New rice plant raises yields by 30 percent

December 21 2005

Japanese researchers have developed a new variety of rice that offers a 30 percent increase in yield, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported Wednesday.

Researchers at the Tokyo University Graduate School of Agricultural and Life Sciences, who developed the strain, said the new plant can be planted vertically and placed closer to a neighboring plant than can standard varieties. Moreover, the upright leaves of the plant allow more sunlight through to its base, helping the plant to grow.

Assistant researcher Tomoaki Sakamoto said these two factors could increase production per unit area by up to 30 percent.

The new strain was among 34 types developed by altering the genetic structure of the rice plant. The strain with upright leaves lacks the

enzyme to produce a hormone related to the standard pattern of leaf growth.

Sakamoto said the main method of rice farming in Japan requires the use of fertilizer to increase production, but the new variety would increase production without depending on fertilizer.