



## PRESS RELEASE

---

11 August 2011

### **Singapore Researchers Get Significant Boost in Rice Research for Regional Food Security**

Researchers from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory (TLL) received a major boost in their research efforts that contribute towards ensuring food security. The Singapore National Research Foundation (NRF) will invest up to SGD\$10 million (US\$8.2 million) over 5 years in a new rice research programme to help ensure there is enough rice to meet the future demands of Singapore and the region.

Provided in the form of a grant from the NRF, the money will support a new joint research programme between NUS and TLL in collaboration with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). The research will address some of the most pressing concerns faced by rice farmers in Asia, especially how rice farming can become better adapted to climate change.

The programme will also seek to develop new rice varieties with built-in protection against diseases, reduce the need for limited inputs like water, thus increasing sustainable rice production and ensuring long-term food security.

IRRI's Deputy Director General for Research Dr. Achim Dobermann said, "We are delighted to see Singapore stepping up as a regional leader with this investment in international rice research."

"We need to be thinking beyond national borders to help tackle food supply issues," he added. "And Singapore is showing real leadership within Asia by doing just that."

Rice cultivation occupies about 140 million hectares in Asia with annual production around 600 million tons. It is a staple food for more than half the world's population, with developing Asian countries equating food security with access to rice supplies. Rice production faces serious constraints due to global environmental changes and ever-increasing demand.

Singapore relies entirely on imported rice and is thus subjected to the fragility of rice supplies and price escalations in international markets. According to IRRI, the world needs to produce 8-10 million tons more rice every year to ensure a reliable supply of rice and keep rice prices affordable. Investments in rice research are essential to provide rice farmers with new rice varieties and smarter ways to grow more rice on less land to ensure and protect future rice supplies in Asia.

The project will be led by **Professor Prakash Kumar** from NUS' Department of Biological Sciences and **Dr Naweed Naqvi** from Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory, Singapore. Prof Kumar said, "This grant from the National Research Foundation will enable our teams to help improve yield and disease resistance in rice, and to adapt the crop to rapidly changing environmental conditions."

"Our collaboration with IRRI will help position Singapore as a strategic partner in regional and global food security. We will now be able to link the excellent research done here in Singapore to many other rice improvement activities worldwide," added Dr Naqvi.

NRF's support for this project will contribute to Singapore's future food security, as well as to regional capacity building, ensuring stability of rice production, and positively influencing agriculture and food related policies.

Additionally, this project positions Singapore as an important partner in the Global Rice Science Partnership ([GRiSP](#)), a new global strategic plan for rice research, led by IRRI in partnership with some 900 organizations worldwide.

### **Fast facts**

- Singapore National Research Foundation awarded up to SGD\$10 million over 5 years to the National University of Singapore and Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory for rice research.
- Singapore depends entirely on rice imports.
- Rice science investments help deliver new varieties and technologies to help farmers grow more rice in an environmentally friendly way.
- This will contribute towards future food security.

*Please refer to [Annex](#) for photograph of the Lead Investigators.*

---

### ***For media queries, please contact:***

Fun Yip  
Office of Corporate Relations  
National University of Singapore  
Tel: +65 6516 1374  
Email [fun.yip@nus.edu.sg](mailto:fun.yip@nus.edu.sg)

Tara Shyam  
IRRI Fund Singapore  
Tel: +65 91122071  
Email [t.shyam@irri.org](mailto:t.shyam@irri.org)

Cheryl Chng  
Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory  
Tel: +65 6872 7068  
Email [cheryl@tll.org.sg](mailto:cheryl@tll.org.sg)

## Annex



Top panel, from left: Prakash Kumar and Naweed Naqvi with Hei Leung, on a field visit at IRRI.