

The world's first standard for sustainable rice

Dossier de la rédaction de H2o
January 2016

New

UN-Supported Rice Management Standard Sets Benchmark for Environmentally Sustainable and Socially Responsible Rice Cultivation

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 (SRP), a global alliance of agricultural research institutions, agri-food businesses, public sector and civil society organizations convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Rice Research Institute (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, AidEnvironment 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% of the world's freshwater and contributes 5-10% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Inefficient use of farm inputs such as agrochemicals presents additional challenges to long-term sustainability. "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, UNEP Regional Representative and Regional Director of the UNEP Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific. 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.

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.

UNEP