



Submission No 27

**Review of Australia's Relationship with the
Countries of Africa**

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Organisation: Australian Centre for International Agricultural
Research (ACIAR)



23 December 2009

Dr John Carter
Inquiries Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Carter

Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa

Thank you for your letter of 30 October 2009 inviting the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) to make a submission to the inquiry into Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa. Please find attached ACIAR's submission. This submission is based on ACIAR's current and prospective engagements in sub-Saharan Africa.

If you or other members of the Secretariat have any queries prior to the Joint Committee deliberations the contact in ACIAR is Dr Simon Hearn, Principal Adviser, Strategy and Policy, phone 02 6217 0547 and email hearn@aciar.gov.au.

My best wishes for a successful and productive inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Nick Austin
Chief Executive Officer



Australian Government

**Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research**

SUBMISSION TO THE

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN
AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE**

**INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH
THE COUNTRIES OF AFRICA**

DECEMBER 2009

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Background

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is a statutory authority that operates within the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio. Our activities are part of Australia's Aid Program, with the objectives of advancing Australia's national interest through poverty reduction and sustainable development. ACIAR was established in 1982 to assist and encourage agricultural scientists in Australia to use their skills for the benefit of developing countries while at the same time working to solve Australia's own agricultural problems.

ACIAR commissions research groups and institutions, including universities, CSIRO and State departments of primary industry, private consultants and non-government organisations (NGO) to carry out agricultural research projects in partnership with their counterparts in developing countries. This includes:

- commissioning research into improving sustainable agricultural production in developing countries
- funding project-related training (postgraduate and short training courses)
- communicating the results of research
- conducting and funding development activities related to research programs, including capacity building
- administering the Australian Government's contribution to the International Agricultural Research Centres (IARC).

Research funded by ACIAR aims to help developing countries to help themselves, by contributing to solving agricultural problems and building research capacity. As such ACIAR's activities relate most closely to the inquiry's terms of reference covering:

- Cultural, scientific and educational relations and exchanges
- Development assistance cooperation and capacity building.

Sub-Saharan Africa

ACIAR has funded research in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) since the late 1990s and for the 1983-2002 period in several other sub-Saharan African countries, including Zimbabwe, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Malawi. Over 40 projects have been completed with benefits ranging from market access for cattle; vaccines for Newcastle disease in several countries; a tick resistance diagnostic test and a tick fever vaccine; selection of Australian trees for particular sites; low impact fertiliser strategies for crops and progressing the marketability of indigenous cattle breeds for emerging farmers. Some of these projects have high potential for application in a range of neighbouring countries with adaptation to individual national circumstances.

In addition to bilateral projects, ACIAR has supported multilateral IARC programs and projects, including partnerships with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI); the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF); the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA); the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) in a number of African countries.

Current activities

ACIAR currently has an ongoing small program in southern Africa which emphasises income generation in crop and livestock systems for emerging and previously disadvantaged farmers in RSA. The program is designed to assist farmers to develop as commercial operators to capture the benefits of improved technology, and to participate in technology and information transfer to other groups. An overarching theme is the sustainable use of natural resources and capacity building at the institutional and farmer level to achieve ongoing development opportunities for emerging and communal small farmers. Current projects include:

LPS/2002/081	Development of emerging farmer crop-livestock systems in northern South Africa
LPS/2004/022	Pasture development for community wool sheep production in Eastern Cape province of RSA
LPS/2008/013	Can we segment the South African market for beef palatability?

Planned activities

In the RSA a proposal is under consideration to initiate a project on 'Developing supply-chain partnerships for the emerging beef sector'. This proposed project will depend on the results of the current beef market segmentation project which is due for completion in 2010. The key objective of these beef market projects are to facilitate market access for the emerging farmers using largely indigenous cattle with improved pasture management and quality control. An earlier project has indicated that such beef systems do have market potential provided the relevant farmer groups are able to meet supply chain requirements.

Recent discussions with RSA researchers have also indicated a possible opportunity for a pilot policy development activity in Limpopo Province aimed at defining policy options that the provincial government can implement to further encourage livestock farmer investment in productive livestock systems.

As a component of the Australian Government's enhanced engagement with Africa, under the *Food Security through Rural Development* initiative, a new ACIAR program entitled 'Pathways to sustainable intensification of maize-legume based farming systems for food security in eastern and southern Africa (SIMLESA)' will commence in early 2010. The program aligns with the regional research priorities in Africa, e.g. Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), and the sub-regional priorities, e.g. the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and South African Development Community (SADC) strategies. This initiative derives from consultations with African and Australian stakeholders. The food security program addresses both dietary energy and food quality challenges, and emphasizes the following research thrusts:

- In selected major maize-legume farming systems with potential/promising business or NGO linkages, identify socio-economic, commercial and climatic drivers of maize-legume farming systems evolution; diagnose farmer and value chain constraints to adoption and impact of improved technologies in the context of complex systems and multiple livelihoods; test local innovation and learning platforms for accelerated scaling out of new maize and legume varieties and sustainable management technologies
- Develop and test resilient smallholder maize-legume farming technologies based on the principles of conservation agriculture that increase and stabilize crop, land, labour and capital productivity, farm-household livelihoods/income and system sustainability

- Release nationally improved maize and legume varieties targeted to the selected farming systems, supported by regional evaluation of advanced maize lines
- Analyse constraints to intra-regional and Australia-Africa spillovers and develop coordination mechanisms for enhanced sub-regional and regional spillover management of germplasm, practices, knowledge and research approaches
- Contribute to building agricultural research capacity in partner countries and sub-regional organisations including monitoring and evaluation, scaling out and the incorporation of gender in agricultural research.

A formulation workshop was completed in Malawi in September 2009 and work will continue to finalise the details in the next few months. ACIAR will support this activity with CIMMYT as the anticipated commissioned organisation, working in partnership with a number of national agricultural research institutes in eastern and southern Africa.

Budget

ACIAR's budget for sub-Saharan Africa is comprised of two segments:

- For the RSA a budget of up to \$0.5 million 2010-11 to continue current bilateral projects and possible commencement of a new project concerning developing supply-chain partnerships for the emerging beef sector
- As part of the *Food Security through Rural Development* initiative the SIMLESA project will total a budget of \$20 million with individual country allocations to be decided once the final research details are completed. The overall budget is as follows:

2009-10 \$m	2010-11 \$m	2011-12 \$m	2012-13 \$m	
2.5	5.0	6.7	5.8	20.0

Future project proposals

ACIAR is in a position to engage in additional projects as required in the future subject to the normal budget limitations. Such ongoing or ad hoc research initiatives will generally be guided by the following principles:

- Research partnerships must be focused on delivery of benefits to small-scale African farmers in mainly arid or semi-arid conditions
- Projects will only be considered in areas where Australian agencies and scientists have a relevant skill base and comparative advantage
- Project selection will recognise both the technology and yield gap challenges in many African countries covering crop, soil, water and livestock systems.

It is recognised that Australian technical knowledge and expertise has wide applicability in sub-Saharan Africa because similar temperate, subtropical and semi-arid production environments exist within large parts of Australia. Water constraints and soil management requirements are also frequently similar in both continents. Australia's advanced research, extension and farm management systems capabilities together with formal tertiary agricultural education institutional capabilities are relevant to human and nutritional capacity building in a range of sub-Saharan African countries.

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