

A Case Study Report on Socio-religious and Commercial Values of Basmati Rice in Nepal

Anjali Mandal

Agriculture and Forestry University, Rampur, Chitwan
Email: anjalimandal200@gmail.com

January 2021



Acknowledgement

Sincere thanks to Dr Bal Krishna Joshi for guidance and support.

Citation

Mandal A. 2021. *A Case Study Report on Socio-religious and Commercial Values of Basmati Rice in Nepal*. Agriculture and Forestry University, Rampur, Chitwan; pp.1-6.

Executive Summary

- Survey was done in Bhardaha and Maleth village of Saptari district of Nepal with the farmers of Basmati rice producer and its users. In these villages, 2 in each Group discussions and altogether 31 households were involved in survey to know whether they were user, producer and consumer of Basmati rice from past or not. Consumers were asked why, how and from when they were using Basmati rice. Farmers or producers of Basmati rice were asked about cultivation of Basmati rice, local varieties of Basmati rice, its yield, hardship of Basmati rice cultivation in present conditions as compared to the past. Farmers were asked from when they were growing Basmati rice.
- Farmers reported that Basmati rice was being under cultivation from past many generations for different purposes. They also informed that in past it was being used by Rich peoples and kings but now by most of all.
- Farmers informed about four local landraces of Basmati rice. Some are with awn and some are awnless, some are with red colour, white colour and black colour.
- People using Basmati rice claimed that Basmati rice is being used not only for rice but also for Socio-religious purposes from ancestry such as in Festivals, fasting, marriage and other ceremonial rituals, decoration, etc.
- According to the farmers, pests invasion, lodging problem, significantly low yield compared to general varieties and hybrids and long duration growing habit; not every farmers grow it as other variety of rice commercially but cultivates at least for social and religious uses.

Introduction

Rice is the most cultivated and stable food of Nepal. Rice ranks in first in production, area under production and most used food crop in case of Nepal. Basmati rice is one of the most scented aromatic fine rice cultivated on the lower belts of churiya range hills and some plains nearby the Koshi river for Socio-religious values, high commercial value and for food consumptions (Joshi et al 2017a, 2017b, 2018, Joshi 2015, Joshi 2005).

The importance of Basmati rice and origin has been in Nepal from very past. Basmati rice is known for its sweet fragrance, fineness, purity, holiness, nutritional values and also being used for consumptions and Socio-religious purposes like festivals, marriage and other ceremonial rituals, decoration, fasting, etc. Local Basmati without genetic deterioration has better quality and market demand than Basmati rice found in shops and hybrids.

Basmati rice are with awn and without awn. Major goal of this case study on Basmati rice is to know the cultivation practices, Genetic variations, basic agronomic requirements for more productions, time of cultivation, Socio-religious and nutritional importance and present conditions of Basmati rice.

Materials and methods

The field, farmers and household survey were done face to face. 2 farmers Group discussions of (5-7) peoples were done and interviews were taken individually from 31 household peoples and farmers on two different locations; Maleth and Bhardaha of Saptari districts. Photos were taken of Basmati rice. Mainly this case study was done by using survey techniques namely Group discussions and individual interviews of household, farmers and few stakeholders.



Lalka basmati with awn.



Genetic variations within basmati rice

Findings and Discussion

From survey and overall case study, following findings were obtained:

A. Use of Basmati rice in Households

Basmati rice is being used from ancient according to the interviewers. In past it was only used by rich peoples but now it's not limited just to rich and king. A kind of high standard status was being maintained in past by the use of Basmati rice. Findings shows that for mentioned reasons Basmati rice were/are being used in households for:

- i. Good quality aromatic rice purpose
- ii. Making pudding
- iii. Food during fasting as handmade beaten rice of Basmati rice "Cheura" in mortar "okhal"
- iv. Making different varieties of food items like "Suhari"; handmade roti on ghee, "puwa"; watery roti made with sugars in oil, Pulao, Dalpuri; pulses gravy sandwiched inside breads made of Basmati rice flour fried in oil.
- v. Making other rice flour scented, it is mixed during flouring.
- vi. Gifting purposes to newly married daughters.

B. Socio-religious values of Basmati Rice

Basmati rice have Antique values from ancient time. Actually, Basmati rice is known as “Aghani” rice in maithili language. It is one of the folk rice of Nepal. It is called so as it is fine, pure long duration rice crop having high nutritional supplements and better qualities like fineness and good aroma. Basmati rice is being used for social purposes in following ways:

- i. In festivals while burning “Diya”; candles in clay pot with oil and cotton, it is not kept directly on floor surface rather “Diyas” are kept on this basmati paddy or basmati rice. It is meant holy.
- ii. In ceremonies like marriage, it is highly used. It is used for making Birth tight bond tying between Bride and groom bonds by putting Basmati paddy on cloth piece and put on both peoples body (janamgath), filling “khuecha”; wrist belt gifted by mother of bride during their departure to grooms house, making “lawar” Basmati rice is made as popcorn on fire by sisters of groom for the throwing on fire god Agni during seven vows , tossing on bridegrooms by elders with blessing to be together and throwing by bride to her loved ones behind her during her departure to grooms house; symbolising that even though Laxmi of home is departing, she wishes blessings for family prosperity, wealth, happiness by the help of Basmati rice.
- iii. In fasting and in all festivals, Basmati rice and food items made from it like as pudding, sohari (its flour roti in ghee, puwa, handmade beaten rice in mortar and puffed rice laddu are being used for praying.
- iv. Beside used as food and in Socio-religious purposes, it’s allso used for decorative purpose. “Gucha”, “Jutti”, sheves are hanging decorative designs made from panicle of basmati rice. It is also used for decorating idols in “Samachakewa”.
- v. Basmati rice is used as “Achata” in prayer and Basmati paddy is used in “Saptabipta” story worshipping.
- vi. In 16 rituals of Nepal this rice is used in each and have great value. During funeral ceremony, on 4th day rice pudding is necessary, which is made up of Basmati rice.
- vii. Basmati rice is thrown in fire during Homan; spiritual vedic worship
- viii. It’s culture of offering food of Basmati rice during the visit of boy family to the girls one, it shows good hospitality, family Tradition and impression to boys family.
- ix. Socially, there is a proverb in maithila “khai xi Madhuwa dhak Basmati ka”, it means that during doing showoff of eating or using high vale and precious basmati rice by eating millets item, to reveal the truth of show off.
- x. Basmati rice has been used in many folk songs of mithila.

C. Commercial purposes

Basmati rice have good local price value of Rs. 150-160 per kg. It is commercially cultivated though it doesn’t produce surplus to import in Global Basmati rice market, it is produced for selling inside country. From findings it is found that Basmati rice yields about 2.4 – 3 ton per hectare. Although production is local variety is low, the quality of aroma, fineness and nutrition is too good.

D. Time Extent of cultivation of Basmati rice

Basmati rice is being used from ancient times by ancestors in festivals, marriages, rituals are more than in present. So it is cultivated from ancient time in Nepal. This rice was offered to rich kings and peoples in past.

E. Seed availability for cultivation

Basmati seeds are selected from previous year field of basmati rice. Old seeds were domesticated in past.

F. Genetic variation within Basmati rice

Altogether 4 local variety of basmati rice, farmers were used to but they prefer more “lalka basmati”, white basmati and “kariya” basmati rice. It was found Basmati rice with awn and without awn. They show high culm height, sweet Aroma from seedlings stage in field. Among all, Red basmati is more under cultivation due to its good performance

G. Soil and climatic requirements

From survey it is found that Basmati rice grows well in heavy black humus rich clayey soils with good drainage system. It is found more productivity in Maleth village as fields lies on belts of churiya hills having heavy humus rich soils than in Bhardaha. Basmati rice require long duration for growing and grows well in fields with good drainage conditions than in flooded conditions as lodging occurs just after flowering and it yields poor.



Conclusion

The production is not enough to export surplus amount of Basmati rice as other countries doesn't mean that Nepal lacks diversity in species of flora and fauna, crops. Traditionally, Socially and Genetically Basmati rice is close to Nepal from very past. Thus, importance must be given in Genetic conservation of local land races of Basmati rice present and exploration of wild varieties of Basmati rice must be taken in action inside Nepal.

References

Joshi BK, F Hay, S Sapkota and K Ebana. 2017b. Nepalese rice around the World. **In:** Rice Science and Technology in Nepal (MN Paudel, DR Bhandari, MP Khanal, BK Joshi, P Acharya and KH

- Ghimire, eds). Crop Development Directorate (CDD), Hariharbhawan and Agronomy Society of Nepal (ASoN), Khumaltar, pp.221-240.
http://cddnepal.gov.np/downloadfile/Rice_science_and_technology_1512106674.pdf
- Joshi BK, P Shrestha, D Gauchan and R Vernoooy, eds. 2018. Community Seed Banks in Nepal. 2nd National Workshop Proceedings, 3-5 May 2018, Kathmandu Nepal; NAGRC, LI-BIRD and Bioersivity International; Kathmandu, Nepal. <http://himalayancrops.org/project/community-seed-banks-in-nepal-2nd-national-workshop-proceedings/>
- Joshi BK. 2015. Rice and wheat gene pools in Nepal (1959-2002). National Agriculture Genetic Resources Center, NARC, Khumaltar.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321309500_Rice_and_wheat_gene_pools_in_Nepal_1959-2002
- Joshi BK. 2005. Rice gene pool for Taria and Inner Tarai areas of Nepal. Nepal Agric. Res. J. 6:10-23.
http://www.narc.org.np/publicaton/pdf/journal/Vol6/rice_gene_pool_tarai_and_inner_tarai_areas_nepal.pdf
- Joshi BK. 2017a. Local germplasm of rice in Nepal: Diversity, characters and uses. **In:** Rice Science and Technology in Nepal (MN Paudel, DR Bhandari, MP Khanal, BK Joshi, P Acharya and KH Ghimire, eds). Crop Development Directorate (CDD), Hariharbhawan and Agronomy Society of Nepal (ASoN), Khumaltar, pp.158-178.
http://cddnepal.gov.np/downloadfile/Rice_science_and_technology_1512106674.pdf

The end