

# From paddock to productivity

**Fruit and vegetables are helping bridge divides and boost prosperity in Pakistan through a cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural project spearheaded by Australian researchers.**

By examining better approaches to marketing these family staples and other agricultural practices, researchers have been able to boost productivity and stimulate the wider economy.

Dr Thilak Mallawaarachchi, a principal research fellow on the project which is also led by researchers at Monash University, said the project is helping the rural economy develop and prosper.

**“Pakistan has the potential to produce enough horticulture for local communities and international trade – but current practices aren’t sufficient to meet their ability,” Dr Mallawaarachchi said.**

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“The supply system is so outdated it cannot cater to international markets – in fact the horticulture systems and policies we are addressing date back to colonial times,” he said.

“The inefficiencies in the system impacts farmers’ ability to sell and lots of food goes to waste,” he said.

The project is already helping to reform processes and aims to provide multiple benefits to the people of Pakistan by addressing outdated marketing systems and policies.

“A lot of the fruit and vegetables produced in Pakistan are sent to market with little or no sorting and go to waste,” Dr Mallawaarachchi said.

“If marketing activities can be streamlined, this loss could be curbed and many jobs could be created, especially benefiting women and children,” he said.

“In the long run, this provides a path for diversifying the economy by freeing up women and children to pursue education and enables agricultural workers to upskill for other professions.



**Dr Thilak Mallawaarachchi**

“The impact of this work is far-reaching, it will benefit millions,” he said.

The research team worked hand-in-hand with local experts to ensure objectives were carried out effectively to match the local context.

“We incorporated local stakeholders and universities to allow the support necessary to ensure their representation in important policy committees and the policies reflected the needs of the local population. The task now is to help them implement effectively,” Dr Mallawaarachchi said.

“For markets to work well governments needs to support them with good policy.”

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