Thailand and IRRI

**Key impact**

- **Deepwater rice.** In the 1970s, Thailand had 9 million hectares of deepwater rice land. To stabilize yield from these unfavorable areas, Thailand and IRRI established a joint research and training facility for deepwater rice—the Prachinburi Rice Research Center—in 1974.

- **Environmental efforts.** IRRI supported the Thai government’s efforts to stop the misuse of pesticides—a move borne in part of IRRI findings stating that indiscriminate use of certain chemical pesticides is a major cause of the brown planthopper outbreak in the country and in other parts of Asia.

- **Climate-smart rice.** With the help of the Thai Rice Department, IRRI has been working to adapt flood-tolerant rice to Thai conditions and finding ways to improve its adoption. Drought-tolerant rice and better weed management are also being developed with partners. Interventions such as the use of suitable varieties and sustainable practices have enabled upland farmers in northern Thailand to profit from growing rice.

- **Rice for the world.** Thailand is a top producer and exporter of rice globally. Huge government investment in agricultural development and extension, as well as infrastructure, enabled Thai farmers to increase rice cropping intensity. Adoption of modern rice varieties strengthened production. In 2008, Thailand exported about 10 million tons of rice, or about a third of the world’s rice supply.

IRRI has provided scientific training to more than 950 Thai nationals, including scholars.

In 1974, the Royal Thai Government and IRRI established a joint research and training program for deepwater rice. The need for such a research facility arose from unstable yields from deepwater rice that at the time, was grown across 9 million hectares. The Prachinburi Rice Research Center became one of Asia’s leading centers in deepwater rice research because of its excellent facilities and experienced staff.

The Thai Royal Family has been very much a part of IRRI’s history and mission. His Royal Highness Prince Chakrabandhu was a founding member of the IRRI Board of Trustees (BOT), the current membership of which includes Thai economist Suthad Setboonsarn, who has served IRRI as a Trustee since 2014.

In July 1963, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit visited IRRI to show their support for the institute.

On the first visit to IRRI of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn in August 1991, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Thailand and IRRI to further strengthen research on deepwater rice culture, as well as to support the development of new rice varieties and farming practices for Thai farmers and others in the region.

In 1996, IRRI awarded the **International Rice Award** to HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej as a special recognition of his devotion to the wellbeing of rice farmers and consumers during his 50-year reign in the Royal Kingdom.

In August 2004, IRRI BOT Chair Keiijiro Otsuka, Director General Ronald Cantrell,
Current collaboration with Thailand

- **Breeding better varieties.** With support from the Thai government, IRRI and the Thai Rice Department are screening for and developing rice varieties tolerant of heat and cold.

- **Growing rice in unfavorable environments.** Under the Consortium for Unfavorable Rice Environments (CURE), IRRI and its national partners in Thailand are developing drought-tolerant rice and improved practices in nutrient and weed management.

- **Protecting rice farmers.** Using remote sensing technologies, rice production is being monitored and mapped to aid government decisions and stave off potential food shortages, making farmers less vulnerable.

- **Improving food security.** Collaborative work strives to close gaps in rice yield by optimizing productivity and sustainability of irrigated rice production systems.

- **Addressing climate change.** Under the Climate Change, Agriculture, and Food Security (CCAFS) program, IRRI works with several research centers to find more ways by which the threats and effects of climate change on agriculture and food security can be overcome. Other initiatives involve exploring options for managing rice straw to add value to the rice crop as well as reduce the environmental footprint of rice production systems.

- **Postharvest and mechanization.** Laser land leveling and the use of farm machinery are being promoted, as are scalable straw management and other postharvest options.

- **ICT for decision support.** IRRI is working with the Thai Rice Department to keep the Thai Rice Knowledge Bank up-to-date as a source of information on best practices and guidance on rice farming, tailored to Thai conditions and farmer needs.

- **Capacity building.** Thai researchers and agriculture officers are among the grantees of research scholarships, such as the Lee Foundation program that seeks to build the next generation of rice professionals.

Under the patronage of the Royal Government of Thailand, the 4th International Rice Congress (IRC) was held at the Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Centre in 2014. Dubbed “the Olympics of rice science,” the IRC is the biggest gathering of rice scientists and industry stakeholders from all over the world and is held every three years.

After the passing of HM King Bhumibol in October 2016, his portrait and emblem at IRRI’s R. Chandler Hall became a place of tribute and thanksgiving to the “Royal Patron” of rice research (photo).