

# INDIA UNVEILS NEW RICE VARIETY TO CUT DOWN ON USE OF WATER, LABOUR

Relevant for: Economy | Topic: Food processing and related industries in India: scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements and supply chain management

**NEW DELHI** : India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday launched an array of new high-yielding crop varieties, including herbicide-tolerant rice that can be directly sown into the soil, cutting expenditure on water and farm workers.

In India, the world's biggest rice exporter, the conventional method of rice cultivation requires farmers to sow seeds in nurseries and then wait for 20 to 30 days before manually transplanting the seedlings into plantation fields that are ankle-deep in water.

With the new seed varieties, developed by the state-run Indian Agricultural Research Institute, farmers only need to irrigate the field once to moisten the soil before sowing the [rice](#).

The conventional cultivation method also uses a lot of water to control weeds as herbicides are costly and often do not distinguish between the rice and the unwanted vegetation.

Government scientists said the new rice varieties contain a gene that would allow farmers to spray a common, inexpensive herbicide without worrying about any side effects.

"Our focus is very high on more nutritious seeds, that can be adopted to new conditions, especially in changing climates," Modi said.

Water conservation is likely to be the main attraction of the new rice varieties in India, where farmers rely heavily on monsoon rains.

The conventional method uses 3,000 to 5,000 litres of water to produce 1 kg of rice. The new varieties could cut water use by at least 50% to 60%, farmers and government officials say.

"For farmers like us, the main concern was the management of weeds, and the new varieties take care of that concern," said Ravindra Kajal, who grows rice on his 9-acre (3.6-hectare) plot in the northern state of Haryana.

India is also the world's biggest rice producer after China.

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