

HOW TO YIELD BIG FROM RICE FARMING

By Alex Wachira



Farmers at rice farms in Mwea. It takes rice plants four to five months to grow to maturity.

Rice is considered Kenya's third staple food after maize and wheat.

It is actually the seed of a grass species that is an annual plant

To add value to rice it is milled into rice flour.

Raw rice is dried before milling or grinding to make flour which can be used to make pancakes, noodles, thicken soups and stews and as an alternative to wheat flour in cakes and biscuits.

Planting

It takes rice plants four to five months to grow to maturity.

Popular varieties include Basmati, Pishori and aromatic.

There are plenty of rice varieties and they are grown differently as stated by farmlinkkenya.com include

Irrigated varieties: Sindano, Basmati 370, Basmat 217, BW 196, BG-90-2, BR 51-74-6 and IR 2793-80-1, ITA 310

Low land rain fed: Ci Cong Ai, WABIS-675, Jasmine-85, TGR-78

Rain-fed upland: NARIKA 1, NARIKA 4, NARIKA 10, NARIKA 11, TRG-94, Nam Roo, Deurado precece, WAB 181-18

Majority of the rice in Kenya is grown under irrigation in paddy schemes.

Ecological conditions required for rice growing consist of annual rainfall of 800 to 2,000mm, the temperature of 20 to 36 degrees Celsius.



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Rice thrives best in sandy loam to clay soils with a soil PH of 4.5 to 7.0



The land is ploughed about two weeks before sowing and flooding and a raised bed prepared.

Land preparation is carried out by flooding the fields to a depth of 10 cm, 15 days before direct sowing and transplanting seedlings.

Planting should be before the onset of long rains for rainfed rice.

Farm practices carried out to maintain rice on the fields include weeding manually by hand or by using herbicides and crop rotation with legumes such as soybeans and green grams to boost soil fertility.

Pests and diseases

Common diseases known to attack rice as noted by *informationcradle.com* include blast, rice yellow mottle virus, damping off, bacterial leaf blight, sheath blight, sheath rot and brown leaf spot.

Rice pests include stem borers, leaf miners, root cutting insects, white rice borer, birds, stalk-eyed fly, rice sucking bugs, rice root knot nematode and rice leafhopper.

The pests and diseases are controlled by use of appropriate insecticides, cultural methods, planting healthy seeds, crop rotation, observing field hygiene and through biological control.

Harvesting

Rice is harvested between four to six months after planting. It is cut, swathed, threshed, winnowed, dried and stored.

Drying is done to around 12 percent to 14 percent moisture content before storage.

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