New UN-supported sustainability standard sets global environmental and social benchmarks for responsible rice cultivation

MANILA/BANGKOK, 27 October 2015 – The world's first standard for sustainable rice, which sets new and more efficient standards for rice cultivation, was launched today by the Sustainable Rice Platform (http://www.sustainablerice.org/) (SRP), a global alliance of agricultural research institutions, agri-food businesses, public sector and civil society organizations convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (http://www.unep.org/) (UNEP) and the International Rice Research Institute (http://irri.org) (IRRI).

The SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation uses environmental and socio-economic benchmarks to maintain yields for rice smallholders, reduce the environmental footprint of rice cultivation and meet consumer needs for food safety and quality.

The development of the standard was led by SRP members, UTZ Certified (https://www.utzcertified.org/), Aidenvironment (http://www.aidenvironment.org/) and IRRI, and draws on global experience in other sustainable commodity initiatives such as sugarcane, cotton, coffee and palm oil. It is made up of 46 requirements ranging from productivity, food safety, worker health, labour rights and biodiversity. It is supplemented by a set of quantitative Performance Indicators to enable farmers and market supply chain actors to gauge the sustainability of a rice system, and to monitor and reward progress.

Rice plays a critical role in global food security and provides livelihoods for over 140 million smallholders in developing countries. However, this comes at a price to the environment. Rice cultivation uses 30-40 per cent of the world's freshwater and contributes 5-10 per cent of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Inefficient use of farm inputs such as agrochemicals presents additional challenges to long-term sustainability.

Photoset

- Sustainable Rice platform 5th Annual Plenary Meeting and General Assembly (https://www.flickr.com/photos/ricephotos/a

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“For most of Asia Pacific, rice is a staple. It is part of the social fabric and influences many aspects of our lives – economic, social and religious. The SRP Standard and Indicators will help ensure that the cultivation of this vital commodity becomes more sustainable and benefits people, communities and the planet,” said Kaveh Zahedi (http://www.unep.org/experts/?page=profiles&l=en&expertID=68), UNEP Regional Representative and Regional Director of the UNEP Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific.

Robert Zeigler (/about-us/our-people/management/robert-zeigler), Director General of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) which co-founded the SRP, added: “The SRP Standard represents the world’s first initiative that will set environmentally sustainable and socially responsible rice production management standards. Our key challenge now is to incentivize and scale up adoption, especially among resource-poor small farmers.”

The SRP Standard and Indicators will be field-tested and validated by national government agencies, research institutes and private companies in a multi-location farm trial to be coordinated by the SRP and IRRI. Ultimately, the Standard and Indicators are intended both as a basis for certification of value-added rice products and also as a benchmark for policymakers.

Organizers

UNEP (http://unep.org)

Sustainable Rice Platform (http://sustainablerice.org)

IRRI

About the Sustainable Rice Platform

SRP is a global multi-stakeholder alliance co-convened by UNEP and IRRI, with 29 institutional stakeholders including public and private sector stakeholders, research, financial institutions and non-profits. SRP aims to help rice farmers—whether subsistence or market-focused—produce more efficiently, enhance their livelihoods, and keep the environment healthy.

SRP promotes resource use efficiency and climate change resilience in rice systems, both on-farm and throughout value chains, and pursues voluntary market transformation initiatives by developing sustainable production standards, incentive schemes and outreach mechanisms to boost wide-scale adoption of sustainable best practice throughout rice value chains.

Organizations are invited to participate in SRP by committing to compliance with the SRP Guiding Principles and associated practices, and to contribute actively to the SRP’s activities, either financially or in-kind.

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NETWORKS

C4 Rice Project (http://c4rice.irri.org)
Council for Partnership on Rice Research in Asia (http://corra.irri.org)
Cereal Systems Initiative for South Asia (http://csisa.cimmyt.org/)
Climate change affecting land use in the Mekong Delta (/networks/climate-change-affecting-land-use-in-the-mekong-delta)
Consortium for Unfavorable Rice Environments (http://cure.irri.org/)
Climate Change Adaptation in Rainfed Rice Areas (/networks/climate-change-adaptation-in-rainfed-rice-areas)
Global Rice Phenotyping Network (http://ricephenonetwork.irri.org/)
Hybrid Rice Development Consortium (http://hrdc.irri.org/)
Irrigated Rice Research Consortium (/networks/irrigated-rice-research-consortium)
- Closing rice yield gaps in Asia with reduced environmental footprint (/networks/irrigated-rice-research-consortium/closing-rice-yield-gaps-in-asia-with-reduced-environmental-footprint)

International Network for Genetic Evaluation of Rice (http://inger.irri.org/)
Postharvest Learning Alliance (http://postharvestla.irri.org)
Rice and climate change research (http://climatechange.irri.org/)
Rice Straw Project (/networks/rice-straw-project)
Stress-Tolerant Rice for Africa and South Asia (http://strasa.irri.org/)
Temperate Rice Research Consortium (/networks/temperate-rice-research-consortium)

TOOLS AND DATABASES

Ricepedia (http://ricepedia.org)
International Rice Information System (/tools-and-databases/international-rice-information-system)
Library Catalog (http://ricelib.irri.org)
ORYZA (https://sites.google.com/a/irri.org/oryza2000/home)
Rice Knowledge Bank (http://www.knowledgebank.irri.org/)
World Rice Statistics (http://ricestat.irri.org:8080/wrs2/entrypoint.htm)
Farm Household Survey Database (http://ricestat.irri.org/fhsd/index.php)
Weedsmart (https://sites.google.com/a/irri.org/weedsmart/)
Weed identification tool (http://www.knowledgebank.irri.org/decision-tools/weed-identification)
Local climate (https://sites.google.com/a/irri.org/climate-unit/real-time-weather)
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WeRise (http://werise.irri.org/)
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Genesys (http://www.genesys-pgr.org/)
Rice SNP-SEEK database (http://oryzasnp.org/iric-portal/)

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