

Expanding the agricultural linkages

A new program promotes closer cooperation between Australia and Pakistan

A new program to forge increased agricultural links between Pakistan and Australia was announced in June 2005, with ACIAR to manage one component of the program. The Australia-Pakistan Agriculture Linkages Program, worth A\$6.6 million over four years, was formally announced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Alexander Downer, and the then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Mr Warren Truss, on 16 June 2005.

The idea behind the program arose during the visit to Australia by the President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf. The Australian Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, and President Musharraf discussed closer cooperation on several fronts, including agriculture.

The program aims to expand links between the two countries by facilitating a greater exchange of expertise in the academic, agricultural and commercial sectors.

“The program will help forge new academic, agricultural and market linkages to produce an increase in the productivity and sustainability of agriculture in both countries,” Mr Downer said in announcing the program.

Pakistan and Australia share similarities in agriculture, with broadacre cropping an important part of each country’s output. Some of the same constraints to increased productivity, such as salinity, water management and the management of biotic and abiotic stresses, feature in both countries. Pakistan also has common interests in livestock production and health.

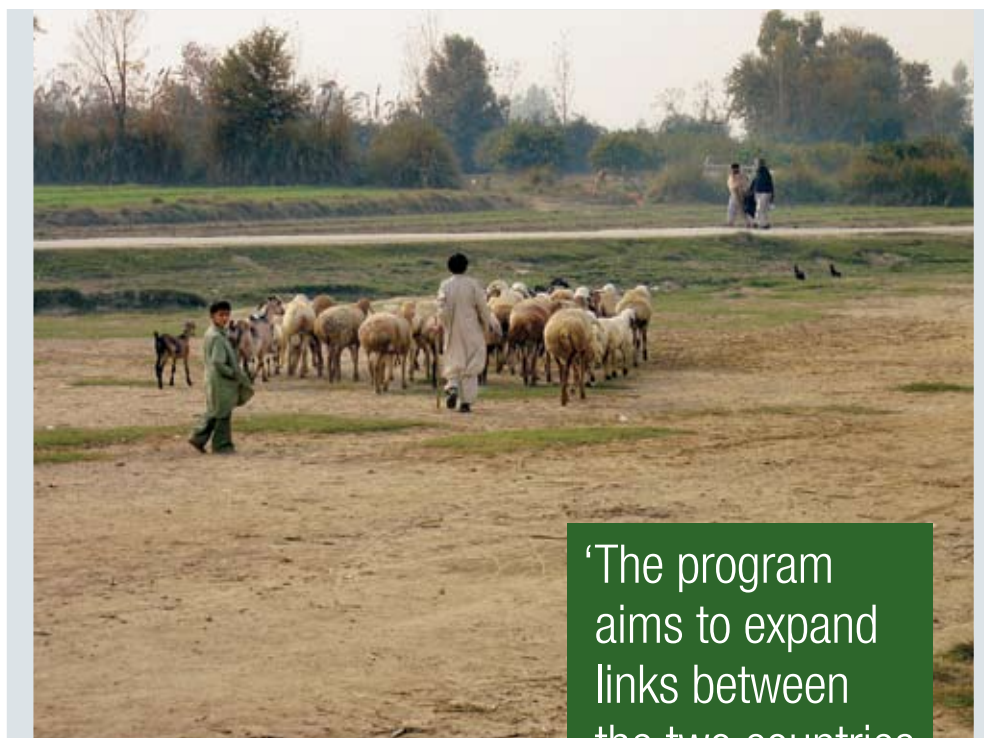
ACIAR will manage the Technical Activities component of the three-part program. The remaining components, involving development scholarships and the facilitation of market linkages, will be managed by AusAID and Austrade respectively. AusAID will fund the Program.

The ACIAR-managed Technical Activities component will involve A\$5 million over four years, beginning in 2005–06.

“Through ACIAR, the program will enhance existing links with a new program of technical exchanges and economic research and development projects,” Mr Truss said. “This includes staff exchanges, targeted seminars, scoping studies, small projects and research and analytical activities.”

ACIAR has held an initial consultation with relevant Pakistani stakeholders to assess the main areas of priority. The results of this consultation are now available on the ACIAR website, www.aciar.gov.au.

ACIAR has worked with Pakistan as a partner country since 1984, with a focus on natural resource



‘The program aims to expand links between the two countries by facilitating a greater exchange of expertise’

management, particularly relating to dryland and irrigated cropping.

Many of the relationships that have been established in this time, along with ACIAR’s knowledge of the agriculture sector in Pakistan, will be important in developing the program. ◀