

Ten steps for farmers to produce their own good seed

1. Select a fertile field.
2. Use clean, good quality seed.
3. Plough, puddle and level the field well to control weeds and improve water management.
4. If transplanting, plant young (15-20 d) seedlings from a healthy, weed-free nursery at 2 per hill at 22.5 cm x 22.5 cm spacing.
5. Apply balanced nutrients (N, P, K, S, Zn) as per crop demand.
6. Keep the crop free of weeds, insect pests, diseases and other varieties.
7. At maximum tillering and flowering, rogue off-types (by plant height, appearance, flowering time, etc.) and poor, diseased or insect damaged plants or plants with discolored panicles.
8. Harvest at full maturity and 20-25% moisture content (80-85% of the grains are straw-colored).
9. Thresh, clean, dry (13% moisture content), grade and label the harvested seed.
10. Store the labeled seed in sealed clean containers in a cool, dry and clean area.

Winnowing to get good seed

Harvested seed includes seed of varying sizes and non-seed matter (e.g., weeds and trash). Full plump (heavier) seed can be selected by winnowing with natural wind or an electric fan. Procedure: Pour seed slowly from a height of 1-1.5 m.

Repeat winnowing if necessary. Select heavier seed closer to the side from which the wind blows. This procedure will also remove lighter weed seed, non-seed matter and partially filled grains.

Drying and storing good seed

After harvest, clean seed and select full and uniform seed. Dry seed to 13% moisture content. Store the seed in sealed airtight containers until ready for planting (seed is good for up to one year if stored properly). Seed in non-airtight containers absorbs moisture and loses viability over time.

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