

## Free phone advice helps Indonesian rice farmers earn more

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Indonesian farmers could earn an added net income of US\$100 or more per hectare per season by following fertilizer advice from a new service they can now access for free with their mobile phone.

The mobile [phone application](#) of Nutrient Manager for Rice (NMRice) in Indonesia (or PHSL as it is known locally) was officially launched at an international seminar by the Indonesian Agency for Agricultural Research and Development (IAARD) and the Indonesian Center for Rice Research (ICRR) together with the [International Rice Research Institute \(IRRI\)](#).

According to Director of the Indonesian Center for Food [Crops Research](#) and Development (ICFORD) Dr. Hasil Sembiring, this finding shows that, besides the release of modern varieties, cultural practices such as nutrient management can produce a positive impact, especially for small-holder farmers in Indonesia.

"Putting this innovation within reach of Indonesian rice farmers marks an important milestone, but PHSL couldn't have reached this stage successfully without the full support from Agriculture Minister Suswono and his key agencies," says Dr. Bruce Tolentino, deputy director general of communications and partnerships at IRRI, who attended the launch.

"For a country with rice as a major food staple, we hope this innovation will help rice farmers make their farming more profitable while also increasing national [rice production](#) through higher yields" adds Dr.

Roland Buresh, lead NMRice developer and nutrient management expert at IRRI.

Indonesia has had its own Internet-based version of NMRice in Bahasa Indonesia since 2011, but more farmers have access to a [mobile phone](#) than a computer with an Internet connection. PHSL Mobile builds on the NMRice Mobile application launched in 2011 in the Philippines, and was developed to enable Indonesian farmers to directly use their mobile phone without the need for an Internet connection.

PHSL was recently field tested in partnership with Assessment Institutes for Agricultural Technology (AIAT) with more than 300 rice farmers across nine provinces — Central Java, East Java, North Sumatra, Riau, South Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, West Kalimantan, West Java, and West Nusa Tenggara.

"Farmers in all provinces increased their rice yields and [net income](#) when switching from their current fertilizer practice to the practice recommended by PHSL," says Dr. Buresh. "In most cases, the increase in net income for farmers exceeded US\$100 per hectare per season."

Indonesia has about 15 million rice farmers. If only 35,000 rice farmers used the PHSL fertilizer recommendation on one-half a hectare for one growing season, the increased net income for these farmers could correspond to about US\$2 million on Java or about US\$4 million outside of Java.

PHSL Mobile is provided in Indonesia through the phone network operator Telkomsel. A farmer with a simple mobile phone can dial 135 to hear a voice recording in a local language. The farmer then follows the voice prompt to answer five simple questions about his rice-growing conditions by pushing appropriate numbers on the keypad of the phone. After all questions are answered, the farmer receives a personalized

fertilizer guideline as an SMS on his mobile phone.

Provided by International Rice Research Institute

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