



## A fresh approach to PNG's produce



# PARTNERS

DECEMBER  
2004

IN RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

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# FELLOWSHIPS BRING GENUINE REWARDS

**E**ach year ACIAR invests in people – as project leaders, participants, end users and trainees – all of whom contribute to the development of partner countries through their unique roles.

The commitment to training is an important one for ACIAR, and one avenue to expose developing country scientists to agricultural expertise. This is achieved through training undertaken in individual projects, training courses targeting specific areas of interest beyond projects and through Fellowships.

ACIAR's two Fellowship schemes bring project scientists to Australia, offering them, after an extensive selection process, the chance to further their qualifications and leadership skills.

The success of this approach is reflected in the 109 Fellows attaining

postgraduate qualifications, and the roles most fill when they return home, as leaders in their organisations and fields.

Nowhere is this more vital than in Papua New Guinea, Australia's closest geographic neighbour. ACIAR's involvement in PNG aims to help smallholders and to raise agricultural expertise and capacity.

Achieving the first is closely related to the second, as smallholders are willing to adopt new ideas, but often need research and extension support beyond that in more developed countries.

Increasing the capacity in research and extension is beginning to reap genuine rewards to smallholders through increased income and changes to the lives of these farmers, and also to many of the scientists who are working together for a better tomorrow.

## PARTNERS IN RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

**Partners in Research for Development** presents articles that summarise results from ACIAR-sponsored research projects, and puts ACIAR research initiatives into perspective.

Technical enquiries will be passed on to the appropriate researchers for reply. Reprinting of articles, either whole or in part, is welcomed provided that the source is acknowledged.

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ISSN 1031-1009

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Photos: All photos ACIAR unless credited

Cover: Growing optimism in PNG

Back cover: Water in East Timor, **Brad Collis**



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**Helping our neighbour:**

ACIAR support for a wide range of research initiatives is helping PNG develop into a country of opportunity for its people.

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA – MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Papua New Guinea is Australia's closest neighbour. Helping PNG in its development into a secure and prosperous country remains a high priority for the Australian Government's official development assistance program.

ACIAR has operated in PNG for two decades, tackling a range of scientific, social and technical challenges along the way. PNG has more than 700 distinct cultural groups, a variety of languages and some of the remotest and inaccessible regions on earth. Infrastructure is often limited, along with scientific and technical capacity in research.

Village-based agriculture supports almost 80 percent of the population, many of whom live close to or below the \$2 a day poverty line. Most agriculture revolves around cash crop production, with some animal husbandry also undertaken. Aquatic resources are also harvested. Villagers trade in cash crops, and produce much of the main export crops of oil palm, cocoa and coconuts, but market access is sporadic and often undertaken on an opportunity basis.

As a result food security remains a major issue, with PNG a net food importer. Yet the potential to begin turning around this reliance on imports is good, reflected in the willingness of smallholders to adopt new approaches. ACIAR projects aim to address several of the major issues underpinning food security.

Enhancing the returns on cash crops for smallholders is a priority, both through increased production and also addressing issues of labour, market access, income distribution and sustainability. Helping smallholders capitalise on the resources they have, many grown in rich soils or harvested from the sea and rivers, is beginning to bring about changes in attitudes.

A second major component of projects in PNG is capacity building. As is the case with smallholders, the willingness of scientists to undertake improvements is strong, but is eroded by a lack of knowledge and expertise. Within projects ACIAR aims to transfer skills, knowledge and, where appropriate, technology to help enhance scientific capacity. PNG has consistently been one of the major providers of Fellows to ACIAR's John Allwright Fellowship scheme (see page 14).

The lack of infrastructure and expertise is also being addressed through a project to improve the communication skills of scientists and extension workers, vital to the effective extension of the range of positive research results emerging.

While the challenges remain considerable, the willingness of smallholders, scientists, extension workers and Government to adopt research outcomes offers hope to many of a more secure food supply and an avenue out of poverty.