

Folk Rice Magic and Low Yield Myths

Author - Anupam Paul, Published on - 4.3.2016

Many folk rice varieties are suitable for marginal land. Cultivation is lower in cost than modern varieties and needs minimum organic input.

Edapho-climatological factors have made rice the staple food of eastern India since times immemorial. There were more than 5,000 region specific indigenous rice varieties (folk rice) in West Bengal and a 1930 survey report showed that undivided Bengal had 15,000 rice varieties; the majority of them belonging to what is now Bangladesh. These had been selected and developed from a single crop species of rice – *Oryza sativa* – by visionary farmers of times past to meet the food security of future generations. Both their contribution and their vision remain unacknowledged. Each variety is unique with specific characters: disease resistance, flood tolerance, flood and drought tolerance, high grain yield, aroma and such others. Farmer-selected crop varieties are not only adapted to local soil and climatic conditions but are also fine-tuned to diverse local ecological conditions and cultural preferences (Deb 2009). *Kalonunia* and *Chamarmani* are blast resistant, for instance. Lowlying areas in West Bengal are replete with flood tolerant varieties. A wide genetic base provides “built-in insurance” (Harlan 1992) against crop pests, pathogens and climatic vagaries.

Check out the full article in the [Feb.-Mar. 2016 issue of](#)

[Farmers' Forum](#)

magazine, on pages 55 to 63.