

Australia's investment in international agricultural research and development pays its way

Small investment reaps big economic returns and more

The proportion of Australia's development-assistance budget given to agricultural research and development (R&D) is only around 2.5 per cent.

Despite this, a new, independent report commissioned by the Crawford Fund conservatively puts the average benefit-cost ratio from well-managed international agricultural R&D at 10:1.¹ This echoes findings of other international studies. It means that every dollar invested in such research earns a \$10 economic benefit for developing countries and Australia.

A second report notes the broad set of other benefits, particularly related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.²

Australians benefit through new technologies, skills, knowledge and improved biosecurity

Australia's agricultural productivity directly benefits from international agricultural R&D. Australian farmers gain access to new crop varieties, management technologies and new biosecurity knowledge.

All Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) projects and Crawford Fund training involve collaboration between staff of Australian universities and research agencies, and our overseas counterparts. This results in new knowledge and skills being captured by all involved, including Australian researchers.

Additional benefits from investing in international agricultural research include building scientific capacity, protecting and restoring natural resources, strengthening biosecurity, improving the environment and empowering women.



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It is in Australia's interests to support an increase in the proportion of its development-assistance budget invested in international agricultural R&D.

Australian wheat productivity boosted

More than 90 per cent of the wheat varieties grown in Australia can be traced back to varieties from the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) in Mexico, in which Australia invests. A recent variety, Borlaug 100, promises to be a game changer for our farmers, offering a big increase in yield over other varieties, even in drought. In 2020 dollars, the benefits to Australian consumers and farmers from access to a range of CGIAR-improved crop varieties equalled about \$110 million. These benefits will have continued to accrue. More importantly, access to these new varieties and their greater productivity has helped Australian farmers remain competitive in international markets.



The Crawford Fund is an Australian registered charity that highlights benefits to Australia and developing countries of research for agriculture and development; engages Australians in training developing-country scientists and farmers around food and nutrition security, and supports and encourages young Australians in their careers, studies and volunteering for food and nutrition security. Our work is often connected with ACIAR projects.

Photo: ACIAR

Raising up women

Women smallholder farmers in developing countries face significant constraints, including poor access to agricultural training, community decision-making and economic development. Australian agricultural aid projects in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea assist women smallholders and their families to develop an equitable and effective 'family business' approach to their farming activities.

Meeting Australia's commitment to UN Sustainable Development Goals raises our profile and promotes regional stability

Australia's investment in international agricultural R&D is pivotal to our foreign aid program and commitment to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such investment improves our international profile and the strength of our diplomatic ties, and promotes regional stability.

Australia's investment in agricultural R&D is mostly through ACIAR, whose projects aim to revitalise agriculture in low-income countries, mainly in the Indo-Pacific region. ACIAR's research is helping to achieve 14 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Our reports demonstrate that Australia's investment in agricultural development through our aid budget is an outstanding success. It is well-targeted and contributes to the food and nutrition security of low-income countries, as well as their environmental and economic sustainability and resilience, and to gender equity and regional stability.

The Crawford Fund and ACIAR work to build the capacity of scientists and farmers in low-income countries.

Our developing-country partners consider this capacity-building to be at least as valuable as the economic benefits from agricultural R&D.

- 1 Australian Gains from Investment in International Agricultural R&D 2010-2020: Doing Well by Doing Good Report (PDF, 205 KB) produced by John Mullen, Julien de Meyer, Caroline Lemerle, Garry Griffith and Bill Malcolm, 2022, www.tinyurl.com/yc5w6vcw.
- 2 The Benefits to Australia and to the Global Community from Investing in International Agricultural Research and Development (PDF, 698 KB), produced by Alluvium International (Dr Neil Byron, Dr Jan Edwards, Mette Kirk and Steve Charlton-Henderson), 2022, www.tinyurl.com/2hbexha8.



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