

## A decade of rice storytelling

A popular magazine about rice? Hmm... What will you write about after the first issue? That's what I'm told one skeptic asked back in 2001 when IRRI was contemplating the development of a popular magazine devoted solely to rice. Indeed, when IRRI management decided to proceed with the experiment with the first issue of *Rice Today* in April 2002, some apprehension was evident about having enough editorial content to put between the covers on a regular basis.

However, as our award-winning *Rice Today* magazine celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2012, one only has to view this issue's cover of covers to see that rice is a multifaceted and vital topic about which interesting and spellbinding news and feature stories can be written. This is true even for a quarterly format in which any single issue now has no less than 48 pages—and sometimes more!

Leafing through the 34 issues published over the last decade, I'm amazed by the diversity of subjects that our legion of writers have covered from all corners of the rice world. Indulge me for a moment as I list just a smattering of some of my favorites:

- Replanting Cambodia's killing fields (2002)
- Sowing peace in South Asia with rice-wheat (2002)
- Interplanting dresses Chinese fields in pinstripes (2003)
- Precious cargo: Seeds of life for East Timor (2003)
- The art of rice: Food for the spirit (2004)
- Crying time: Women learn to cope when their menfolk leave the farm (2004)
- Drought—fighting the dry curse (2005)
- The genome sequence: Making waves in research (2006)
- The direct approach: Moving away from transplanting in South Asia (2006)
- Rice trade liberalization: Examining a tricky issue (2006)
- IR8: The rice that changed the world (2006)
- Rice and climate change: What's to be done? (2007)
- Vietnam and Laos: Making the uplands productive (2007)
- Bird's-eye view of the enduring Ifugao rice culture (2008)
- Coping with the rice crisis (2008)
- IRRI Pioneer Interviews (2008-10)
- How much water does rice need? (2009)
- Scuba rice: New varieties save farms from floods (2009)
- Uganda's rice revolution (2009)
- Praying for rain: Perils of the delayed monsoon (2009)
- Why cold-tolerant rice is needed (2010)
- Pockets of gold in Africa (2010)
- Water harvesting in Latin America (2010)
- Rice in the city (2011)
- The Americas have two faces (2011)
- How to feed 9 billion people in 2050 (2011)

The current issue continues in this fine tradition of storytelling with features about rice in Japan beyond 3.11



(page 20), Ethiopia's millennium crop (page 26), the plight of the rice birds (page 38), and many more.

Of course, rice and the activities that surround it are quite photogenic. We have exploited this aspect since our April 2006 issue with our breathtaking centerfolds. I look forward to this two-page spread in each issue. See the current one on pages 24-25 featuring traditional threshing of rice in Ethiopia using the hooves of trampling oxen.


I also look forward to what have become regular features in each issue in recent years: a two-page map spread (this issue shows rice cropping patterns in Bangladesh on pages 28 and 29) and mouth-watering rice recipes from members of the IRRI community (this issue features soft-centered chocolate pudding using rice flour on page 42).

Since our April 2002 issue, the magazine has grown in distribution and reputation. It has carved out important niches in the publishing world—in traditional hardcopy, on the Web (now upgraded at [www.irri.org/ricetoday](http://www.irri.org/ricetoday)), and through an email version (sign up by sending a message to [info\\_ricetoday@irri.org](mailto:info_ricetoday@irri.org)). The magazine is now being distributed electronically to 13,000 subscribers including consumers, donors, and partners.

The Rice Trader (TRT), as publisher, and IRRI have now been successfully producing the magazine together for nearly 3 years. This unique partnership has opened up more advertising opportunities to help support the magazine and provide information about private-sector products and services.

In our next issue, we will be announcing the members of an Editorial Board for the magazine, which will reflect the makeup of the Global Rice Science Partnership (GRiSP), the first research program of the new CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research). The diverse mix of persons on the Editorial Board should bring in a plethora of new ideas and keep us abreast of the latest innovations and achievements of the men and women in rice science and trade in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Yes, as *Rice Today* enters its second decade, the future looks bright. The printed, Web, and e-*Rice Today* versions of the magazine continue to evolve into a global media presence and resource in an ever-changing world. The production team needs and wants your feedback and ideas. Let the team know what you think! I do regularly.

  
**Robert S. Zeigler**  
 IRRI Director General

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YEARS

## Fish and rice flourish together

A traditional farming technique that cultivates rice and fish side by side could help small farmers earn more money from their crops and reduce the impact on the environment, according to a study.

When fish were introduced into flooded paddy fields, farmers were able to grow the same amount of grain as in conventional rice monoculture, but with two-thirds less pesticide and a quarter less fertilizer, according to a 6-year study conducted in China.

This rice-fish co-culture could lessen the environmental impact of agricultural chemicals and help make rice farming more profitable, said the study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA*.

"In areas where land and water are limited for developing both rice and fish production, it is important to conduct rice-fish co-culture," said Dr. Xin Chen, lead author of the study and professor at Zhejiang University in



FARMERS CAN profit more by combining fish and rice production side by side.

China. She added that the technique should be combined with modern techniques such as irrigation and the use of machinery.

Dr. Zainul Abedin, a farming systems specialist at the International

Rice Research Institute in Bangladesh, explained that the practice can generate twice as much income compared with growing just rice.

Source: [www.scidev.net](http://www.scidev.net)

## Green: the new color of rice

Rice consumers worldwide can now look forward to eating "green" rice with the launch of an initiative that will set environmentally sustainable and socially responsible standards on rice production management.

The "Sustainable Rice Platform" will elevate rice production to a new level by helping farmers—whether subsistence or market-focused—boost their rice production, keep the environment healthy, facilitate safer working conditions, and generate higher incomes to overcome poverty and improve food security.

The Sustainable Rice Platform will set sustainability targets, develop and promote regional and global standards of best practices for rice production, and support rice farmers to adopt these practices. It will also identify criteria to assess how well the sustainability targets are being met and whether farmers are implementing the practices.

"For example, we will harness our know-how to set standards to better manage insect pests in rice to reduce the unsafe and ineffective use of pesticides, which can damage the environment and the health of farmers," said Dr. Bas Bouman, who will lead the work at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)—one of the project partners.

"We can also develop and promote the use of specialized field calculators to

determine the environmental footprint of water, carbon, greenhouse gas emissions, or chemical use," he added.

"There are many different sustainable technologies and practices for rice—the world's most important food crop that feeds half the planet," said Mr. James Lomax, from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) that initiated the Sustainable Rice Platform.

"The trouble is, we need a way to deliver and upscale these practices," he added.

The Sustainable Rice Platform initiative was launched on 30 November 2011 at IRRI headquarters in the presence of representatives from IRRI, UNEP, Kellogg Company, Louis Dreyfus Commodities and other companies, and national government agencies from Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines.



"GREEN" RICE is the target of the new Sustainable Rice Platform that will develop environmentally friendly and socially responsible standards for rice production.