

In 2012, the need for integrated action to deliver sustainable agricultural intensification at the landscape scale stimulated the formation of the Association of International Research and Development Centers for Agriculture (AIRCA, [www.airca.org](http://www.airca.org)). This nine-member alliance focuses on increasing food security by supporting smallholder agriculture and rural enterprise within healthy, sustainable and climate-smart landscapes. AIRCA members are CAB International, Crops for the Future, the Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza, the International Centre for Biosaline Agriculture, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, the International Centre for Insect Physiology and the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan

Interview

*At the beginning of this year you took over as the Chair of AIRCA. Could you first tell us a little bit about yourself and CFF?*



Based in Malaysia, CFF is the world's first organization dedicated to research on underutilised crops for food and non-food uses. Underutilised crops are domesticated plant species with the potential to contribute to global agriculture. CFF's purpose is to show how such crops can help diversify agriculture beyond the world's major staple crops and cropping systems. Our research is developing products and knowledge systems through which underutilised crops can contribute to food and nutritional security, animal nutrition, renewable energy and more resilient and diverse cropping systems. In addition to leading CFF, I am also Chair in Global Food Security at the University of Nottingham.

**What are the benefits of being a member of AIRCA for CFF?**

CFF joined AIRCA in 2014. As a new organisation, it is essential that CFF builds partnerships and synergies with research organisations with which we share common values on how agriculture can have a positive impact on people's lives. It was clear from the outset that CFF should become a member of AIRCA which is a unique network of research and development organisations with activities in all major geographic regions and ecosystem types. All members have a proven track record of research, development and implementation, working closely with farmers, extension systems, national research institutes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector across a wide range of crops and ecosystems.



CFF benefits hugely from AIRCA in getting access to partners, networks and fora and making our work more relevant, adaptive and sustainable. Through AIRCA we can also speak with a common voice in our interactions with development partners, donors and policy makers. On a personal level, it is wonderful for me to work with such a group of open minded and supportive colleagues who recognise that collective actions are more likely to have global impacts than narrow institutional interests.

## What lies ahead for AIRCA in the coming years?

AIRCA activities are aligned with the objectives of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to end poverty, fight inequality, tackle climate change and build peaceful societies. Our members are committed to combining our experiences of successful approaches, opportunities and challenges in moving farmers and their communities from poverty to prosperity. For this, we need collective actions that provide bold and imaginative solutions to feeding over 9 billion people on a hotter more volatile planet. The Global Action Plan for Agricultural Diversification (GAPAD) is one such AIRCA initiative to support the UN 2030 Agenda. GAPAD shows how agricultural diversification can expand current food systems through greater species diversity and agricultural systems that are more resilient to changing climates. AIRCA members issued the call for GAPAD at the Paris Climate meeting in 2015. We have since built an alliance of partners to show agricultural diversification can help provide greater food and nutritional security, minimise environmental harm, alleviate poverty and support the better use of land. We look forward to encouraging more institutions and funding agencies to contribute to GAPAD.

