

Research program impact assessment

Program management

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Budget

	\$m
2005–06 actual	0.709
2006–07 estimate	0.450
2007–08 budget	0.500

Key performance indicators and indicative priorities

Project specific

- Publish five assessments of the impacts of completed projects in 2007–08. Measurement of economic growth, environmental, social and capacity-building impacts will be incorporated where identified as important and possible. This year we will commence the process of selecting some projects for assessment using a stratified sampling process. The stratification of projects will be based on a range of considerations such as geographical location, types of research and sector of the economy. The projects selected will also be part of a longer term strategy for project assessments which will be developed from the preliminary assessment of all projects.
- Review and publish the 2007–08 project leader adoption studies for the set of large projects concluded in 2003–04.

Capacity building

- Develop closer links with partner-country impact evaluation groups to enhance estimation of technology adoption levels in future assessments. Training for partner-country impact assessment groups will also be included where appropriate.
- Develop collaboration with international CG centres in impact assessment activities, particularly of projects jointly funded through ACIAR.
- Provide feedback on the implications of impact assessment studies for research project development and management within ACIAR, through regular 'lessons learnt' style meetings with all staff.
- Enhance the clarification and estimation of the outcomes of new projects by assisting project research groups during the peer-review process of their proposals. In particular, summaries of the implications of impact studies will be provided to meetings of these groups.

Thematic studies

- Develop a database of all past impact assessment studies and start a process of Rapid Impact Assessment (RIA) studies to provide a basis for and complement Adoption and Impact Assessment Studies.
- Review all ACIAR fruit fly research activities and especially assess the wider regional capacity-building aspects of this work.
- Develop a program for assessing country wide impacts. This will begin with two or three countries, most likely

the Philippines, PNG and the South Pacific.

- Work closely with the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) to ensure ACIAR's impact assessment work continues to be closely linked to ODE's activities.

Position

ACIAR has always had a significant investment in impact assessment. During the past few years there have been several reviews of these activities and the recommendations from these external reviewers have been developed into a new set of guidelines for undertaking impact assessment studies for ACIAR. These guidelines were finalised in 2006–07 and will be used as the basis for all impact assessment studies during 2007 – 08. At the end of that period a workshop will be held to review experience and finalise the guidelines. They will then be used to ensure rigour and consistency in all future scenarios.

This review process identified three broad levels of impact assessment which are important for ACIAR. These include the Adoption Studies (AS) and detailed full Benefit Cost Impact Assessment Studies (IAS) which ACIAR has been undertaking for some time. However, it identified the need for Rapid Impact Assessment Studies (RIA) which are quicker, more qualitative assessments but provide a basis for more systematically developing an effective assessment program. These RIAs can serve two important functions: first, to focus attention on impacts (during the project development, project review or after the project's completion) and, second, as a useful, consistent basis for the more detailed studies.

ACIAR has developed a database for systematically recording all of these studies and for providing important summary information to support decision making. This continues to be developed, expanded and refined to ensure maximum use is made of the results of its impact assessment efforts.

Adoption of research outcomes is crucial to ensuring impacts from ACIAR's funding. Effective estimation of adoption is a major aspect of impact assessment studies and is why ACIAR includes adoption studies three years after projects finish as a first stage in identifying this effect. ACIAR has also found that the policy environment facing industries, farmers and businesses in the supply chain can have an important impact on the incentives for these groups to adopt research outcomes. As part of its impact assessment activities ACIAR also funds a small program which reviews these policy environments for countries where it funds research. These analyses are used to identify possibilities for change and to influence choices of research activities to fund.

ACIAR has commenced the process of linking its impact assessment work to the activities of the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) and will strengthen this link during 2007/08.