ACIAR Agribusiness Scholarship Program
Guidelines

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is a statutory authority of the Australian Government which sits under the Foreign Affairs portfolio. It was established in 1982. The core business of ACIAR is brokering and funding research partnerships between Australian scientists and their counterparts in developing countries. Approximately 70 per cent of ACIAR’s research budget is allocated to bilateral collaborative development-related research between Australia and developing countries.

ACIAR’s Agribusiness Research Program has a range of projects through East and South-east Asia and the Pacific. It aims to improve the net-income and livelihoods of poor farmers and rural communities through research that links farmers to market opportunities and develops more inclusive, efficient and competitive agricultural value chains.

The program has four modes of achieving this:
1. Identifying market and agribusiness development opportunities
2. Linking farmers to markets
3. Improving value chain efficiency, competitiveness and value-added
4. Strengthening capacity in market, business and value chain research and analysis

Purpose of the Agribusiness Scholarship
ACIAR is piloting an agribusiness scholarship to identify and attract talented young Masters students or recent graduates from Australian university business schools and MBA programs who could develop and apply their experience, skills and knowledge to agribusiness research in an international development context. The scholarship seeks to promote international agribusiness research as a possible career pathway for business students and young professionals.

Who are we targeting?
The program would target students enrolled in, or recently completed a full-time Master of Business Administration (MBA), Masters of Business or Masters of Agribusiness.

What is the Agribusiness Scholarship?
The Agribusiness Scholarship program is an opportunity for Masters Students to get work experience, applying their knowledge and skills to a challenge facing ACIAR project partners in the context of international agricultural research for development.

The ACIAR Agribusiness Scholarship will support a student project aligned with their degree outcomes, to gain experience with ACIAR projects.

- The Student Project is for a new, discreet piece of work that doesn’t not duplicate current activities, however, complements the research and outcomes of the ACIAR project.
- The project should be approximately three months in length, inclusive of field work and reporting of findings/outcomes.
Where possible, opportunities to directly engage the student with private sector partners in-country should be explored.

What’s involved in a Student Project?
The scholarship will be a funded placement with an ACIAR project for up to three months. The student will work on a project addressing a specific agribusiness research problem developed by the ACIAR project leader in conjunction with specific agribusiness partners. There is an expectation that Student Project will have a significant in-country work component, and will work directly with multi-national, national or SME agribusinesses. The student will produce a comprehensive report and present their findings and recommendations to in-country partners and ACIAR.

What’s the best timing for a Student Project?
To align with university teaching periods, the optimum time for a Student Project is during the winter and summer holiday period.

How are students selected?
Project briefs will be circulated to Australian Business Schools and students. Students are invited to submit an Application Form (see attached) outlining their capabilities and interest against the selection criteria and attach a CV of no more than two pages. The student’s host-university and ACIAR will short list applications. Two to three students will be invited for final round of interviews.

Emphasis will be placed on selecting the brightest and most suitable students for each Student Project. Applicants will be selected on the basis of:
- Strong analytical skills and experience in business economics, financial analysis or market, consumer and value chain research.
- A demonstrated capacity for applying their skills in a context of inclusive international agribusiness, market systems development and social enterprise.
- Personal attributes for working both independently and as part of a cross-cultural team with private sector business and research institutions in developing countries.

What will the ACIAR Project University be responsible for?
- Developing a brief proposal for the agribusiness Student Project (see attached).
- Selecting suitable candidates (with ACIAR)
- Supervising and supporting the student in Australia and overseas
- Assisting with living arrangements in-country, including logistics and travel arrangements

What will the Australian Business School be responsible for?
- Identifying potential high caliber, suitable candidates
- Administering Student Project funds
- Holding and maintaining necessary insurance for the student (including accident cover)
- Supervising and mentoring the student in Australia and overseas

What will ACIAR be responsible for?
- Reviewing and approving the Student Project Proposal
• Reviewing and selecting suitable candidates
• Funding the student scholarship project (up to AUD$19,000 ex GST)

What budget will be available?
AUD$19,000 will be available for the ACIAR agribusiness scholarship, allocated as following:

• **$12,000 student stipend** – for projects up to three months in length, inclusive of living costs in Australia and overseas. A stipend of $4,000/month would be provided for shorter projects.

• **$4,000 student travel** – including domestic and international airfares, visas and other in-country travel expenses such as hotels, transport. This is inclusive of return airfares to/from University and the project site and the university and Canberra.

• **$1,000 student research operating** – for student research operating expenses.

• **$2,000 institutional support** – for student support and supervision, administration, overheads and insurances.

ACIAR will enter into a small services contract with the Australian Business School where the student is enrolled.
# ST. STUDENT PROJECT OVERVIEW

**Title:**
The business case for a market linkage app linking farmers, traders and processors in the cassava value chain.

**Student Project Description:**
Cassava production in most of Southeast Asia is a largely commercial activity to meet the rapidly growing regional demand for animal feed, starch products, and biofuel. The market outlook for cassava, and hence the prospects for smallholder producers, are strongly linked to supply and demand in global starch, grain, and energy markets. Vietnam grows over 500,000 ha of cassava, generating over USD 1 billion per year in export earnings, making it the world’s second largest exporter of cassava products (starch and dried chips).

The University of Queensland is working with partners in Vietnam (Northern Mountainous Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute, Tay Nguyen University and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture) to assess opportunities and constraints for smallholder production and marketing of cassava in different agro-economic settings and to increase the adoption of improved cassava production and processing technologies by strengthening linkages between primary value-chain actors and with support actors.

One of the keys to achieving the outcomes of the project is to increase the flow of information between value chain actors. Farmer focus group discussions and a cassava value chain actor survey undertaken in Dak Lak in 2016 show that in the absence of formal contract arrangements, actors at all levels of the value chain are constantly seeking accurate information in order to minimize risk.

Updating of information is primarily done by calling other value chain actors via mobile phone, but this generally only enables sharing of information on price or demand from a single buyer, rather than an overall picture of market conditions. In addition, this can incur significant expenses in mobile phone call fees.

A means of transmitting real time updated market data from a wide range of sources would be an ideal solution to the challenge of information provision to value chain actors. Given the high degree of smartphone penetration in Vietnam – almost 60 percent of people aged under 44 use a smartphone and connect to the internet (Appodata, “Vietnam Mobile Market Report 2015” – https://www.slideshare.net/appota/vietnam-mobile-market-report-2015) – an Android/iOS based app to collate and share such market information could potentially be very useful and have a high uptake rate.

This intern will work with researchers from the University of Queensland and partner organisations in Vietnam to develop and test the business case for a market linkage app that is useful for processors, traders and farmers in the cassava value chain in Vietnam.
The app would have a number of functions, which would be useful both to support value chain linkage development, but also to generate data which could potentially be monetized to ensure sustainability.

Functions:
1. Multiple factories advertise price for fresh roots, accessible to traders and farmers.
2. Traders commit to deliver at that price to one factory.
   a. Factory can manage feedstock for the day and plan ahead.
3. Trader geo-references the location of the farmers field.
   a. Could access area, production to generate yield maps
4. Once the load is delivered that factory measures starch content
   a. Have data of starch yield per ha in different areas. Can identify areas with low yield and starch yields to target interventions
5. Trader could also report disease problems etc
6. Factories could also advertise their prices for products (starch, chips etc).


Looking forward, the app could be adaptable for different crops and situations. It could be rolled out to other countries in the other ACIAR-funded research projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country: Vietnam</th>
<th>Project timelines:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Start and Finish date: July 1 – Sep 30, 2017</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Time spent in Country: 4 weeks including time in Hanoi and in Dak Lak for survey and stakeholder discussions.</td>
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**Student Supervisor:**
Dominic Smith
Senior Research Fellow
University of Queensland (UQ)

Jonathan Newby
Research Officer
UQ and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)

**Project Stakeholders and Participants:**

**Country Description:**
Vietnam is situated in continental South East Asia, bordered by China to the North, Lao PDR and Cambodia to the West and the East Sea to the East. Vietnam is home to more than 90 million people, both of the Kinh majority ethnic group and a further 54 different ethnic minorities.
The recent development history of Vietnam is considered to be an Asian success story. Significant economic growth and rapid poverty reduction since the Doi Moi reforms of 1985 led to the country achieving middle income status by 2010. While growth is continuing at a rapid pace, Vietnam is increasingly grappling with problems of environmental degradation, social change and persistent pockets of poverty among ethnic minority groups and the rural population.

Cultural Tips
- Vietnamese, Asian and Western food options are widely available in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Danang, as well as in popular tourist destinations. Outside these areas the non-Vietnamese food options are relatively limited.
- Caution should be exercised in the chaotic traffic conditions throughout Vietnam
- Both males and females should wear modest clothing when visiting offices or religious sites


Required capabilities, skills and experience:

The student be capable of working effectively individually and as part of a cross-cultural team. The student would ideally have:
- Experience in Business case development and analysis – preferably in relation to IT products
- Basic knowledge of market oriented apps, including iOS and Android platform
- Experience in stakeholder consultation, and ability to adapt to work in different cultures and working conditions

It is critical that the student have the capacity to adapt to the cultural and social context of Vietnam. It would be beneficial for the student to have prior experience in emerging market economies if not in the region (Southeast Asia), both for cultural sensitivity and awareness of regional best practices. The student will need to be able to operate relatively independently, for example organizing meetings with local experts and stakeholders, or going to the “field”.

Support for students while in country:
The student will be based in the offices of Northern Mountainous Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute (NOMAFSI) whilst in Hanoi and at Tay Nguyen University (TNU) when in Dak Lak. A translator will be available to assist and will be paid out of student operating funds, with some support from the host institution if needed.

When in Australia the student will directly interact with the project leader, Dr Dominic Smith at the University of Queensland. In Hanoi, the student would interact directly with Ms. Cu Thi Le Thuy of the International Center for Tropical Agriculture and in Buonmethuot, the student will work with Professor Le Duc Niem and his team, who will support the student in the field survey and concept app testing with stakeholders. In addition, the student will benefit from the advice of Dr Jonathan Newby of the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (based in Laos) who has significant experience in cassava research and markets and value chain research.
It is likely that Dr Smith, Dr Newby and Ms Thuy will be in the field in Dak Lak for at least a portion of the fieldwork of the student. The student may also seek secondary support from Ms An Nguyen, ACIAR Country Manager, Vietnam.

### ACIAR HOST PROJECT OVERVIEW

**ACIAR Host Project Title:** Developing value-chain linkages to improve smallholder cassava production systems in Vietnam and Indonesia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACIAR Host Project Leader:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dominic Smith</td>
<td>Host Project Institution:</td>
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<td>University of Queensland</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>In-country Host:</th>
<th>In-country Institute:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor Le Duc Niem,</td>
<td>NOMAFSI and TNU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tay Nguyen University</td>
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**ACIAR Project Description:**

- **The research context** – Throughout Southeast Asia, cassava (*Manihot esculenta Crantz*) is an increasingly important crop in terms of both rural livelihoods and regional economic development. Cassava production in most of Southeast Asia is a largely commercial activity to meet the rapidly growing regional demand for animal feed, starch products, and biofuel. The market outlook for cassava, and hence the prospects for smallholder producers, are strongly linked to supply and demand in global starch, grain, and energy markets. Nevertheless, cassava remains an important food-security crop in specific sub-regions. Vietnam grows over 500,000 ha of cassava, generating over USD 1 billion per year in export earnings, making it the world’s second largest exporter of cassava products (starch and dried chips). Indonesia, on the other hand, cultivates over 1,000,000 ha of cassava but remains the second largest importer of cassava starch in the world.

- **The problem** – Despite its current economic importance, the sustainability of the industry is under increasing pressure from a number of endogenous and exogenous factors, including soil erosion, declining soil fertility, emerging pests and diseases, and increasing labour costs. Furthermore, while the global demand is strong it is highly variable due to connections with several global commodity markets, exposing farmers to considerable risk. Infrastructure and logistics problems also significantly impact the sector.

- **The opportunity** – Given its agronomic robustness, cassava production is well suited to resource-poor farmers living in marginal upland areas, who often belong to ethnic minority groups. Its cultivation provides an important source of cash income for these upland households, contributing to their food security and livelihoods. Despite growing in marginal conditions, the crop responds well to improved management, and significant yield gaps have been identified both within and between regions. The cultivation of cassava offers a profitable livelihood opportunity, provided it is managed sustainably and farmers are adequately linked to both input and output markets.

The SRA on which this proposal is based (AGB-2012-056) found large variation in the adoption of technologies in different production and marketing systems, with varying incentives for value-chain actors to engage in technology dissemination in the absence of strong government extension programs. Hence new impact pathways need to be developed to ensure these research outputs lead to development outcomes and impact. Developing
improved value-chain linkages, nuanced to suit local conditions, has the potential to increase the adoption of cassava technologies and thereby enhance smallholder livelihoods.

In both countries there are considerable opportunities to increase the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of the industry through enhanced value-chain linkages (between researchers, governments, industry, and farmers) that assist in the dissemination and adoption of improved technologies.

**Aim and objectives** – The overall aim of the project is to increase the profitability and sustainability of smallholder cassava production in Vietnam and Indonesia by developing effective linkages between value-chain actors to increase the adoption of improved technologies. To achieve this, the project seeks to: (1) assess opportunities and constraints for smallholder production and marketing of cassava in different agro-economic settings, especially access to extension services; (2) increase the adoption of improved cassava production and processing technologies by strengthening linkages between primary value-chain actors (farmers, traders, processors) and with support actors (researchers, government agencies); (3) develop policy recommendations and facilitate a dialogue on the opportunities for the development of the cassava industry and improvement in rural livelihoods through improved agribusiness arrangements.

**Partnerships and linkages** – Formal partnerships will be developed between the University of Queensland, International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), national universities including Tay Nguyen University (Vietnam) and Brawijaya University (Indonesia), and national research centres, including NOMAFSI (Vietnam) and ILETRI/ICFORD (Indonesia). The project will also involve local extension agencies (DARD in Vietnam and BPTP in Indonesia and community extension officers) in activities to increase their experience and linkages to cassava researchers, industry actors, and farmers. The project will also focus on increasing the capacity of other value-chain actors who are identified as key to the sustainability of the approach and maintaining linkages beyond the project.

**STUDENT PROJECT DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES**

**Background and Justification:**
Developing improved value-chain linkages between growers, traders and starch factors, nuanced to suit local conditions, has the potential to increase the adoption of cassava technologies and thereby enhance smallholder livelihoods.

Value chain assessments found that information on price at processing facilities doesn’t always flow along the value chain. Some factories are better at coordinating the delivery of feedstock, but this requires many different phone calls and arrangements each day. Over supply of roots on a given day leads to lower prices for farmers and traders, and losses in the starch content/quality.

A market linkage app would contribute to the development of enhanced value chain linkages, particularly between farmers, traders and factories.

**Project Tasks and Responsibilities:**
- Identify and review similar apps in the market
- Consult with key stakeholders in the field in Vietnam to identify technical and human opportunities, issues and constraints
- Develop a business case for a market linkage app in cassava value chains, including strategies for monetization of the app, expansion to other crops and potential uses of collected spatial, volume, price and other data.
- Based on the results of the business case development, develop parameters for a simple concept application which would be built by a programmer using Google App Maker (https://www.blog.google/products/g-suite/customize-your-g-suite-experience-app-maker-and-recommended-apps/)
- Using the concept app, test the interest and potential uptake of the app in the field in Vietnam with participants in the cassava value chains in Ea Kar and Krong Bong Districts of Dak Lak province
- Based on the field testing of the pilot app, refine the business case for development and roll-out of a full app
- Feedback those results to stakeholders

**Deliverables:**
- Two page Executive Summary and 15-page (body) report outlining the business case for a market linkage app and the feasibility of monetizing the app/utilizing generated data
- Presentation of key findings/outcomes to in-country partners
- Presentation of key findings/outcomes to University of Queensland
- Concept market linkage app and information on how to scale out to additional commodities
- Presentation of scholarship outcomes to ACIAR and Student’s university

**Project Challenges:**
- Lack of experience of value chain actors in utilizing technology-based linkage tools
- Low willingness/capacity to pay for services, especially in context of falling cassava prices
- Limited English language among stakeholders
- Formal and informal barriers for foreigners travelling to a number of key rural areas in Vietnam.

**Student Opportunities:** *(what career opportunities participation in this project may be created for the student)*
- Increased networking opportunities in the fast-growing agribusiness sector in South-East Asia
- Experience in interacting with multi-disciplinary teams in an international environment
- Experience in using practical research to develop a business case for the deployment of a real-time market information app in a developing country context.

**SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION PROCESS**

**Applications:**
Project briefs will be circulated to Australian Business Schools and students. Students are invited to submit an Application Form (see attached) outlining their capabilities and interest against the selection criteria and attach a CV of no more than two pages. The
student’s host-university and ACIAR will short list applications. Two to three students will be invited for final round of interviews.

**Process and Timelines:**
Short-listed applicants will be contacted for interviews by Dominic Smith and Jonathan Newby. It is envisaged that the student will be selected and the project contracted by the end of June, 2017.

**Funding:**
AUD$19,000 will be available for the ACIAR agribusiness scholarship, allocated as following:

- **$12,000 student stipend** – for student projects up to three months in length, inclusive of living costs in Australia and overseas. A stipend of $4,000/month would be provided for shorter projects.
- **$4,000 student travel** – to cover domestic and international airfares, visas and other in-country travel expenses such as hotels, transport. This is inclusive of return airfares to/from University and the project site, and the university and Canberra.
- **$1,000 student research operating** – for research operating expenses including contribution to the cost of the programmer to program the concept app in Google App Maker.
- **$2,000 institutional support** – for student support and supervision, administration, overheads and insurances.
ACIAR Agribusiness Scholarship
Application Form
To be completed by the Student Applicant and Business School

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Student Project Title:

STUDENT APPLICANT INFORMATION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Title</th>
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Date of birth: 
Gender:

Address: 
State: 
Postcode:

Phone:

Currently holds a valid passport?
Yes/No

Ability to travel overseas during project timeframes?
Yes/No

ENROLMENT INFORMATION

Degree title: 
University/Faculty: 

Enrolment: 
Part time/Full time

Degree Start Date: 
Estimated Degree End Date: 

Nominated Supervisor (within the student’s faculty):
Name: 
Position: 
Organisation: 
Email: 
Phone:

STATEMENT AGAINST SELECTION CRITERIA (MAX 200 WORDS FOR EACH)

Strong analytical skills and experience in business economics, financial analysis or market, consumer and value chain research. (Relevant experience)

A demonstrated capacity for applying their skills in a context of inclusive international agribusiness, market systems development and social enterprise. (Capacity to apply skills)
Personal attributes for working both independently and as part of a cross-cultural team with private sector business and research institutions in developing countries. (Personal attributes)

Capability to work effectively and professionally inside a commercial bank, with an understanding of bank operations, product offerings and bank culture. (Specific to the project)

REFEREES (1 ONLY)

Referee:
Name:
Position:
Organisation:
Email:
Phone:

Please attach the applicant’s CV including relevant qualifications and previous employment (2 page max).