

# Message from the Minister and Parliamentary Secretary

The global recession, on top of the food crisis of 2008, has serious repercussions for developing countries. Australia's 2009–10 International Development Assistance Budget represents the Government's scale-up of Australian aid to maintain progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and support early and sustainable recovery for the most vulnerable populations. This year's Ministerial Budget Statement also includes a policy statement highlighting the Government's priorities for the planning and implementation of Australia's international development assistance over coming years.

The aid program's new *Overseas Development Assistance – Food Security through Rural Development* initiative recognises the centrality of agriculture in developing countries and targets support towards food production globally and strengthening the ability of developing countries in the Asia-Pacific and Africa to address food security. Australia has a specialist agency, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), to facilitate its premier agricultural research institutions to work side-by-side with partners from countries in the Asia-Pacific and the International Agricultural Research Centres.

The 2009–10 Annual Operational Plan outlines in detail how the Centre's ongoing and additional funding in the 2009–10 Budget will be allocated. The additional funding of \$11.3 million will focus on four key areas:

- safeguarding food security in the rice-based farming systems of South Asia and South-East Asia
- helping South Asia and South-East Asian crop and livestock production systems respond to climate change
- exploiting opportunities for developing high-value agricultural, forestry and fisheries products in the Pacific nations
- contributing to global agricultural productivity through increased support to the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research

The year ahead will also see ACIAR increase its investment in poorer countries (such as Laos and Cambodia) and in 'lagging regions' within partner countries; a continued shift to larger, multi-disciplinary programs; and important initiatives to restore agricultural productivity in Afghanistan and Iraq. ACIAR will also make key contributions to the increased development assistance to Africa in the area of agricultural research. Additional funding for Africa will be appropriated to ACIAR during 2009–10.

We extend our appreciation to all those involved in the Centre's agricultural research and development programs both in Australia and in partner countries. Sustained investment in agricultural research for development generates growth, reduces poverty and protects the environment—it also offers the means to address the challenges that food security and climate change present to agricultural production, both in the region and in Australia.



Stephen Smith, MP  
Minister for Foreign Affairs



Bob McMullan, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for  
International Development  
Assistance

# Preface from the Chair and Chief Executive Officer

ACIAR is an integral part of Australia's aid program and, clearly, the strategic framework set by the Australian Government will govern our work. The core principles of this framework as outlined in the new policy statement are:

- accelerating progress towards the MDGs
- a recognition that while economic growth is the most powerful long-term solution to poverty, economic growth will not, by itself, deliver fair and stable societies
- a strong emphasis on the Asia-Pacific, while also increasing our efforts in Africa and South Asia
- an emphasis on the power of education to promote development
- a commitment to continue to improve effectiveness.

In addition to the joint discussions with partner countries, a key reference point for ACIAR moving forward is the Government's new policy statement released in the Budget on 12 May 2009, *Overseas Development Assistance – Food Security through Rural Development*. This policy statement is built around the fundamental importance of agriculture to rural development in partner countries particularly in relation to the MDG of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

ACIAR's program is one element of this new initiative by the Government. It recognises the importance of lifting productivity on a sustainable basis over the longer term as a key mechanism for strengthening broader based economic growth in rural areas. Our increased funding from 2009–10 places significant responsibilities on ACIAR to ensure that this rural development is catalysed.

The Annual Operational Plan will be ACIAR's roadmap for 2009–10 and lays the groundwork for the incoming Chief Executive Officer who will take the Centre and its agenda forward from August 2009.

If you need more information about any aspect of ACIAR's activities, do not hesitate to contact us. Details are in the corporate directory on the inside back cover. Our website <[www.aciar.gov.au](http://www.aciar.gov.au)> is also a key gateway to our operations.

## **ACIAR's Vision**

*ACIAR looks to a world where poverty has been reduced and the livelihoods of many improved through more productive and sustainable agriculture emerging from collaborative international research.*

## **ACIAR's Mission**

*To achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems, for the benefit of developing countries and Australia, through international agricultural research partnerships.*



Peter Core  
Chief Executive Officer  
June 2009



Meryl Williams  
Chair, Commission  
June 2009