For more than three decades, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has supported the International Rice Research Institute’s (IRRI) research—most notably its work on unfavorable rice environments—through its contributions to the CGIAR Consortium.

The partnership between IFAD and IRRI started in 1980. Over the last 34 years, IFAD has contributed more than USD 20 million through 23 grants to IRRI’s research. These grants covered projects that focused on protecting the livelihoods of rice farmers and reducing prevalent poverty in rainfed, key achievements of IFAD-supported projects

- Validation and delivery of new technologies to help farmers in the flood-prone lands of South and Southeast Asia increase their productivity.
- Accelerated technology adoption by rice farmers in the rainfed Eastern Gangetic Plains, facilitated by socioeconomic studies to assess need for technologies and by decentralized community-level participatory farmer research.
- Through a farmer-centric participatory and multi-institutional approach, evaluation and dissemination of about 200 improved varieties of lowland and upland rice, as well as vegetables, along with suitable crop system recommendations and management technologies for household food security in the marginal uplands of Nepal, India, Lao PDR, and Vietnam.
- Pioneered innovative seed-multiplication mechanisms—farmer seed-production groups as commercial enterprises—as valuable models for local production of high-quality seed.
- Improved rice production in East and Southern Africa (ESA) through assessment and better understanding of production constraints and the supply and demand chain; testing of more than 5,000 rice lines in various ecosystems in Mozambique, Tanzania, and Burundi; more than 20 participatory varietal selection trials; introduction of small-scale farm equipment for demonstration and assessment; and development of a rice knowledge bank for the region.
- Stronger research capacity in ESA and support to seven national breeding programs in the region, facilitated by established networks and working relationships with the agriculture ministries of these countries and regional partners, and by increased representation of African scientists in IRRI’s training programs and scholarships.
- Identification of water management systems to reduce contamination, as well as the amount of arsenic found in different types of rice and its effects on crop growth, crop yield, and plant and animal health.
A Green Revolution for the margins

In all rice-growing countries of Asia, several pockets of rice land are still no better off than they were 50 years ago. This harsh reality persists despite the Green Revolution of the 1960s and ’70s that saved the region from looming famine. The gains of the Green Revolution mostly benefitted irrigated rice farms that have the capacity to absorb and optimize the high-yielding varieties and crop management practices that IRRI and its partners had developed.

When IRRI started on its sixth decade, it reoriented a large part of its work, guided by its mission, toward the needs of the disadvantaged, marginal rice lands and the farmers who have no choice but to work these poor soils. This is the “second Green Revolution.” At IRRI, we believe that poverty can only really be overcome with the inclusion of the poorest of the poor in global efforts to improve rice production and make it more resilient. By this, we mean farmers who till fields that have nutrient-poor soils, receive too much or too little water across seasons, have no reliable source of irrigation water, and/or are battered repeatedly by flooding or drought.

IRRI recognizes IFAD as a staunch partner in this area and will work toward our continued collaboration in improving the livelihoods of rice farmers and, consequently, reducing poverty in the unfavorable areas.

Current work supported by IFAD

- **Enabling poor rice farmers to improve livelihoods and overcome poverty in South and Southeast Asia through the Consortium for Unfavorable Rice Environments (CURE) and Reducing risks and improving rice livelihoods in Southeast Asia through CURE (Phase 2).** CURE has helped develop a new generation of rice varieties that more than double yields under moderate drought stress, greatly increase tolerance for salinity and submergence, and improve productivity in upland rice areas. These research gains must be brought to the farmers who till the soil in lands beset by these environmental stresses. CURE works with other IFAD investment projects and a network of agencies in 10 countries across Asia.

- **Improving livelihoods and overcoming poverty in the drought-prone lowlands of South Asia.** Drought- and flood-tolerant rice varieties and corresponding management practices are being developed for the drought-prone rainfed lowland rice areas of South Asia. Accurate targeting of these technologies by area and a stronger seed system are expected to accelerate varietal release, seed multiplication, and outscaling. Target beneficiaries are smallholder and marginal farmers and the rural poor, with a focus on ethnic minority groups, members of lower castes, and rural women. Implementation takes a participatory approach with the farmers and is conducted in linkage with IFAD-supported projects, CURE, and national agricultural research and development organizations.

**International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)**

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is the world’s premier research organization dedicated to reducing poverty and hunger through rice science; improving the health and welfare of rice farmers and consumers; and protecting the rice-growing environment for future generations. IRRI is an independent, nonprofit research and educational institute founded in 1960 by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations, with support from the Philippine government. The institute, headquartered in Los Baños, Philippines, has offices in 15 rice-growing countries in Asia and Africa, and about 1,000 staff members.

Working with in-country partners, IRRI develops advanced rice varieties that yield more grain and better withstand pests and disease as well as flooding, drought, and other destructive effects of climate change. More than half of the rice area in Asia is planted to IRRI-bred varieties or their progenies. The institute develops new and improved methods and technologies that enable farmers to manage their farms profitably and sustainably, and recommends rice varieties and agricultural practices suitable to particular farm conditions as well as consumer preferences. IRRI assists national agricultural research and extension systems in formulating and implementing country rice sector strategies.

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**Rice science for a better world**