

**The Brunt of Rice Imports – A Case for the
Development of Local Rice Production.**

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The brunt of rice imports

A case for the dev. of local rice production

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RICE is life for millions of people. It is deeply embedded in the cultural heritage of their societies. It is the staple food for more than half of the world's population. In Asia alone, more than 2,000 million people obtain 60 to 70 per cent of their calories from rice and its products.

It is the most rapidly growing source of food in Africa, and is of significant importance to food security in an increasing number of low-income food-deficit countries.

Rice-based production systems and their associated post-harvest operations employ nearly 1,000 million people in rural areas of developing countries. About 80 per cent of the world's rice is grown by small-scale farmers in low-income and developing countries.

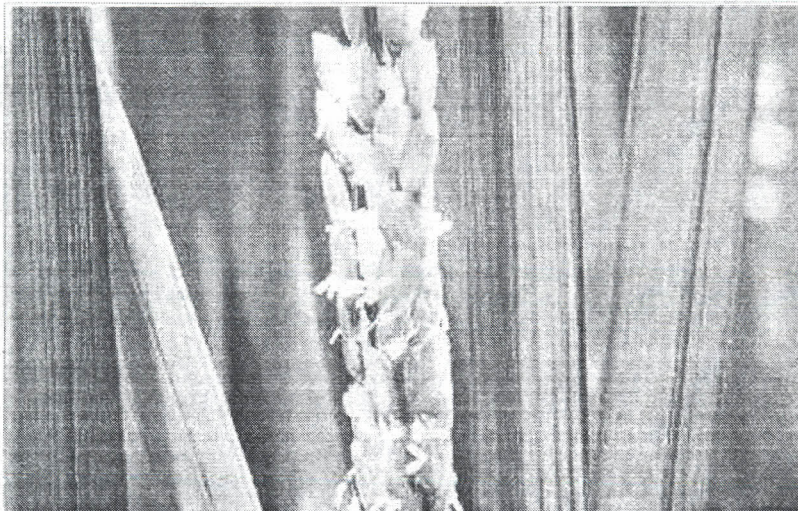
It follows that efficient and productive rice-based production systems are essential for economic development and for improved quality of life of much of the world's population. Improving the productivity of rice systems would contribute to hunger eradication, poverty alleviation, national food security and economic development.

In Ghana, rice is becoming the preferred staple for rural and urban populations due to its availability and convenience. Imported rice contributes significantly to Ghana's trade deficit.

It is estimated that Ghana imports over \$100 million worth of rice annually. The effect of these imports has been that the price and quality of the imported rice dictate the price of locally produced rice.

Currently, about 60 per cent of the total rice production in Ghana is from the three northern regions of the country. Rice grown in these areas is very dry at harvest and yields a very high percentage of broken grain if milled raw.

Consequently, it is usual practice to parboil the rice to gelatinise the starch within the grain so that it becomes harder, thus reducing breakage on milling and rendering it less susceptible to insect attack during storage. Previous studies by the Food Research Institute and its research partners indicated that a prototype parboiling vessel developed (for parboiling of paddy rice) for trial in northern



• Providing some relief to local farmers will boost the local production of rice and reduce imports. Photo: Kokogm.com.

Ghana, has been well received, since it more than doubled the quantity of paddy rice that can be parboiled in a batch (100kg), and reduced the amount of water used by 25 per cent. The quantity of fuel used was also reduced by 50 per cent.

This vessel has, therefore, reduced much of the drudgery currently encountered by the women and reduced the requirement for water and fuel. Processors found the product from the prototype vessel more acceptable than that from the traditional process as it

to provide opportunities for the enhancement of rural livelihoods.

The government of Ghana, like most governments in the developing world, is confronted with the classic policy dilemma of keeping prices low for poor consumers, while keeping them attractive to producers. With the implementation of structural adjustment programmes and, in 1994, with the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, which provided the basis for reduced government intervention and trade

income assistance programmes available to their counterparts in the developed countries.

Ghana is now confronted with the challenge of keeping abreast of the trade liberalisation momentum to reap the benefits associated with a more efficient allocation of resources, while also providing some alleviation to the plight of small producers.

The Food Research Institute under the DFID sponsored a project on "Enhancing rural livelihoods through a new coalition arrangement for the dissemination of improved rice post-production and marketing technologies in Northern Ghana" and produced five training manuals covering generally the requirements of rice quality, the role of farmers, parboilers, millers and marketers.

Forty agricultural extension agents (AEAs) were trained in improved post-production practices and they have in turn, been training the farmers, processors and millers that they are in contact with. The project on the whole trained 250 parboilers, 160 farmers and 100 women in the management of the 18,000 tree seedlings supplied to them to grow as woodlots to provide fuel wood for parboiling.

Innovation systems for post-harvest practices for parboiled rice in northern Ghana disseminated to farmers and processors and the effects of the technologies and practices on the livelihoods of target beneficiaries evaluated indicated significant improvements in the livelihoods of target beneficiaries.

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was of a more uniform colour, had less broken grain and was of a more acceptable flavour.

Adaptations were also made to some of the mini rice mills currently in use in northern Ghana to include aspirators to improve the milled rice quality to command a higher market price. This innovation also eliminated the drudgery and time spent by the women processors in winnowing rice after milling.

Currently, the Food Research Institute and its research partners are undertaking a project to promote the technologies developed and also disseminate knowledge of improved rice post-production and marketing systems in northern Ghana

liberalisation, importation of rice into the country have assumed critical dimensions which have impacted negatively on local rice production.

Under the new international trade environment, world trade in rice is expanding strongly, with a growing number of countries relying on imports to meet their domestic needs, Ghana being a classic example.

While the benefits of the opening to trade have accrued mainly to rice importers and urban consumers by enabling them to buy rice at lower prices, much of the brunt has been borne by the small, poor farmers in the rural communities, who lack the safety nets and