

## Promising rice variety for semi-dry cultivation



**The progressive farmer, Thulasiraman (left) showing the bountiful crop to a visitor.**

A PROGRESSIVE farmer in Kancheepuram district of Tamil Nadu has successfully harvested 4.8 tonnes of paddy a hectare from a promising long-duration variety. The variety `J-18', developed by the `J'-Farm, Pudupakkam near Kelambakkam in Kancheepuram district, performed exceedingly well, and yielded good quality grains and lengthy straw with thrifty use of water, according to Mr. S.S. Nagarajan, Senior Vice President (Agricultural Research), J-Farm.

### **Pest resistant**

The crop grew healthy with the application of neem cake mixed nutrients, and was free from major pests and diseases of rice. Interestingly, the duration of the crop was less by about 35 days than its normal age of 180 days, when it was raised in semi-dry conditions. The cost of weeding was low, and there was no expenditure on plant protection.

### **Cultivation cost**

The cost of cultivation of this variety was far lower compared to the other ruling varieties grown in semi-dry conditions, according to Mr. K.R. Thulasiraman, the progressive farmer of Vallakottai village in Sriperumbudur taluk, who took up `J -18' cultivation under the guidance of Mr. Nagarajan.

The farmer could not take up sowing at the right time (July-August), and was delayed by a month. In spite of it, the variety did well, and grew vigorously in his 0.8-hectare plot. There was no lodging, and the panicles bore well-filled grains.

### **Late sowing**

It is found ideally suited for late sowing, and its reduced duration under semi-dry conditions is another desirable trait. It yielded 4.8 tonnes of grains per hectare, and the long (1.6 m) and stiff straw was sold as roofing material.

The straw from a hectare fetched Rs. 5,000, according to Mr. Thulasiraman. The total cost of cultivation

was Rs. 12,500 per hectare, and the crop ensured a net profit of Rs. 30,000 per hectare last season. Semi-dry cultivation of rice is widely practiced in Kancheepuram, Ramanathapuram, Pudukottai and Kanyakumari districts of Tamil Nadu. It involves direct seeding with traditional bullock-drawn implements such as 'guntaka', and covering the seeds immediately. The crop duration extends from July-August to December-January.

#### **Dry crop**

The first phase (the vegetative phase) of the crop is raised as a dry crop, and second phase is synchronised to take advantage of the northeast monsoon.

"It is raised with limited water available in the local tanks, and is practiced in tracts with scarce labour, where nursery raising and transplanting will be prohibitively expensive," explains Mr. Nagarajan.

#### **Unwanted vegetation**

Weed menace is a major problem in semi-dry cultivation. But this variety, with its vigorous growth habit, has suppressed the unwanted vegetation, and effected a natural weed management. Its response to organic nutrition, and in-built resistance to pests and diseases also helped in reducing the cost of cultivation. Its early maturity in semi-dry conditions, fine grains and long straw make it an ideal substitute to the existing varieties grown as semi-dry crop.

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