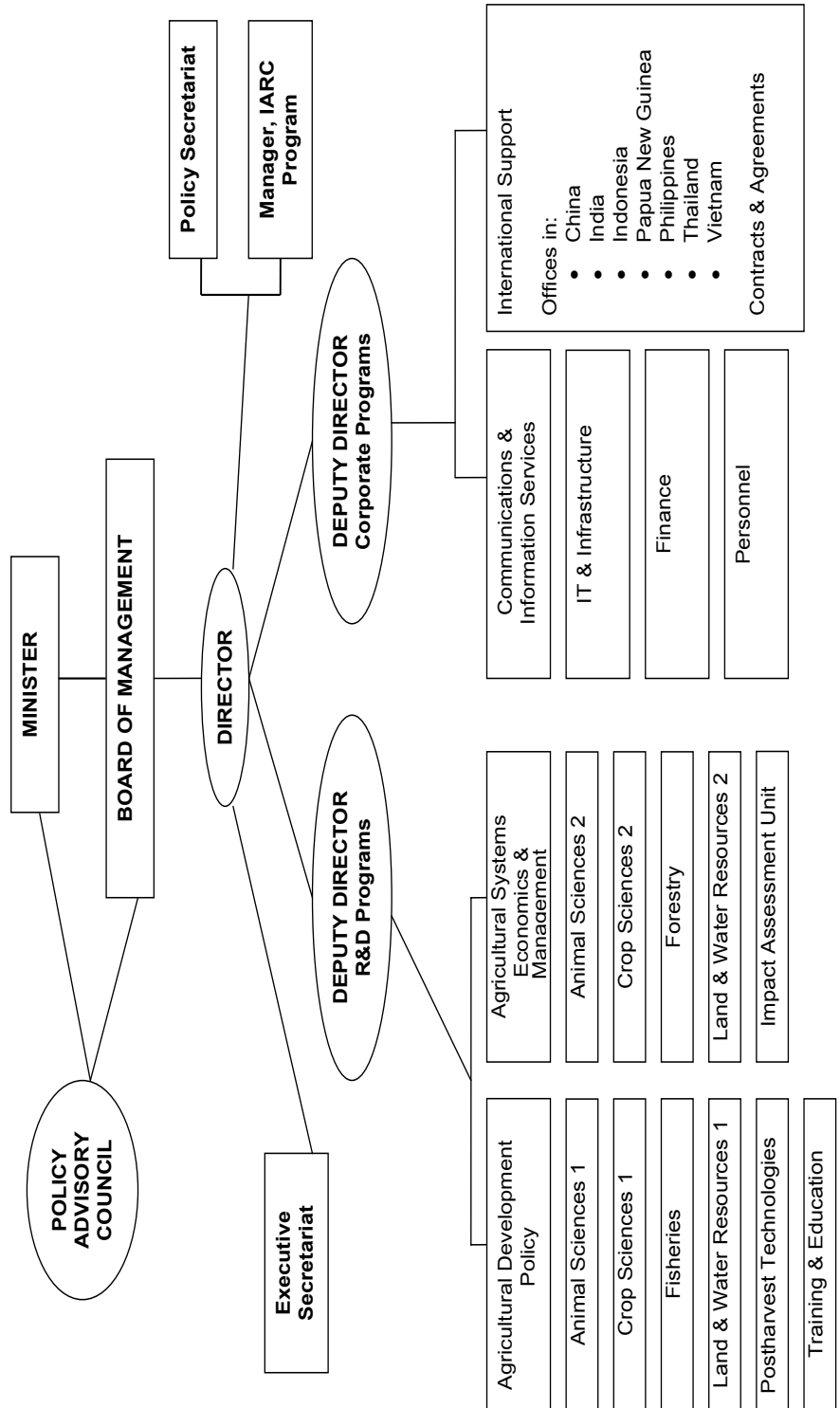


Heather Crompton, Policy Secretariat and IARC Program



Melina Tensen and Nicholas Sophiadakis, Executive Secretariat

# The organisation



## Programs

Programs	Objectives
<b>Bilateral R&amp;D programs</b>	To work with developing countries in the identification and solution of their important agricultural and natural resource management problems by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- commissioning, monitoring and evaluating research conducted through partnerships between Australian and developing-country research institutions in those fields where Australia has special expertise; and</li> <li>- building research capacity in both Australia and developing countries</li> </ul>
<b>Multilateral R&amp;D program</b>	To ensure that funds provided by Australia for research conducted by the international agricultural research system are used effectively, and that benefits flow to developing countries and Australia
<b>Impact Assessment</b>	To provide systematic information and impact assessments to support the activities of ACIAR and to enhance the Centre's public accountability
<b>Training and Education</b>	To build the research capacity of agricultural research institutions in partner countries by providing discipline-specific and broader training opportunities for partner country researchers
<b>Communications and Information Services</b>	To contribute to successful outcomes from ACIAR-supported research and development by communication of research results to potential beneficiaries and through promoting awareness of the Centre's activities
<b>Corporate Services</b>	To facilitate and contribute to the effective management of ACIAR's people and programs
<b>International Support</b>	To facilitate effective administration of ACIAR's collaborative research programs in partner countries

## Research programs

Bilateral R&D programs are responsible for developing, monitoring and evaluating projects, including multilateral projects. A brief description of each program is included below. The achievements reported by region are delivered through these program areas. Multilateral R&D is delivered through a combination of core funding to IARCs and restricted funding tied to projects, administered by program areas.

### Agricultural Development Policy

The Agricultural Development Policy program has the goal of supporting economic policy research in the areas of trade, rural development and natural resource management, as well as to build partner country capacity in these areas.

The program is organised under three main themes: trade policy, rural development policy, and natural resources policy, with a geographic focus on Vietnam, China, Indonesia, India and the Pacific. Projects were





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developed within all these themes, sometimes in combination. In trade the focus was on WTO related issues given the current negotiations, in rural development on new institutions, and in natural resources policy on water and the use of market-based approaches. The program for 2002–03 comprised 20 active projects of which two were extensions of previous projects. Seven were multilateral IARC projects and two involved contributions by other Australian research organisations. Two projects were reviewed, two concluded and 11 commenced during the year.

### **Agricultural Systems Economics and Management**

The Agricultural Systems Economics and Management program operates in a multidisciplinary manner, commissioning integrative economic, social and biophysical research within a systems context. The ASEM program has a geographic focus on Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Cambodia. It has single projects in other key ACIAR partner countries.

Seventeen projects were active during the year. Of these, 11 were small/medium and six were large. Agricultural extension is a key factor limiting the uptake of new technologies in many of our partner countries. In line with ACIAR's commitment to enhance the impact of its projects, a major program research thrust in agricultural extension techniques and methodology has been developed. Three active projects have this theme, as do two pipeline projects due to commence in July 2003.

### **Animal Sciences**

The Animal Sciences program has the goal of optimising the contribution of livestock and their products to the economic, environmental, cultural and social wellbeing of people in developing countries and Australia. The program is divided into two parts, the first focusing on animal health and product processing issues, the second on animal nutrition and livestock in farming systems.

In 2002–03 the Animal Sciences program had 34 active projects, three of which were multilateral projects, covering a range of topics, including animal health, genetic improvement, pest control, nutrition, farming systems, forage production, livestock husbandry, reproduction, information systems and livestock policy.

### **Crop Sciences**

The Crop Sciences program has the goal of contributing to greater productivity, sustainability and profitability in small-farmer cropping in ACIAR's mandate region (and also cropping in Australia), through support to research partnerships in crop plant improvement, crop agronomy, and weed, disease and pest management.

The program is divided into two parts. One focuses on genetic improvement of crop plants and, where appropriate, improved crop management including through matching suitable crop varieties to cropping areas; the other focuses on protection of horticultural crops,

cereals, food legumes, forages and oilseeds, with an increasing focus on biosecurity, reflecting the growing importance of this subject to all partner countries. During the year 36 bilateral projects were active, along with eight multilateral projects. Two projects concluded, and eight were under development.

### Fisheries

The goal of the Fisheries program is to improve the productivity and sustainability of fisheries and aquatic farming systems in partner countries and in Australia through international research partnerships directed at: innovative resource management approaches; the elimination of serious adverse environmental impacts arising from fishing or farming practices; better utilisation of existing harvests; and the development of productive and sustainable aquatic farming systems.

During the year, the Fisheries program managed 18 active bilateral projects, including nine large projects, five medium and four small projects. The Fisheries program covers both modes of fish production—wild harvest fisheries and aquaculture, with activities spread across a variety of production strategies and environments, from wild capture marine and inland fisheries to aquatic farming systems, mariculture and fisheries enhancement. The program aims to solve key problems constraining the productive use and sustainability of fisheries and aquatic resource systems in developing countries.

### Forestry

The Forestry program contributes to poverty reduction and natural resource conservation and rehabilitation through scientific support for the establishment, management and sustainable utilisation of forests, providing optimum social, economic and environmental benefits to partner countries and Australia.

During 2002–03 the program consisted of 25 projects (including two multilateral projects). The program has a central theme of developing Australian tree germplasm for use in developing countries, to address the growing shortage of forest products and alleviate environmental problems caused by loss of native forests. Projects test tree species for particular soil and climatic conditions, and undertake genetic improvement for selected promising species. Research into increased productivity and profitability through improved nutrition and management of pest and diseases, and enhancement of environmental benefits of reforestation, such as catchment protection or salinity control, are other areas of focus.

### Land and Water Resources

The primary goal of the Land and Water Resources program is to contribute to food security and wealth by enhancing long-term productivity, management and conservation of agricultural land and water resources in developing countries and Australia.



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The program is organised into four themes: Water Management; Agriculture and Environmental Quality; Land and Cropping Systems; and Soil Management. Land and Water 1 concentrates on the first two themes, while Land and Water 2 focuses on the latter two. Altogether there were 31 active projects in LWR in 2002–03, including seven IARC projects. Eight new projects started and five projects were completed. LWR1 concentrates on broad-scale issues such as water and catchment management while LWR2 works more at the farm and individual field level, in particular with cropping systems and soil management.

### Postharvest Technology

The goals of ACIAR's Postharvest Technology program are to: improve application and efficiency of postharvest systems for crop products; optimise the quality and suitability of produce for market requirements; assure food security and improve trade and market access; and minimise losses or undesirable health, environmental and social impacts of the products or technologies. The Postharvest program focuses on crops, with livestock, fish and forestry products integrated into the corresponding ACIAR programs.

A total of 16 projects were active during the year, including three medium and one small project. Major support was also provided for workshops on *Phytophthora* diseases of tropical crops in Southeast Asia, strengthening farmer–market linkages, grain drying and management of mycotoxin and pesticide residues.



Cages for grow-out trial for barramundi, Bali, Indonesia

## Corporate programs

### Communications and Information Services

The objective of the Communications and Information Services program is to contribute to managing ACIAR's information and successful communication outcomes from ACIAR-supported research and development by communication of research results to potential beneficiaries and through promoting awareness of the Centre's activities. Key communication outcomes are reported under Communicating Research, beginning on page 71.

The program led redevelopment of ACIAR's website, which has attracted favourable feedback about the ease of finding information, and praise for the format of country and project information. The redevelopment of the ACIAR website [www.aciar.gov.au](http://www.aciar.gov.au) enabled broader dissemination of publications in electronic format.

ACIAR makes publications freely available to those working in agricultural development in developing countries. ACIAR's publication distribution lists were revised during the year, and are now being maintained in-house. The revised list includes email addresses for notification of new publications in specified areas of interest. A publications subscription form is available on ACIAR's website. ACIAR's publishing and distribution costs have fallen while maintaining outputs at previous levels, due mainly to appropriate uses of information and communication technologies.

Support was provided for several key communication activities, most notably the Fisheries Showcase held in Jakarta, Indonesia on 31 July 2002. The Communications and Information Services program also supported the annual Fellows week, when a group of John Allwright Fellows visited ACIAR headquarters. A key activity was training the students in science communication.

Internally, ACIAR documents project outcomes, and the benefits of ACIAR-funded work, and communicates this to targeted audiences through print and electronic media and personal interactions in Australia and partner countries. The Centre's Communications and Information Services Program also provides information resources and briefing materials to support communication activities of its portfolio partners, country offices and Australian posts in partner countries.

### Corporate Services

The objective of the Corporate Services program is to facilitate and contribute to the effective management of ACIAR's people, resources and programs.



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*Robin Taylor,  
Publications Manager*

ACIAR's Communications team



*Kay Murtha, Reception*



*Serena Maher, Reception*



*Sue Allen, Human Resources/  
Personnel Administrator*



*Jeff Galea, Manager  
IT and Infrastructure*



*Jaques Varlet, Assistant Manager  
IT and Infrastructure*

## Our team at reception

## Personnel

## Our IT team

All legislative and reporting requirements were met during 2002–03. Financial and personnel delegations were updated. Technical and procedural changes were carried out to project information, finance and travel management systems to increase efficiency, reliability and accessibility. ACIAR's running costs were reduced during the year as a proportion of total costs, with streamlining occurring through natural attrition and procedural improvements in Corporate Services.

The ANAO confirmed that the financial statements for 2001–02 presented a true and fair view of the Centre's financial position. Following assessment of tenders, a new contract for internal audit services was entered into with Acumen Alliance for a period of three years. An internal audit program based directly on an ACIAR-wide risk assessment was implemented. The 2002–03 internal audit plan addressed travel security, the integrity of the general ledger, IT security and capturing and recording benefits from projects.

Budget-related developments were negotiated with the Department of Finance and Administration including a revised application of the efficiency dividend and abolition of the Agency Banking Incentive (interest) Scheme. ACIAR's levels of cash and equity were managed to optimum levels. Changes to the budget module of ACIAR's finance system were prepared to enable whole-of-project financial information to be more easily captured and accessed. An improved database of financial information was developed. Rises in insurance premiums were substantial but kept to the minimum practical level through best use of excess thresholds.

The third ACIAR Certified Agreement (2002-05) took effect and was implemented in August. Amongst other things, this included a revised and more efficient performance development and appraisal scheme that emphasises continuous improvement and sharing of skills and knowledge to increase the transfer and retention of corporate memory. In the same vein, fuller job profiles for some critical positions were developed, to guard against loss of corporate knowledge.

A comprehensive staff satisfaction survey was conducted and its findings evaluated, with implementation to occur in 2003–04. ACIAR's workplace diversity plan was updated. Corporate Services made available to staff a range of seminars, benefits and access to professional services to maintain and strengthen a healthy and safe work environment. Staff development was facilitated in several key areas including leadership and management skills, teamwork, performance management, information technology and poverty-related pre-project impact assessment.

New laptops and desktop PCs and associated software, including a new standard operating system (XP), were purchased as part of a three-year replacement/update cycle. A reduced number of IT helpdesk calls was logged during the year, indicating the improved reliability of ACIAR's

IT systems and growth in the IT skills of staff. The management of the Internet Gateway Security Functions (the firewall protecting ACIAR's IT infrastructure) is now carried out within ACIAR's IT environment. Security improvements were made in both IT and physical security, and there were no security breaches. IT contingency arrangements were strengthened. Improvements were made to the connectivity and information access of ACIAR's overseas offices, and to remote access for travelling ACIAR staff. The PABX phone system is now managed completely within ACIAR.

Regular consolidated updates of travel security advice were issued to ACIAR staff and beyond. ACIAR's travel policy was updated and supporting administrative procedures were changed.

## International Support

The International Support program actively supports the R&D program through seven overseas offices, located in Australian embassies and high commissions in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, China and India. The program also provides advice to senior management, the ACIAR Board of Management and the Policy Advisory Council, on overseas research and development support and program implementation arrangements.

Three staff work in Canberra (one part time) and 20 staff are based in the overseas offices. The program also manages, coordinates and provides policy and operational services with regards to contracts and agreements (including intellectual property), and undertakes tasks associated with partner country consultations on the determination of program priorities.

Key activities and outputs during the year included conducting a review of the role and responsibilities of country offices, involving key stakeholders. The results of the review will be implemented in 2003–04. The ACIAR Project Agreement (the primary contractual document for the administration and conduct of ACIAR projects) was reviewed with revisions made. The agreement was amended in March to incorporate internal policy changes and to meet relevant new legislative requirements.

The program conducted post liaison visits to PNG, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, and was actively involved in organising the formal country consultations on program priorities in Indonesia. Progress was made in consultations with the Indonesian Government, to establish an umbrella framework arrangement under which ACIAR may implement forestry projects.

An Intellectual Property Register was implemented to identify anticipated intellectual property generated by ACIAR-funded projects and catalogue pre-existing intellectual property used in projects.

## Overseas offices in:

- China
- Vietnam
- India
- Thailand
- Philippines
- Indonesia
- Papua New Guinea



*Marchien van Oostende,  
Project Officer*



*Kim Taylor, Executive Officer,  
Contracts and Agreements*



*Allan Barden has overall responsibility  
for our international offices*