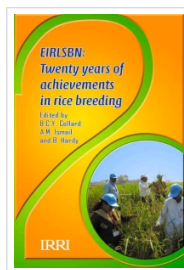


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EIRLSBN: Twenty years of achievements in rice breeding

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Eastern India is an area with a largely agrarian society and high poverty incidence. Rice is the dominant crop, but yields are low. Most of the rice is grown under rainfed conditions in which rainfall is highly unpredictable, and numerous abiotic and biotic stresses occur in combination during all growing seasons. Farmers have limited access to inputs such as fertilizer and good-quality seed. Despite these challenges, a progressive increase in rice production must be maintained, especially within the vast rainfed areas, if India and other Asian countries are to achieve food security.

Considerable progress has been made in developing new rice varieties for eastern India, although the literature on this topic is limited. Evidence for this is the development and release of many new improved varieties. At least 20 of these varieties have been released within the Eastern India Rainfed Lowland Shuttle Breeding Network (EIRLSBN). In addition to producing new varieties, this network has conducted considerable research on many high-priority traits and has identified new donor parents, key maturity groups for the region, elite lines that can be transplanted at normal or delayed times, and target variety profiles for eastern India. More importantly, the network has been an exemplary model for synergistic rice breeding partnerships. It demonstrates the benefits of regional and international scientific collaboration for working to overcome food insecurity. Indeed, it has influenced the formation and structure of many other breeding networks.

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