

JST and Quad partners to revolutionize agriculture in Indo-Pacific Region

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The Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST), in partnership with Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), and the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), is pleased to announce the first-ever Quad joint research funding opportunity. *"We firmly believe that the adoption of advanced technologies in agricultural approaches across the Indo-Pacific region will play a critical role in mitigating food security issues. Our collaborative endeavors through the initiative represents a significant step forward in our shared mission to innovate and enhance agricultural practices. We anticipate that these efforts will yield substantial benefits, addressing the pressing challenges of food security and fostering sustainable development across the globe."* said Dr. Kazuhito Hashimoto, the President of JST.

The AI-ENGAGE (Advancing Innovations for Empowering NextGen AGriculturE) funding opportunity was highlighted in the [Joint Statement](#) issued on September 21 2024 at the conclusion of the Quad Leaders Summit hosted by President Joseph R. Biden with Prime Ministers Anthony Albanese of Australia, Narendra Modi of India, and Fumio Kishida of Japan.

AI-ENGAGE aims to support cutting edge research and the development and deployment of critical and emerging technologies to empower farmers by addressing challenges such as water shortages, pests, and diseases that threaten productivity. By collaborating in areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics, communications, and sensing, AI-ENGAGE will foster research collaborations across the diverse environments in the Quad countries that can help transform agricultural approaches for increased yields and resilience.

While the research environments are rich inside of each Quad country, collaborations among researchers in these four countries have been limited to date. AI-ENGAGE will catalyze the creation of Quad research teams to harness talent, generate ideas, and uncover best practices that can be disseminated to all Indo-Pacific nations. These results and activities will have a global impact on the people, economies, and our planet by

addressing the issue of food security through innovative agricultural technologies.

AI-ENGAGE invites proposals from teams with researchers from at least three of the Quad countries, but hopes to see many teams with researchers from all four. The AI-ENGAGE partners have pledged a total of \$7.5 million to the inaugural AI-ENGAGE call in cash or in kind, and expects to award at least 5 projects. Awards will be announced in Spring 2025. These projects will result in new solutions, new technologies, new industries, and entrepreneurial ventures that will create a vibrant future for our farmers in the Quad nations.

The Quad leaders endorsed AI-ENGAGE in May of 2023, and in August 2024, JST, CSIRO, ICAR, and NSF signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to establish the research partnership framework of AI-ENGAGE.