

Citation

THE INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) was established in 1960 in the Philippines as an international scientific research centre. Over the last two decades when so much else faltered in the struggle against hunger and poverty, IRRI's quiet, persistent, highly professional and wholly dedicated work touched the lives of millions in the Third World, improving the human condition in truly practical and lasting ways. That such a contribution should have been the result of fruitful cooperation between scientists and food technology experts from developed and developing countries alike is in itself a cause of satisfaction and encouragement.

During these years of steady efforts, IRRI has developed a series of rice varieties with yield potential double or triple that of the varieties previously available to Third World rice farmers. It introduced "modern varieties," beginning with IR8 (belonging to the *indica* rice group), characterized by potential for high yield, capacity to grow well during any season of the year and genetic capacity to resist major insects and diseases. More recent varieties such as IR36 have early maturity and multiple pest resistance, use much less water, are exposed to field hazards for a much shorter time, and, most important of all, make double cropping possible for millions of rice farmers. The acceptance of IR36 has been so widespread that more than 10 million hectares are now being planted annually in Asia.

In economic terms IRRI's work generates an added value of about \$1.5 billion per year of increased rice production. Its "modern varieties" have been adopted by the eleven most populous countries of South and South East Asia, planting them in about 40% of the rice area in these countries. This has alleviated the plight of the millions of the Third World rice farmers and their families who in the past practiced only subsistence farming and whose rice yields were among the lowest in the world.

The social impact of this major advance in food production technology has meant the promotion of on-farm employment; increase in hired labour on farms; increase in job opportunities in the villages; reduction of drudgery; and improvement of living conditions in such areas as housing, health and education.

And IRRI has made other contributions. Its scientific advances with respect to rice genetics, rice physiology, and rice soil science are systematically disseminated in Third World countries through strengthening national research capabilities and offering educational and training opportunities at IRRI. During 1962-81 over 2,800 persons from 50 Third World rice-growing countries were trained there, returning to their home countries to become active participants in the international research networks catalyzed by IRRI.

A further lasting contribution of IRRI in sustaining global rice production at the desired levels is the conservation of rice genetic resources for posterity. To meet the challenges of the 21st century over 60,000 strains of rice have been collected from all parts of the world and stored for future use in the IRRI Gene Bank; undergoing through an interdisciplinary "Genetic Evaluation and Utilization" Programme, continuous evaluation and improvement. Through all these efforts IRRI has evolved an institutional pattern for the organisation of scientific resources capable of being replicated for a wide variety of crops and localities with high probability of success.

IRRI's work has been widely recognised within the scientific community and especially by those concerned with food security, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. That work continues under the distinguished guidance of its Director-General, Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, whose personal contributions in the field of agricultural development have been in the highest traditions of IRRI itself.

While the war on hunger is yet to be won, the contribution which IRRI developed and stimulated rice technology has made in ensuring that no child, woman or man goes to bed hungry is a vital element in the battle against poverty, hunger, disease and early death.

IRRI has, by the excellence and relevance of its scientific contribution to improving the productivity and production of rice and rice-based cropping systems, made a truly outstanding contribution to Third World development.

The Third World Prize Selection Committee is proud to award to The International Rice Research Institute the Third World Prize for 1982.