

A photograph of two rice farmers in a field at sunset. The farmer in the foreground is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, a blue bucket hat, and patterned pants, and is holding a large bundle of rice seedlings. The farmer in the background is wearing a light-colored shirt and a light-colored bucket hat, and is also holding a bundle of rice seedlings. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong silhouette effect and a bright reflection on the water. The sky is a mix of blue and orange. The right side of the image has a large yellow curved graphic element.

IRRI

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IRRI 65 Years and Beyond:  
**Building on Legacy, Driving Innovation,  
Increasing Resilience**

## IRRI 65 Years and Beyond: Building on Legacy, Driving Innovation, Increasing Resilience

- Special Remarks from Dr. Yvonne Pinto, Director General of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), including the rich history of IRRI, accomplishments, challenges, and future for the global rice industry.
- As IRRI marks its 65th anniversary this year, it remains deeply embedded in the Philippine landscape, with Dr. Pinto emphasizing the dual imperative of building upon past achievements, while urgently responding to the unprecedented demands of the present era.
- The 2025 World Rice Conference, taking place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from 7–9 November, serves as a strategic platform for these critical discussions, bringing together key players from across the global rice value chain.



**IRRI Director General - Dr. Yvonne Pinto, IRRI 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Remarks:** IRRI is now in the midst of its critical 65th anniversary, where we are reviewing our past, present, and future on many levels. The history of IRRI and its many accomplishments throughout time remain an important piece of the rice market and have added to the global success of rice worldwide. As we look into the future, we are reminded that our vision is not complete. IRRI shares in the challenge of navigating today's complex global rice market, and our team is focused on driving critical new projects that align IRRI more closely with its real needs.

Even saying this, the core mission of IRRI remains unchanged: to foster an environment where ideas are shared and strategies are co-developed to strengthen the global food system. True progress, in our view, is rooted in actions that create both local and global impact. As we reflect on occasions like World Food Day, we are reminded that the challenge of ensuring food security and nutrition is an ongoing commitment that calls for sustained effort every day. We continue to value thoughtful dialogue, especially during times of uncertainty and conflict, where diverse perspectives can be expressed, understood, and learned from. IRRI and my office remain committed to open, honest, and inclusive conversations that lead to meaningful change. With that spirit, we warmly welcome you to engage with us at the upcoming World Rice Conference, a space for collaboration, insight, and shared purpose. We take this as an opportunity to hear directly from diverse voices across the entire rice value chain, beyond research alone, so we can align efforts to meet the real-world market demands. Together, we can develop sustainable approaches that support farmers, enhance supply chain efficiency, and deliver value to consumers. We look forward to collaborating with you at the conference.

## World Food Day Spotlight: Reflecting on a shared journey

The founding of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines in the 1960s was rooted in the early realization that improved rice production is essential not only for food security but also for economic stability across Asia. The subsequent decades of IRRI marked a cascade of breakthroughs that reshaped global agriculture: the release of IR8, the first “miracle rice,” which doubled yields and

helped avert famine across Asia; the decoding of the rice genome, opening doors to precision breeding; innovations in sustainable practices like water-saving systems and ecological pest control; and, more recently, the development of climate-resilient and nutritious rice varieties. IRRI's research and the rich partnerships that underpin it, not only transformed how rice is grown. It fed billions, lifted millions out of poverty, and helped build more resilient food systems worldwide.



As IRRI marks its 65th anniversary this year, it remains deeply embedded in the Philippine landscape, with its Director General, Dr. Yvonne Pinto, emphasizing the dual imperative of building upon past achievements while urgently responding to the unprecedented demands of the present era; "In the land of my birth, we use the expression: "We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us." I hold deep respect for the scientists, partners, and communities who built the foundation upon which IRRI stands today. Those early years were defined by the promise of higher yields, and the partnership delivered on that promise. However, the Philippines today faces a more complex set of challenges. Climate volatility, market uncertainty, urban expansion, and the urgent need for agricultural modernization have significant implications for farmers and the wider agricultural economy."

The country is now navigating a delicate balancing act: supporting rice farmers' livelihoods under climate pressure while working proactively to stabilize farmgate prices. In 2025 alone, its rice sector suffered the most significant damage and losses from severe typhoons. Amid these climatic and production challenges, Philippine Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., noted that the

Philippines is not behind in technology. Rather, it faces critical gaps in irrigation and post-harvest infrastructure. The agriculture chief pointed out significant rice losses after harvesting due to insufficient dryers, silos, and milling systems. The DA's strategy and ongoing programs to reduce reliance on imports and increase climate resilience are shifting; no longer focused solely on increasing production but on attracting investment in equally critical areas such as irrigation, logistics, and post-harvest systems. In view of the ripple effects of these challenges across domestic and global rice markets, IRRI's new strategy represents a crucial shift in its approach to rice research and delivery; emphasizing integrated, demand-driven solutions that not only respond to immediate disruptions but also contribute to the Philippines' broader goals of long-term resilience through value addition and sustainable technologies.

The ongoing collaboration between IRRI and the Philippines, through DA agencies such as the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) and the Agricultural Training Institute, to name a few, and various other partners in the local governments and private sector marks this pivot. Central to this effort is the Low Glycemic Index (GI) Rice Project, which established techno-demo plots and farmer training efforts to develop, produce, and promote healthier rice varieties across target provinces.



*Photo source: Vladimir B. Caliguiran, Information Services Section - ATI-RTC)*

Simultaneously, under the OneRicePH initiative, 25 improved rice lines co-developed through the collaboration of PhilRice, University of the Philippines Los Baños, and IRRI have been shortlisted for National Cooperative Tests, moving closer to farm-level adoption.

In support of the DA's digital agriculture modernization agenda, IRRI also contributes to ongoing research and national programs that leverage precision agriculture technologies such as drones, satellite-based insurance, and digital advisory systems to help reduce labor costs, boost productivity, and promote the adoption of climate-smart practices. Newer collaborations with the National Irrigation Administration also focus on digital innovations to optimize water management and reduce greenhouse



gas emissions in rice systems. More recently, IRRI has also intensified efforts to support the DA's policy-driven strategies by providing evidence-based market briefs and data-driven insights, backed by its own rice model.



The IRRI-Philippines partnership has evolved and deepened over time, navigating past and present challenges with resolve, yet it can still be further leveraged as the country faces even greater challenges ahead.

The 2025 World Rice Conference, taking place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from 7–9 November, serves as a strategic platform to discuss these critical opportunities, in the context of the broader, highly interconnected global rice value chain. Organized by The Rice Trader and the Ministry of Commerce of Cambodia, with support from IRRI and other partners, this year's WRC will spotlight sustainability, climate resilience, and trade as central pillars for securing the future of rice, right at the intersection of science and policy, where global cooperation is urgently needed.

Insights gained from IRRI's work across diverse rice-producing countries offer valuable lessons for advancing sustainable and resilient rice-based systems, providing a rich foundation for shared learning and progress. **Read more on IRRI's 2025 WRC participation [here](#).**