

Australian farmers benefit from aid-funded international agricultural R&D



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Australia only invests 2.5 per cent of its international aid budget in agricultural research and development (R&D). Yet, the benefits from this investment to farmers in Australia and to smallholder farmers in developing countries, especially our neighbours, are huge.

New independent reports^{1,2} commissioned by the Crawford Fund conservatively puts the average benefit-cost ratio from well-managed international agricultural R&D at 10:1. This means that for every dollar invested in such research, there's a \$10 economic benefit. Much of this flows to smallholder farmers in developing countries and to Australian farmers.

It has other benefits too, contributing to the food and nutrition security of low-income countries, as well as to their environmental and economic sustainability and resilience, and to gender equity and regional stability.

This demonstrates that Australia's investment in agricultural development through our aid budget is an outstanding success.

Our international agricultural R&D directly benefits Australian farmers through new technologies and improved biosecurity

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

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

Slowing Panama disease

Bananas are the world's most traded fruit, and in Australia are the number-one-selling supermarket product. Work supported by Australian agricultural aid has been part of the global battle against Panama disease, which can devastate banana crops. Knowledge gained from overseas research projects, for example in the Philippines, has proved invaluable for slowing the spread of Panama disease in Australia and to other countries.



Photo: Conor Ashleigh



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

Oyster-farming improvements

ACIAR's work on oyster farming in Vietnam has increased the income of producer families, while building the scientific capabilities of local and Australian researchers. In parallel with the work in Vietnam, Australian scientists have developed improved molecular tools which are being used to breed Sydney rock oysters with better disease resistance, growth and meat condition.

Our farmers benefit from Australian researchers with improved capacity, knowledge and skills

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

Australia's small international agricultural R&D budget benefits developing-country farmers, increasing regional stability and trade

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.

Delivering benefits like these to smallholder farmers in our region improves stability, diplomatic ties and our international profile—contributing to improved trade and demand for our exports.



Photo: ACIAR/P. Cape

Investments in stopping zoonotic diseases

The COVID-19 pandemic brought into stark relief the health connections between humans, animals and our environment. Well before the pandemic, Australian agricultural aid was invested in research aimed at addressing diseases transmitted from animals to humans. Research has investigated malaria in Indonesia; antimicrobial resistance in Fiji; extrapulmonary tuberculosis and arboviruses (viruses transmitted by arthropods, e.g. insects) in Papua New Guinea; and bird flu in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

- 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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