



Australian Government

Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research

ACIAR

CORPORATE PLAN 2024–25

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ACIAR Corporate Plan 2024–25 (CP2024-25)

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Enquiries about this corporate plan are welcome and should be directed to:

Director Outreach

Phone: +61 2 6217 0500 Email: aciarc@aciarc.gov.au

Cover photograph: ACIAR supports research on rubber-based intercropping systems in the southern Philippines, which demonstrated improved productivity and climate resilience, improved women's capabilities in agronomic practices and increased smallholder farmers' income through crop diversification and improved soil and land management practices.



About ACIAR

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is the Australian Government's specialist agricultural research-for-development agency.

ACIAR is established by the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982* (the ACIAR Act), as amended. It is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act) and a statutory agency under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

ACIAR is an agency of the Foreign Affairs and Trade Portfolio and contributes to Australia's development program. ACIAR operates solely on budget appropriation from Australia's Official Development Assistance.

The **ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027** provides guidance which aligns to ACIAR's enabling legislation, reflects Australia's International Development Policy and whole-of-government priorities, and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Australian Government
**Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research**

I, Wendy J Umberger, as the accountable authority of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), present the ACIAR Corporate Plan 2024–25.

The plan covers the period of 2024–25 to 2027–28, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

The corporate plan is prepared in accordance with the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wendy J. Umberger', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor Wendy J. Umberger, PhD
Chief Executive Officer, ACIAR
28 August 2024

Message from CEO



ACIAR works to support a world where poverty is reduced and livelihoods are improved through more productive and sustainable agriculture and natural resource systems delivered through collaborative international research partnerships.

The publication of the ACIAR Corporate Plan 2024–25 coincides with my first rewarding year as Chief Executive Officer (CEO). I am pleased with the success we have achieved through collaborative research engagements and capacity development programs with partner countries, astute commissioning of expertise from Australian and international research providers and strong management of research programs by experienced ACIAR program managers.

The ACIAR Corporate Plan 2024–25 outlines how ACIAR will deliver on our mandate to achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems for the benefit of developing countries and Australia through international agricultural research and training partnerships. We will achieve this through brokering, funding, and managing partnerships and investments that support more productive, sustainable and resilient food and farming systems, improved food and nutrition security, and more sustainable management of natural resources. We will ensure our investments have a strong emphasis on climate change and gender equality, are locally led and reflect changing regional and country priorities through next generation partnerships.

ACIAR operates in a challenging global environment where communities are increasingly impacted by climate change. The ability of developing countries and smallholder farmers to mitigate these risks has compounding effects on food system resilience and economic stability. To support these communities, we are prioritising deeper consultation with partners and supporting locally led research with a stronger emphasis on climate adaptation and mitigation, while continuing to contribute to sustainable development goals.

We start 2024–25 with a new Executive Team, which is committed to further maturing our performance framework, approach to risk, and leading Australia's agricultural research-for-development efforts across the Indo-Pacific region.

I look forward to reporting on our achievements in the ACIAR 2024–25 Annual Report.

Professor Wendy J. Umberger, PhD
Chief Executive Officer, ACIAR

Corporate plan at a glance



Our purpose

To contribute to reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of many in the Indo-Pacific region through more productive and sustainable agriculture and natural resource systems emerging from collaborative international research partnerships.



Our values

IMPARTIAL | COMMITTED TO SERVICE | ACCOUNTABLE
RESPECTFUL | ETHICAL | STEWARDSHIP



Our 2024–25 portfolio budget statements outcome

OUTCOME 1: To achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems, for the benefit of developing countries and Australia, through international agricultural research and training partnerships.

Program 1: International agricultural research for development for more productive and sustainable agriculture.



Our key activities

1. Global research collaborations
2. Bilateral and regional research projects
3. Scientific and policy capacity-development activities



Our capabilities



Our people



ICT



Country network



Partnerships



Our risks



Cybersecurity



People safety



Relationship management



Disruption to research



Our performance

An effective performance framework that ensures we are measuring and reporting on our performance to the Australian Government and the Australian people and demonstrating how we achieve our purpose and strategic objectives.

Our corporate plan

The ACIAR Corporate Plan 2024–25 sets out our purpose and outcomes, and the key activities we undertake to achieve them.

The ACIAR Corporate Plan 2024–25 is our principal planning document. The plan complements our **Portfolio Budget Statement** (PBS) that outlines the funds appropriated for ACIAR to achieve its Outcome (Outcome 1) and Program (Program 1). It describes how we manage our responsibilities and use public resources. It also explains the parameters for ACIAR’s annual business and individual performance planning cycle, how we engage with risk, and our capabilities and values. It ensures clarity of purpose and alignment with government priorities.

ACIAR is committed to delivering a high-quality program of effective research-for-development projects that is responsive to partner needs, achieves results, and is informed by robust monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The planning and implementation of this program will be guided by Australia’s International Development Policy and addresses the key recommendations and strategic change initiatives of the mid-term review of the **ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027**.

The strategic change initiatives have a strong focus on working with partner countries – ensuring our investments reflect changing regional and country priorities and the growing capacity of partners to address the complex issues of food security, climate change and economic transition in the Indo-Pacific region.



The purpose of ACIAR in relation to our enabling legislation and strategic objectives



PURPOSE

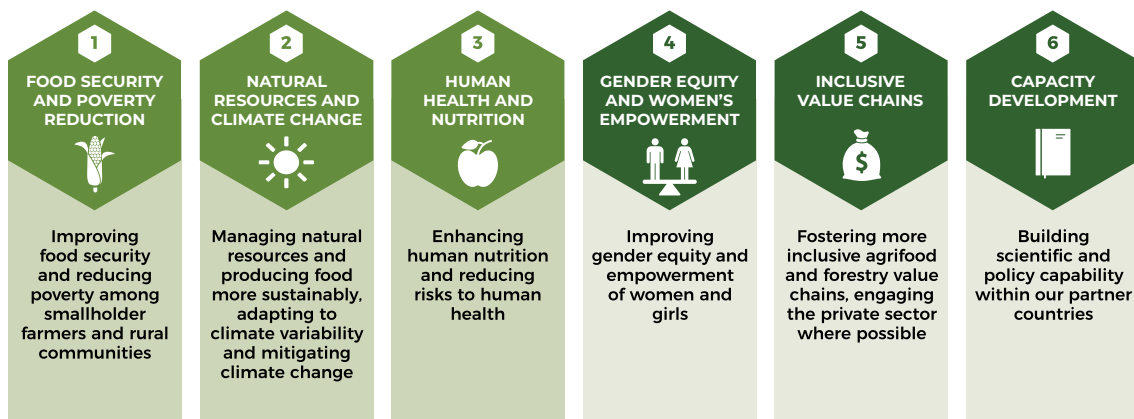
To contribute to reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of many in the Indo-Pacific region through more productive and sustainable agriculture and natural resource systems emerging from collaborative international research partnerships.

ACIAR 10-YEAR STRATEGY 2018-2027

ACIAR brokers and invests in research partnerships in developing countries in the Indo-Pacific region to build knowledge to support crucial development objectives

ACIAR works to ensure that its research-for-development programs are equitable, inclusive and empowering

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



KEY ACTIVITIES



Opportunities

Climate change is amplifying food security challenges around the world. ACIAR is continuously evolving to be best placed to invest in research that builds resilience in rural communities and empowers our research partners to lead climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

In 2024–25, with improved structures and collaboration, ACIAR will be able to better support our staff and guide the organisation through the key strategic areas of partnerships, research and corporate services. These changes reflect the priorities set out in **Australia's International Development Policy**, released in late 2023 by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

We remain committed to the 6 strategic change initiatives developed in response to the mid-term review. With the new Executive Team in place, we expect to accelerate delivery against these initiatives. We will also work towards ensuring all new investments have climate objectives addressing climate adaptation or mitigation.

We will continue to work with partner countries, ensuring our investments reflect changing regional and country priorities, and the growing capacity of partners to address the complex issues of food and nutrition security, climate change and economic transition in the Indo-Pacific region.

We will improve delivery of our well-known and highly regarded fellowships, scholarships and training programs, while reviewing activities to further integrate capacity development across all our functions – a key recommendation of the mid-term review.

We are committed to improving gender equity and social inclusion, and integrating intersectional understandings of gender equity and broader social inclusion considerations into all aspects and stages of research, capacity development and outreach.

We will continue to foster global research collaborations with multilateral partners including international agricultural research centres, regional research institutions and funding foundations. Through these collaborations, we seek to maintain a strong voice in international agricultural research-for-development and contribute to a coordinated and sustainable partnership approach that addresses challenges in global food systems and natural resource management.

The 6 strategic change initiatives

to be implemented by ACIAR in response to the mid-term review of the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027



Strategic change 1: Transformational research initiatives for food system resilience

By July 2025, ACIAR will manage 30% of our bilateral research and capacity development investments as mission-directed, transdisciplinary and cross-program initiatives. These initiatives will target transformational change in food systems characterised by high levels of uncertainty.



Strategic change 2: More efficient commissioning of projects

We will redesign our commissioning and contracting processes, while not compromising the quality of project design and planning, to ensure that by 2025 at least 90% of projects proceed from project concept note approval to legally committed project activity within 12 months. Current average is more than 2 years.



Strategic change 3: Next generation partnerships

By 2027, we will transition our major partner country and regional relationships into new partnership models that reflect the growing research and leadership strengths of our country partners, and maximise the mutual benefit achieved from international research collaborations between Australian and country partner institutions.



Strategic change 4: A strategic role in the Australian Government's evolving international engagement

Over the next 5 years we will increase visibility in, and deepen our partnerships with, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). In doing so we will focus on our distinctive role in effective delivery of Official Development Assistance and informing strategic policy on global change in agriculture, food systems and climate.



Strategic change 5: Preferred partner in the Australian innovation system

Over the next 5 years we will position ACIAR to be a continued partner of choice for universities, state government agencies, CSIRO, research and development corporations and the private sector. We will contribute to the continued development of the Australian agricultural innovation system through strategic research investment and brokering connections to international collaborators and opportunities.



Strategic change 6: Maximising the value of our multilateral investments

Over the next 5 years we will strengthen our partnerships with multilateral agricultural research-for-development institutions, such as CGIAR, to maximise synergies between our multilateral and bilateral investments. We will broker new approaches for Australia and partner countries to access the capacity, knowledge and assets of these multilateral institutions, and to better engage the Australian innovation system.

Our purpose

The purpose of ACIAR is to contribute to reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of many in the Indo-Pacific region through more productive and sustainable agriculture and natural resource systems emerging from collaborative international research partnerships.

This reflects the Australian Government's commitment to support Australia's national interests by contributing to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction in our region, with a strong focus on climate adaptation and mitigation.

ACIAR does this by investing in collaborative research and capacity-development partnerships in partner countries to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farming, fishing and forestry communities and the sustainable management of natural resources.

Our mission and vision are derived from our purpose. We work with public and private research institutions to improve the productivity and sustainability of agricultural and natural resource systems, and the resilience of food and nutrition systems in partner countries. International agricultural partnerships are at the heart of our work. Our partnership model and areas of work have evolved strategically since the establishment of ACIAR in 1982.

Our medium-term planning is guided by the **ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027**, which sets out 6 high-level strategic objectives that guide and inform our partnerships and research programs. These objectives are consistent with the Australian Government's Official Development Assistance objectives and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our work also reflects Australian Government policy imperatives articulated in the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The collaborative international programs and partnerships that underpin ACIAR-supported research also improves Australian scientific capabilities and the productivity and sustainability of agricultural systems in Australia. Improved technologies and practices identified and developed through ACIAR research programs often address the shared challenges of all farmers in the Indo-Pacific region, including Australia.

Mission

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

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 at a glance

Research that works for developing countries and Australia

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is the Australian Government specialist agricultural research-for-development agency, within the Australia's development program.

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.

Mission

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

Enabling legislation

ACIAR is established by the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982*, as amended. Also established under the Act are the Commission for International Agricultural Research and the Policy Advisory Council.

Responsible minister

ACIAR is part of the Australian Government Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio, and is accountable to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Penny Wong.

Governance

ACIAR has an executive management governance structure headed by the Chief Executive Officer, who reports directly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Our role

Australia is a global leader in agricultural and food systems innovation. This is a strategic national capability that ACIAR uses to mobilise and build international research partnerships to improve food and nutrition security, improve food system and climate resilience, sustain natural resource management and improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, fishers and foresters and their communities in the Indo-Pacific region.

One of the strengths of Australian diplomacy in our region is that we tackle shared challenges with partner countries through agricultural research collaborations. Australia is well equipped to play a leading role within our region and globally—the scale of our impact greatly outweighs our relative economy and population.

As the Australian Government's specialist agricultural research-for-development agency, ACIAR works with regional partners to identify their priorities. With our partners, we are tackling the intersecting and complex challenges of growing more food, improving human nutrition and reducing poverty, while using less land, water and energy and, at the same time, striving for more productive and sustainable agriculture, and adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Our mandate is to amplify the impact of Australia's outstanding capabilities in food systems innovation and natural resource sciences by brokering and funding research-for-development partnerships in developing countries. We work with public and private research institutions to improve the productivity and sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fisheries systems and the resilience of communities in partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

As a part of our statutory mandate, ACIAR manages Australia's investments in the international agricultural research system, largely through the CGIAR, formerly known as the Consultative Group for International Agriculture Research. ACIAR represents Australia on the CGIAR System Council.

ACIAR brokers and supports collaborative international research partnerships based on respect, listening and learning from each other to improve livelihoods in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors in the Indo-Pacific region, while emphasising individual and institutional capacity development. Diversity and flexibility are key to our work, but it is equally important that all programs, projects and partners are working towards common objectives and goals.

ACIAR partnerships and programs also contribute to the development of the research, policy and leadership capacities of our international and Australian partner institutions. Funds invested by ACIAR are managed and monitored to optimise economic, social and environmental benefits for partner countries and Australia.

The relationship between ACIAR Portfolio Budget Statements, Corporate Plan and Annual Performance Statement

Portfolio Budget Statements	Outcome 1	
	To achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems, for the benefit of developing countries and Australia, through international agricultural research and training partnerships.	
	Program 1	
	<p>International agricultural research for development for more productive and sustainable agriculture.</p> <p><i>ACIAR is an investor, broker, facilitator and manager of strategic partnerships in agricultural research for development, and an evaluator and communicator of research findings. The partnership model ensures that partner countries have input into and ownership of research priorities and the delivery of research programs. This approach maximises the relevance of the research undertaken and the likelihood that research outputs and findings will be used and will make a difference to those countries and to Australia. ACIAR has a well-established Impact Evaluation Program that helps us to refine our priorities, learn lessons from current and past projects, and report accurately to the Minister, the Parliament and the wider Australian public.</i></p>	
Corporate Plan	Purpose	
	To contribute to reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of many in the Indo-Pacific region through more productive and sustainable agriculture and natural resource systems emerging from collaborative international research partnerships.	
	Key activities	
	<p>To contribute to reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of many in the Indo-Pacific region through more productive and sustainable agriculture emerging from collaborative international research, we deliver programs in line with the ACIAR 10-Year Strategy 2018–2027 through 3 key activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Global research collaborations 2. Bilateral and regional research projects 3. Scientific and policy capacity-development activities 	
	Performance measures	Expected Performance Outcomes
	<p>Through annual project progress reports, mid and end-project reviews, long-term outcome and impact evaluation, case studies (quantitative and qualitative), and financial activity indicators, as appropriate to each performance criteria, ACIAR will measure the extent to which these activities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » highly satisfactory » satisfactory » not satisfactory 	All 3 key activities as satisfactory or highly satisfactory
Annual Performance Statement	Reports achievement of outcomes set for performance measures	

Our performance framework

Prepared as part of the Enhanced Commonwealth Performance Framework, the ACIAR Corporate Plan 2024–25 is the primary planning document for the period 2024–25 to 2027–28. It forms the basis of our annual performance statement.

The Australian Government seeks to achieve benefits for the Australian community (outcomes) primarily through programs delivered by government entities. The work of ACIAR is framed by one Australian Government outcome and delivered through one Commonwealth program. The ACIAR Corporate Plan 2024–25 sets out how ACIAR intends to achieve its purpose for the 4-year period of this plan.

Our key activities

To achieve our purpose of contributing to the reduction of poverty and the improvement of livelihoods through more productive and sustainable agriculture and natural resource systems emerging from collaborative international research partnerships, our work involves 3 key activities: global research collaborations, bilateral and regional research projects, and scientific and policy capacity-development activities.

While these key activities are like those carried out in previous years, our programs and processes undergo continual review, improvement and development to accommodate the changing environment in which we work. We will also work towards all investments having climate objectives addressing climate adaptation or mitigation.

1. Global research collaborations

We develop and foster partnerships and strategic relationships with international research and development agencies, the most significant being CGIAR and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). We also develop and foster partnerships with research-for-development funders, regional research bodies and the private sector, to co-invest in shared goals and ensure that ACIAR-funded research results are implemented at scale.

2. Bilateral and regional research projects

We make decisions about our research investments by working with partner countries to identify locally led priorities that address the intersecting challenges of growing more and healthier food and reducing poverty while using less land, water and energy, in a complex environment. We also develop partnerships with government agencies, universities and other relevant partner organisations that have local research capacity.

3. Scientific and policy capacity-development activities

We identify and establish opportunities for individuals and institutions in partner countries to boost technical research capability, and policy, management and leadership skills to work across food systems and natural resource management.

Planning for the next 4 years

Our plans to deliver our key activities contribute strongly to Australia's International Development Policy and address the key recommendations of the mid-term review. We will ensure our investments have a strong emphasis on climate change, are locally led and reflect changing regional and country priorities.

Through an evolving investment process and a refreshed, collaborative approach to project development, we are also mindful of our partners' increasing capacity to address the complex issues of food and nutrition security, climate change and economic transition in the Indo-Pacific region.

1. Global research collaborations

Recognising that agricultural research is an international endeavour, ACIAR fosters global research collaborations with multilateral partners including international agricultural research centres, regional research institutions and funding foundations.

ACIAR manages Australia's investment in the international agricultural research system, as mandated by the ACIAR Act. The most significant investment is in CGIAR, the world's largest agricultural innovation network, comprising 14 research centres and close to 3,000 partners, with a presence in 89 countries and more than 50 years of experience. Australia is among the top investors in CGIAR. ACIAR staff are involved at the highest levels of the CGIAR System Council and Australian researchers are prominent in the leadership and governance of the CGIAR. ACIAR will also continue to support several other international-scale organisations and regional networks.

We will continue to invest in multilateral collaborations, as this gives Australia an influential role in the maintenance and dissemination of global and regional public assets, capacity and knowledge. Through these investments we will maintain a strong voice in international agricultural research-for-development and maintain coordinated and sustainable partnerships.



2. Bilateral and regional research projects

The major focus of our work is to collaboratively identify research priorities with partner countries and broker research partnerships that use science and technology to address these priorities. Our bilateral and regional research projects are managed by a set of research themes structured around key agricultural sectors, including farming, agroforestry, livestock and fisheries systems, as well as sustainable natural resource management. We also include the science to generate economic and social benefit with policy, markets, institutions, value chains and social systems.

We will continue to evolve our research portfolio in response to new research and development imperatives and the changing priorities of our partner countries, as well as opportunities enabled by new knowledge and technologies. All new investments will have a strong emphasis on climate adaptation and mitigation. We work closely with our collaborators to determine project milestones and track progress towards their achievements. The outcomes of our research investments are monitored at project and portfolio level to understand their impact and to guide the design and implementation of future investments.

3. Scientific and policy capacity-development activities

Strengthening the capability of individuals, organisations and systems in our partner countries to perform effective, efficient and sustainable agricultural research-for-development supports progress towards ACIAR's vision. We do this through collaborative partnerships and specific activities driven by our capacity-development activities. We will integrate capacity development into the design of every ACIAR project and link capacity development to the realisation of project outcomes and partnerships, with a strengthened focus on climate change, and gender and social inclusion.

Over the next 4 years, we will continue to deliver our 2 long-running fellowships: the John Allwright Fellowship, offering postgraduate training under the Australia Awards scheme and the John Dillon Fellowship, aimed at strengthening organisational capability, as well as our more recently established Meryl Williams Fellowship aimed at increasing the leadership capability of women in agricultural science. Our Pacific Agriculture Scholarships Support program, which provides higher-degree research funding and academic support to postgraduate students at the University of the South Pacific and the Fiji National University, will continue to improve and expand based on strengthened partnerships. We will also continue to strengthen our alumni programs to support continuous learning and mentoring in agricultural research-for-development.

We will further strengthen connections between our extensive alumni network and current research projects and opportunities. Activities aimed at developing capability in projects will include mentoring, participation in short courses and workshops, online learning, job placements, formal study, peer-to-peer learning and supporting a learning culture within projects.

ACIAR regions and partner countries

KEY

Pacific

- 1 Fiji
- 2 Kiribati
- 3 Palau
- 4 Papua New Guinea
- 5 Samoa
- 6 Solomon Islands
- 7 Tonga
- 8 Tuvalu
- 9 Vanuatu

South Asia

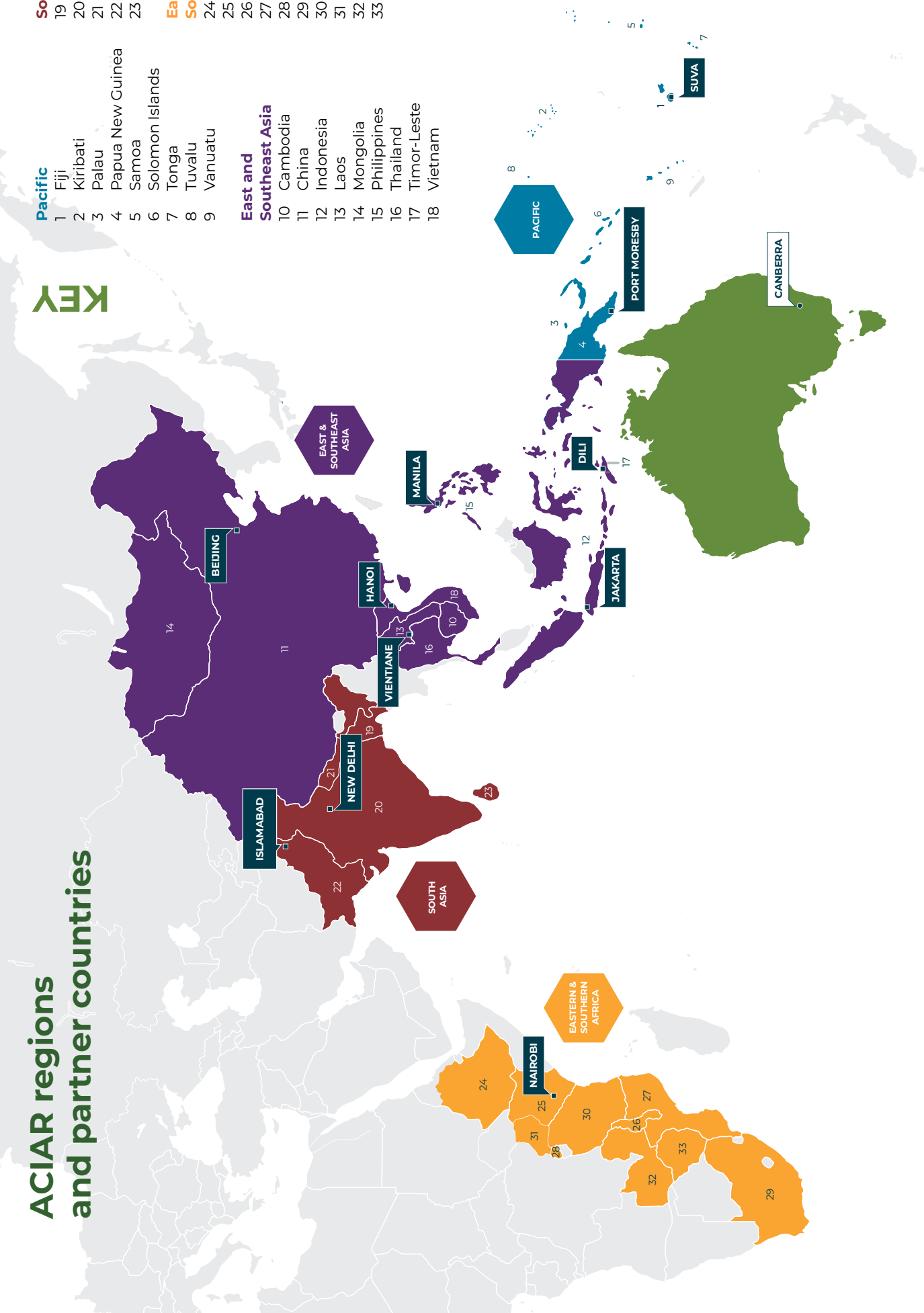
- 19 Bangladesh
- 20 India
- 21 Nepal
- 22 Pakistan
- 23 Sri Lanka

Eastern and Southern Africa

- 24 Ethiopia
- 25 Kenya
- 26 Malawi
- 27 Mozambique
- 28 Rwanda
- 29 South Africa
- 30 Tanzania
- 31 Uganda
- 32 Zambia
- 33 Zimbabwe

East and Southeast Asia

- 10 Cambodia
- 11 China
- 12 Indonesia
- 13 Laos
- 14 Mongolia
- 15 Philippines
- 16 Thailand
- 17 Timor-Leste
- 18 Vietnam



EAST & SOUTHEAST ASIA

SOUTH ASIA

EASTERN & SOUTHERN AFRICA

PACIFIC

ISLAMABAD

NEW DELHI

VIENTIANE

HANOI

BEIJING

MANILA

JAKARTA

DILI

PORT MORESBY

SUVA

CANBERRA



Our operating context

Environment

The international environment in which ACIAR operates is increasingly complex. Global challenges are interconnected and have a compounding impact across our region. Our operating environment has been reshaped by global-scale health and biosecurity crises, the impacts of geopolitical tensions, and unprecedented extreme weather events precipitated in a more variable climate.

In 2024–25, ACIAR will operate in 33 countries, across 4 geographic regions: the Pacific, East and Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Eastern and Southern Africa.

Our partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region continue to undergo rapid social, economic and political change. Overlaying this are substantial health and economic challenges following the pandemic, and the impacts of climate change on food systems and natural resources. Our ability to successfully navigate these challenges with our partner countries requires targeted investment in our culture, capabilities and performance, and trusted, resilient international and domestic partnerships.

Global trends affecting our region include competing forces of globalisation and trade protectionism, and a shift in geopolitical power. Interwoven with social, economic and political changes at global and regional levels, our partner countries are grappling with the complex and intersecting challenges of growing more food and reducing poverty, while using less land, water and energy, and the need to adopt climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. Factors that directly influence these challenges include major technological advances in food production, rising urbanisation, increasing globalisation of agrifood chains, climate change, increasing challenges to food safety and biosecurity, and a natural resource base that is under great stress.

ACIAR operates in a challenging and dynamic environment, and we acknowledge that all our partner countries have unique research priorities. We actively maintain strong in-country relationships to ensure we can respond to evolving local and regional challenges and opportunities.

Our international relationships are managed by in-country staff at 13 locations across the Indo-Pacific region. The highly regarded and respected ACIAR Country Network brokers, maintains and facilitates key partnerships, and supports ACIAR staff and project teams to deliver research outcomes.

When addressing high-level changes in our working environment, ACIAR seeks counsel from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is advised by the Commission for International Agricultural Research and the Policy Advisory Council.

Across 2024–25 to 2027–28, specific influences and issues will shape the environment within our regions of operation. Our programs must remain flexible and adaptive to the impacts of global, national and local events that will affect our operating environment and the capacity and lives of our partners and our beneficiaries. ACIAR must be nimble.

Pacific

In the Pacific region, global challenges are magnified and further exacerbated by local challenges, including food and nutrition insecurity, high debt burden and increasingly severe weather and climate events. Forecasts for the Pacific region in 2024 suggest there are 3 emerging themes: economic prospects, climate outlook and geopolitical dynamics. All these impact livelihoods.

On the climate front, the El Niño phenomenon that hit the region in October 2023 and La Niña, forecast in the second half of 2024, are expected to have drastic effects on the region's food and water security, particularly the agriculture and fisheries sectors, where commodity yields are dependent on weather conditions.

As the Pacific navigates these challenges, efforts to improve sustainability and resilience in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors will be crucial. A central focus of our efforts in the Pacific will be fostering regional cooperation and partnerships in research and capacity development to address shared challenges and opportunities.

East and Southeast Asia

Population growth, rapid urbanisation and rising incomes are transforming East and Southeast Asia. Agriculture is critical to sustaining the region's ongoing economic growth, ensuring food and nutrition security, and sustaining and improving livelihoods.

The East and Southeast Asia program remains the largest across the 4 regions in which ACIAR operates. The nature of our engagement within this region is predominantly bilateral, based on robust partnerships with national research systems, longstanding diplomatic connections and sustained development collaboration with Australia. There is a growing interest in further developing trilateral partnerships to address shared challenges more effectively across the region.

The relationships between ACIAR and the region's highly capable agriculture research institutes have continued to mature. Understanding the contribution that agriculture and food systems make to climate change, and the impact of these changes on food, nutrition and livelihood security, is a key priority for all partners in the region. Our country partners are at the forefront of setting both our strategic and applied research agenda and co-producing our approach to addressing ongoing challenges in the region.



South Asia

South Asia is a very diverse and densely populated region. It is home to about 2 billion people—one quarter of the world's population. Half of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. High levels of undernutrition (stunting and wasting) and micronutrient deficiencies persist even as the prevalence of overweight, obesity and related noncommunicable diseases are rising.

While the countries of South Asia face common challenges and opportunities in agriculture, there are also fundamental differences between and within these countries in terms of the broad characteristics that influence the nature and success of agriculture.

Climate change is exacerbating the constraints and degradation of natural resources in this region, especially water and soil. Unsustainable management of natural resources and the impacts of climate change are increasingly becoming major barriers and risks to sustainable production and productivity growth across the region.

Water-related constraints range from drought and groundwater depletion in India and Pakistan, to riverine and coastal floods and storms in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and glacial lake outburst floods in Nepal. There is serious land and soil degradation throughout the region due to intensive tillage practices and the removal or burning of crop residue, unsustainable nutrient and water management, salinity, deforestation and misuse of pesticides.

Consultations and strengthened partnerships with key country partners will help identify significant priority areas for the years ahead.

Eastern and Southern Africa

Agriculture typically accounts for 30–40% of the gross domestic product of African countries. More than 70% of the continent's most impoverished citizens live in rural areas. While agriculture remains a key driver of the growth required to deliver economic transformation to these rural areas, growth in productivity and production have broadly stagnated in the past decade. Unlocking the potential of Africa's food systems requires substantial investment in the agriculture sector. To underpin growth in the productivity and market engagement of smallholder farmers and the sustainable management of natural resources, investment is required in research and capacity development to build knowledge

Australian agricultural science has expertise that is directly relevant to the African context due to the similarities of our agroecological environments. A strong culture of collaboration also enables ACIAR to broaden its reach, undertaking research in 11 African countries with longstanding partners, including CGIAR centres and international agricultural research centres, such as the Centre for Agricultural Biosciences International (CABI), the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe) and the World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg).

Our governance

ACIAR is established by the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982 (ACIAR Act)*, as amended, and it is an agency of the Australian Government's Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio.

ACIAR is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and a statutory agency under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

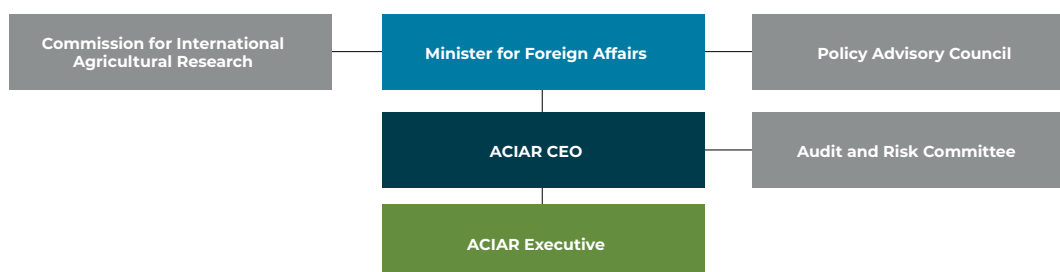
ACIAR has an executive management structure headed by the CEO, who reports directly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The CEO manages the administrative and financial affairs of ACIAR and its staff, subject to, and in accordance with, any directions given by the Minister. An executive team supports and advises the CEO on strategic, operational and corporate priorities.

An audit and risk committee also supports the CEO by providing independent assurance on financial and performance reporting responsibilities, risk oversight and management, and systems of internal auditing.

Also established under the ACIAR Act are the Commission for International Agricultural Research and the Policy Advisory Council. These advisory bodies provide expert strategic advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on international agricultural research-for-development. .

Governance structure of ACIAR



Commission for International Agricultural Research

The legislated role of the Commission for International Agricultural Research (the Commission) is to provide strategic advice to the Minister on the formulation of programs and policies to identify agricultural problems and find solutions in developing countries. The Commission also provides advice to the Minister on the functions of ACIAR and priorities for the ACIAR program and funding.

Policy Advisory Council

The legislated role of the Policy Advisory Council (the Council) is to provide advice to the Minister on the agricultural problems of developing countries and strategic aspects of national and regional development. The Council, which includes members from countries other than Australia, plays an important role in facilitating partnerships and is pivotal in discussions on setting national and regional research priorities.

Our capability

ACIAR's new corporate structure aims to strengthen strategic organisational planning, business and functional prioritisation, resource allocation and executive oversight. We will achieve this through confident leadership of our people, our Networks, our systems and our partnerships.

In early 2024, we introduced a new corporate structure that better supports core programs, enables stronger collaboration, better targets resource allocations and improves executive oversight. The new structure is embedded in a workplace culture built on transparency, integrity and a commitment to shared goals and collaboration that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.

We are driving stronger collaboration in the investment and design of projects, programs and partnerships that make up the ACIAR research portfolio. These changes will help us achieve our vision, now and in the future. Complementing the new structure is the introduction of the Monthly Investment Meeting to consider research investments. This brings all staff together to discuss and plan for future investments that meet the needs of our partner countries, and to identify the best collaboration of Australian researchers to address priority issues in our partner countries.

In 2024–25, ACIAR will reduce outsourcing of core work in line with the APS Strategic Commissioning Framework. Our targets for 2024–25 focus on reduced outsourcing of various job families with an expected reduction of \$1.4 million in outsourcing expenditure.

Our people

At ACIAR, our strength lies in our people. Our team comprises highly skilled individuals who are passionate about facilitating quality research through genuine collaborations. Our scientifically trained staff are highly specialised and experienced in fostering and brokering successful partnerships worldwide. They are equally respected for their scientific capabilities as for their relationship building abilities, culminating in strong partnerships with a diverse range of Australian and international organisations, institutes and associations. These relationships make it possible to deliver global and regional public goods.

Our recently introduced ACIAR People and Culture Strategy outlines our vision for a positive workplace. We prioritise inclusivity and uphold a values-based culture. We continually review our workforce policies and our Work Health and Safety Framework.

ACIAR is a small government agency with 90 staff

(full and part-time)

- » **65 employees** are located at ACIAR House in Canberra, Australia
- » **25 employees** are locally engaged staff at Australian government diplomatic missions, throughout the Indo-Pacific region,

Staff are organised in

3 lines of management:

- » Research
- » Partnerships
- » Corporate

2 advisory bodies:

- » Commission for International Agricultural Research
- » Policy Advisory Council

We actively consult with staff, primarily through the ACIAR Consultative Committee, ensuring an inclusive and consultative environment where diversity is valued, and everyone has a voice in the process of how systems are developed and governed within ACIAR.

Our organisational capability thrives on the values and diversity of our team members. Within the workplace, core values of impartiality, commitment to service, accountability, and respectful and ethical conduct influence our approach to all that we do, particularly our work culture and commitment to diversity. These values align with the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct.

We encourage the development of our people through a performance framework that provides training and development opportunities, promotes health and wellbeing, and offers flexibility that allows our staff to perform at their best.

Our networks

ACIAR actively communicates with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and its Heads of Missions in partner countries. These relationships are a vital contribution to the effort of Team Australia to ensure alignment with, and relevance to, Australia's broader development initiatives and objectives.

The ACIAR Country Network, located in Australian missions and embassies, is central to our ability to operate in our partner countries. Our Country Network staff work alongside embassy staff and manage our strategic relationships in partner countries and research agencies to ensure ACIAR and Australia's interests are represented in both bilateral and multilateral relationships and bodies. Country Network staff are also important for the delivery of our capacity development programs, as well as keeping alumni connected and contributing to agricultural research-for-development. Establishing a network of communication officers in our in-country offices is also an example of ACIAR increasing in-country capabilities.

The advisory bodies, the Commission for International Agricultural Research and the Policy Advisory Council, are also an integral part of the ACIAR network. With a combined membership of eminent Australian and international leaders in agricultural research, they enhance our capability by participating in our partnership negotiations and high-level in-country dialogues.

Our systems

We support our people with corporate processes and systems that underpin our performance and delivery. Continuous development of our information and communication technology platform has improved collaboration between staff, research partners and stakeholders. The platform integrates research, partnership, corporate and compliance requirements into a single system that enables us to deliver more effective and efficient project procurement and management outcomes.

As a responsible corporate citizen, ACIAR plays their role in achieving the Australian Government's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. We are committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2030 and have already implemented a range of measures to reduce our impact on the environment.

Our partnerships and engagements

As a broker, investor and manager of strategic partnerships, ACIAR works with approximately 440 organisations through about 180 projects annually. To do this, we are advised by and work with a diverse range of stakeholders and partners in Australia and in 33 countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Area of partnerships and engagement	Partners and stakeholders
We engage with experts and governments to ensure our work is guided by the needs of our partner countries, embraces new methods and aligns with Australian Government policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Australian Government – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade » Commission for International Agricultural Research » Policy Advisory Council » National agricultural research organisations in partner countries
We establish partnerships with Australian and international organisations to jointly address shared priorities in agricultural research-for-development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Australian Government departments » Universities » International research-for-development agencies » International agricultural research centres » Private and not-for-profit foundations
We commission technical experts to implement our research portfolio and capacity development programs, according to well-defined priorities and well-developed project scopes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Universities » CSIRO » State and federal government departments » Partner country governments » Private-sector specialists and consultants
We facilitate the delivery of new knowledge and technologies via our commissioned research partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Smallholder farmers, fisheries and foresters and their communities in partner countries » Small and medium community-based enterprises in partner countries » Australian agricultural industries and farmers
We communicate project news and results to extend the reach of our work and increase understanding of the impact of Australia's investment in agricultural research-for-development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Project and program partners » Industry peak bodies » Australian public » International public » Regional agencies



Our risk management and oversight





Engaging with risk is essential to good decision-making and meets our performance and legislative responsibilities.

Risk management and oversight is essential for ACIAR functions and operations and underpins the achievement of our purpose. The ACIAR Risk Management Framework is an integrated structure that enables staff to proactively identify, manage and share risks in line with our risk appetite, tolerance, governance and accountability arrangements. Our positive risk culture means that staff at every level understand and can appropriately manage risks as an intrinsic part of their day-to-day work.

The CEO and Executive Team have overarching responsibility for managing risk. The CEO reports any issues related to risks that affect the delivery of the ACIAR objectives to the ACIAR Audit and Risk Committee. The Commission for International Agricultural Research also advises the CEO on risk oversight and management.

Our risk register identifies both strategic risks (that may impact our strategic objectives or require a change in strategic direction) and program risks (that may impact our ability to deliver operational objectives). Our risk management plan supports all staff to document and use risk information in their activities. We also conduct regular reviews and risk assessments to test and adjust our response to our operational environment.

The ACIAR strategic risk and mitigation plans align with our risk appetite and tolerance, as outlined below.

Strategic Risks		Mitigation Plans
	<p>A significant cybersecurity incident results in the loss and/or exposure of sensitive information or the loss of business-critical systems.</p>	<p>Work with cloud service providers to increase cybersecurity controls for cloud services.</p> <p>Continue to monitor and upgrade controls through a sustained cybersecurity focus in the internal audit program.</p>
	<p>The safety of our people is compromised due to threats posed in our operational environments.</p>	<p>Continue to review processes to ensure that decision-making in this area provides the highest level of safety for ACIAR staff.</p>
	<p>Ineffective management of our relationships, including those with the Minister's Office, the Secretary and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and research partners.</p>	<p>Maintain a clear communication channel with the Minister, Office of the Minister and the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.</p> <p>Dedicate resources to engage in the policy setting and in Australian research and agricultural policy spheres.</p> <p>Strengthen relationships with individual and institutional policymakers in both Australia and our partners countries to ensure information flow and influence.</p>
	<p>Significant political instability, pandemic and/or a major global catastrophe disrupt our research programs.</p>	<p>Establish formal and regular communications with our partners. Develop advanced skills and tools in our Country Network that will allow us to effectively re-engage with our partners when the crisis subsides</p>

Our performance

Our core business is to foster long-term relationships with our partner countries that allow us to collaboratively identify research priorities, establish research partnerships and commission research to tackle the priorities.

The impact of ACIAR projects, programs and partnerships is difficult to measure, as it involves complex technological and sociological changes in diverse partner countries, which may be realised over many years, even decades, after the original research investment.

We manage and monitor our investments in research and partnerships to maximise impact and returns. We have a well-established approach to reviewing the performance of research projects and assessing the adoption of research results and their subsequent impact at a project level.

We implement both formal and informal processes to review, assess and learn from the work we do. This learning builds individual and institutional knowledge from project outputs, and enhances our understanding and our experience, enabling continual improvement of the programs that we develop and support.

These activities enable us to monitor progress and performance across the portfolio, refine our priorities, identify lessons from current and past projects, and report accurately to our Minister, the Parliament and the Australian public.

Over the next 4 years, ACIAR will manage projects and establish relationships and programs that contribute to the achievement of our targets in the 3 key activities prescribed in the ACIAR Act:

1. Global research collaborations
2. Bilateral and regional research projects
3. Scientific and policy capacity-development activities.

The following sections set out the performance measures and annual outcomes for areas of work that contribute to our annual performance within the Enhanced Commonwealth Performance Framework.



1. Global research collaborations

Our global research collaborations enhance Australia's global reputation as an effective and sustainable research-for-development partner, and positions Australia to positively influence the international agricultural research agenda.

This is achieved mainly through:

- » managing Australia's investment in the international agricultural research system, most notably through the CGIAR, as mandated by the ACIAR Act
- » establishing and managing multilateral and strategic partnerships with public and private organisations, to facilitate shared objectives or visions.

We measure our performance as an influencing funder, through ACIAR representation on governance bodies of our multilateral partners, and the mutual respect and commitment demonstrated in our multilateral partnerships.

Key performance measures for global research collaborations, 2024–25 to 2027–28

Area monitored	Performance indicator	Annual outcome
Influence as a donor	50–90% of supported multilateral research collaborations in which ACIAR is represented on a governance body	Highly satisfactory ACIAR was influential in supporting effective multilateral research governance through all supported research collaborations
Mutual respect and commitment	More than 80% of multilateral financial contributions delivered by the end of the financial year	Satisfactory Partnership management processes ensured timely financial acquittal of public funds
	50–90% of agreed reporting products submitted within agreed time frames	Satisfactory Partnership management processes ensured timely receipt of agreed deliverables
	No more than a 20% decrease in support of multilateral financial contributions delivered within an acceptable range of variation from previous financial year	Satisfactory ACIAR provided consistent support for global public goods, research, infrastructure and capacity

2. Bilateral and regional research projects

Agricultural research facilitated and implemented by ACIAR, and our partner countries has benefits at the local, regional, national and global levels, for smallholders, communities, and industries. In any one year, there will be close to 180 ACIAR-supported bilateral and regional research projects underway in the Indo-Pacific region. This research is led by commissioned organisations (universities, CSIRO, state government agencies or private firms) and/or international agricultural research centres, and is a collaboration between Australian and international researchers with in-country partners.

We measure our project-level performance through targets for project management and the delivery of intended outputs at the end of each project. We also measure the contribution of our investment to development outcomes, several years after the conclusion of the project.

Key performance measures for bilateral and regional research projects, 2024–25 to 2027–28

Area monitored	Performance indicator	Annual outcome
Project management	50–80% of annual deliverables submitted on schedule	Satisfactory Project management practices ensured timely financial acquittal of public funds
	50–80% of annual and final reports submitted on schedule	Satisfactory Project management practices ensured timely delivery of commissioned work
Delivery of intended project objectives	70–90% of projects concluded during the financial year that rated as good quality or above on the effectiveness criteria in final project reviews	Satisfactory The research portfolio effectively delivered agreed end of project outcomes
	70–90% of projects concluded during the financial year that rated as good quality or above on the gender equity criteria in final project reviews	Satisfactory The research portfolio effectively responded to the different needs of women and girls
Contribution to development outcomes	70–90% of outcome evaluations completed during the financial year showing evidence of contribution to intended development outcomes	Satisfactory Evidence shows that the research contributed to development outcomes
	70–90% of long-term economic impact assessments completed during the financial year showing benefit–cost ratio of 3:1 or above	Satisfactory Evidence shows that the funded research improved productivity

3. Scientific and policy capacity-development activities

Our capacity-development activities support the development and strengthening of skills, knowledge and understanding of individuals and organisations, allowing them to undertake agricultural research that advances our objectives and shared development outcomes. To do this, we work with implementation partners to deliver capacity-development activities and project-based opportunities for individuals and organisations.

We measure our performance at the sub-program level through targets for program management and the delivery of intended program outputs. We also measure the contribution of our programs to development outcomes, several years after their conclusion.

Key performance measures for scientific and policy capacity-development activities, 2024–25 to 2027–28

Area monitored	Performance measure	Annual outcome
Project management	More than 70% of annual deliverables submitted on schedule	Satisfactory Project financial management practices ensured quality, timely delivery of program activities
	50% of total participants identifying as women	Satisfactory Selection processes ensured balanced participation of all genders
Delivery of intended project objectives	70% of participants successfully complete the program	Satisfactory Research and management qualifications of participants enhanced as expected
	70–90% of participants rate the program as high quality at completion	Satisfactory Program participant experience improves Australia's people-to-people linkages
Contribution to development outcomes	70–90% of total program alumni surveyed annually are engaged in relevant sectors	Satisfactory Research and management qualifications developed by the program retained within partner system as expected
	70–80% of total program alumni profiled in qualitative case studies annually rate the program as a significant contribution to career development	Satisfactory Program contribution to participant career development assessed as significant

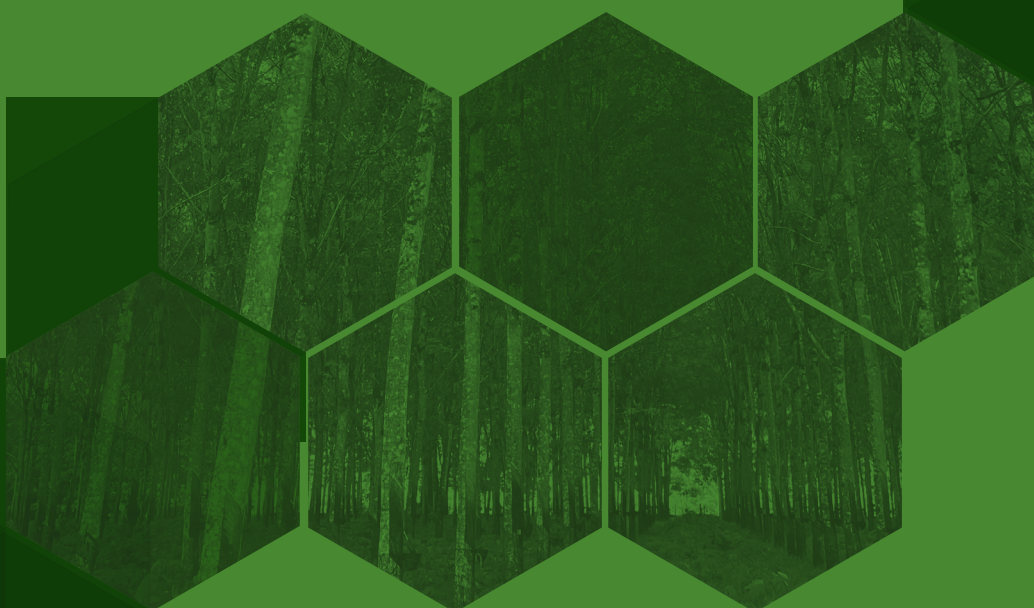
List of requirements

The ACIAR Corporate Plan 2024–25 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of:

- subsection 35(1) of the PGPA Act
- the PGPA Rule 2014.

The following table details the requirements met by the ACIAR Corporate Plan 2024–25 and the page references for each requirement.

Requirement	Page(s)
Introduction	3
» Statement of preparation	2
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» Reporting periods covered by the plan	2
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Key activities	13
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