Myanmar and IRRI have enjoyed a long and fruitful partnership that started in 1965, when a trade delegation from the country visited the institute headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna. A few weeks later, the government requested IRRI for samples of rice seeds.

Myanmar was the world’s top exporter of rice in the 1950s and, with recent renewed efforts, is poised to regain its status. The visit of Myanmar President U Thein Sein, Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Myint Hlaing, and other members of the president’s cabinet on 5 December 2013 gave a strong indication of the country’s serious interest in strengthening the Myanmar-IRRI partnership in rice research and was a significant step in refining recent joint initiatives.

**KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

- **Rice sector strategy.** The Myanmar Rice Sector Development Strategy (MRSDS), launched on 20 May 2015 at Yezin Agricultural University, will guide the MoAI and other ministries on policies and action for food security and economic growth based on rice sector growth and exports. The strategy will serve as the reference document in the international community’s assistance of Myanmar’s agricultural development and food security programs and investments.

- **Myanmar CSA Strategy.** The CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture, and Food Security (CCAFS) and IRRI facilitated and supported the first national consultation meeting on “Climate-smart agriculture in Myanmar” in 2013, in which climate change adaptation and mitigation frameworks and strategies around CSA were comprehensively discussed and crafted. The activity resulted in the Myanmar CSA Strategy report, which covers the development of technical, policy, and investment conditions to achieve sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition through climate-resilient agriculture.

- **Better varieties.** To date, Myanmar has released 74 IRRI-improved rice varieties. Since 2015, about 130 tons of seeds of stress-tolerant varieties were shared with some 17,000 farmers to help them cope with the effects of climate change.

- **Postharvest technologies.** Partnerships with the private sector have resulted in the installation of more than 300 dryers across Myanmar. About 35,000 farmers benefit from these dryers, the use of which result in better grain quality that commands higher market prices.

- **Improved crop management.** IRRI shares best management practices with Myanmar partners to help farmers improve crop establishment, nutrition, and productivity; and in water, weed, and rodent management. Since 2006, 33 sites have reported using alternate wetting and drying (AWD), a technology that helps cut down use of irrigation water by up to 30%.

- **Capacity building.** IRRI has provided training to about 500 agricultural scientists and extension workers from Myanmar. Many alumni of IRRI’s training programs now hold key positions in Myanmar’s agricultural research agencies.
In September 2013, with IRRI’s support, Myanmar’s Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAII) held a meeting with key players to discuss the development of a plan to propel the country’s rice industry and regain its previous preeminent role in the global rice market.

On 20 May 2015, the Government of Myanmar launched its national Myanmar Rice Sector Development Strategy (MRSDS) at Yezin Agricultural University in Nay Pyi Taw. The government has tapped IRRI for technical assistance in the development and implementation of the MRSDS, which will serve as a guide for stakeholders. Key officials and representatives of the Myanmar government, IRRI, and donor organizations came together to determine the steps in strengthening the country’s rice sector and the corresponding requirements for research and development.

A Host Country Agreement (HCA) between Myanmar and IRRI and a memorandum of understanding between the institute and Yezin Agricultural University were both signed on August 2015. The HCA established the global terms of reference for IRRI’s long-term presence and research program in Myanmar, including the operation of a breeding and research center in Yezin.

Ongoing initiatives include:

- **Intensifying rice-based systems.** This ACIAR-funded project involves research on cropping options that will increase and sustain cropping system productivity.
- **Improving postharvest technologies.** The solar bubble dryer, launched commercially in 2014, uses the sun’s energy even when the sky is overcast and is a portable alternative for drying grains.
- **Improving the livelihoods of rice-farming rural households.** Village-level multistakeholder platforms formed in Maubin and Bogale villages have brought various stakeholders together to improve grain quality and link farmers to better markets.
- **Reducing risks and improving livelihoods.** The Myanmar National Seed Committee registered Swarna-Sub1 (local name Yemyoke khan saba), the first flood-tolerant rice variety in the country, as a new variety in March 2013. Salt-tolerant rice variety Sangankhan Sinthwelatt was also released in the same year.
- **Improving farmer access to stress-tolerant rice varieties and high-quality seeds.** This USAID-funded project involves farmers in testing and selecting rice varieties suitable for stress-prone areas through participatory varietal selection, and focuses in organizing and training farmers in producing high-quality seeds.