

Rice research pays off big

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Rice research leading to new and improved varieties resulted in some in farmers being lifted from poverty in China and India, a study shows.

Rice production grew by 170 percent, from 199 million tons in 1961 to 540 million tons in 2000, mostly because of the research resulting in improved rice varieties. This yield improvement not only helped millions avoid starvation but also saved thousands of acres of fragile natural habitats from falling under the plow to create new rice fields.

"The results indicate that rice varietal improvement research has contributed tremendously to increases in rice production, accounting for 14 (percent) to 24 percent of the total production value over the last two decades in both countries," says lead author, Dr. Shenggen Fan, of the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute.

"Rice research has also helped reduce large numbers of rural poor and IRRI played a crucial role in these successes."

The findings are published in the journal *Agricultural Economics*.

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