

# Vietnam and IRRI

Since 1963, Vietnam and IRRI have enjoyed a long, fruitful history of collaboration, starting with the release of IR8 in both the northern and southern delta rice-growing areas. In 1978, a memorandum of agreement between the Ministry of Agriculture and IRRI laid the foundation for partnership in the succeeding decades.

Vietnam and IRRI have since worked hand in hand in areas of varietal improvement, conservation of rice diversity, sustainable farming systems, and climate change. As a result, Vietnamese farmers are now able to maximize the full potential of the high-yielding rice varieties being grown in the Mekong and Red River Deltas. From their initial areas of collaboration, Vietnam and IRRI are expanding their partnership to include rice production in the upland ecosystems, environmental issues, and grain quality.



## Recent collaborations

In November 2014, former Agriculture Minister Cao Duc Phat and Vice Minister Le Quoc Doanh convened a multistakeholder effort to refine the national strategy and make rice production an even larger engine of inclusive economic growth in Vietnam, already a leader in the global rice market.

As a longtime partner, IRRI offered support to efforts in rice sector improvement in key areas. Leaders and experts from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), IRRI, and other public and private sector partners discussed IRRI's proposed technical assistance (TA) package that covered production of high quality and specialty rice for the domestic and export markets, branding of Vietnamese rice, reduction of losses, climate change adaptation, support for small farmers, and policy advice.

## IRRI's impact

A report from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) in 2011 evaluated the economic impact and value of IRRI's breeding work in Vietnam between 1985 and 2009. Findings showed that rice farmers in southern Vietnam achieved average annual yield increases of 9.8%, or an additional USD127 per hectare from IRRI's breeding contributions alone.

## Key achievements

- **New rice varieties.** About a hundred IRRI breeding lines have been released as varieties in Vietnam.
- **Good agricultural practices.** IRRI is a key collaborator in developing the award-winning 'Three Reductions, Three Gains' program that successfully helped farmers improve their rice crop management practices. Now, the '1 Must Do, 5 Reductions' program is underway to further advance good management.
- **Rice straw management.** Scalable management options for rice straw are developed and documented to help improve farmers' income and make rice production sustainable.
- **Conservation of rice genetic diversity.** Vietnam has contributed more than 3,900 types of rice to IRRI's International Rice Genebank for conservation. In turn, IRRI has dispatched more than 2,700 rice samples to Vietnam for use in breeding and research.
- **Training and capacity building.** IRRI has helped build the capacities of more than 2,300 students, researchers and extensionists through different short courses, scholarships, and in-country training activities.

Rice breeding trial in An Giang province.



## Current initiatives

- **Improved rice varieties.** We are constantly improving rice varieties and breeding for rice that is tolerant to drought, salinity, and submergence; chalk-free and of high quality; resistant to pests and diseases; and more nutritious.
- **Sustainable rice farming systems.** We aim to overcome declining productivity in intensively managed rice lands by helping increase water productivity, conserve resources, and improve livelihoods in the Mekong and Red River basins.
- **Combating pests and disease.** We are learning more about the grassy stunt virus; managing rodents; finding ways to combat brown planthoppers through biodiversity-based pest control, and doing more effective capacity building and communication.
- **Farm mechanization and modernization.** We are helping farmers reduce pre- and postharvest losses and work more efficiently by demonstrating and verifying laser leveling, mechanized transplanting and sowing, and new crop care technologies, and facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships to increase uptake of new technologies.
- **Climate change research.** IRRI works with Vietnamese institutions on climate-smart agriculture (CSA) for rice production, evaluation of CSA practices (e.g., alternate wetting and drying, climate-smart varieties, and ICT-based climate information) and scaling approaches.
- **Policy and market research.** IRRI analyzes consumer preferences and improves the various rice value chains. Together with MARD as well as local governments, we develop policies that facilitate the uptake of sustainable farming practices and support national policy strategies and plans.
- **Help for salt-prone areas.** We are working with the provinces of the Mekong River Delta to adjust farmers' cropping calendar in order to avoid times of high salinity.
- **Training the next generation of rice scientists.** We remain committed to developing the capacity of our partners in new breeding methods, advanced rice crop management options, remote sensing, simulation models and other new technologies.

IRRI technology package 1M5R (1 Must Do, 5 Reductions) developed in Vietnam



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IRRI aims to improve livelihoods and nutrition, abolishing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition among those who depend on rice-based agri-food systems. In doing so, IRRI's work protects the health of rice farmers and consumers, and the environmental sustainability of rice farming in a world challenged by climate change. IRRI's work promotes the empowerment of women and supports opportunities for youth in an equitable agri-food system.

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