

Whetting Singapore's thirst for rice

March 5 2010

Singaporeans consume around 275,000 tons of rice each year, which requires 688 billion liters of water to be produced - 2.5 times Singapore's annual domestic water use.

Competition for [water](#) is getting fiercer and water supplies are dwindling, yet Singapore can contribute to securing its rice supply by joining the global community in helping farmers become water-wise.

This is the key message from Dr. Bas Bouman of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), who will present "Preparing Rice for the Global Water Crisis" as part of the Environment and Climate Change Seminar Series of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore.

"To produce one bowl of rice it takes about 500 liters of water," said Dr. Bouman.

"For a city like Singapore, the question is whether the 688 billion liters of water needed to produce the country's rice will remain available."

Worldwide, water for agriculture is becoming increasingly scarce as groundwater reserves drop, water quality declines because of pollution, irrigation systems malfunction, and competition from urban and industrial users increases.

Climate change will also reduce water availability in large parts of the world. And, by 2025, 15-20 million hectares of irrigated rice will suffer

some degree of water scarcity.

"Farmers can reduce the amount of water they use to grow rice by 10-30% if they adopt water-saving technologies, such as 'alternate wetting and drying,'" said Dr. Bouman.

"The hardest part is to deliver these technologies to farmers. The public and private sector need to mobilize to promote and implement the existing water-saving technologies through policies, partnerships, and extension and education efforts.

"At the same time, investments in research to develop new water-saving technologies need to be increased so that the future of rice production is safeguarded."

Dr. Bouman's visit to Singapore is part of IRRI's 50th anniversary activities, which included the launch of the IRRI Fund [Singapore](#) and a campaign to raise US\$300 million to support rice research to help ensure that rice production is sustainable, to reduce poverty and hunger, and to improve the welfare of [rice](#) farmers and consumers.

Provided by International Rice Research Institute

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