



Sahyadri Megha: New Paddy Variety

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Why in News

The University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga (Karnataka), has developed a new variety of paddy, 'Sahyadri Megha'.

The University has developed the new variety to prevent decline in the area under paddy cultivation.

Reasons Behind Developing the New Variety

- Paddy growers are switching over to commercial crops like arecanut, ginger and rubber for lucrative returns.
The area under paddy that was around 1.5 lakh hectares in Shivamogga district in 1990, has come down to around 1.05 lakh hectares.
- The '**Jyothi**' variety which is widely cultivated in the command areas of the Bhadra and the Tunga reservoirs and in semi-arid areas in Sorab, Shikaripur, Hanagal and Sirsi taluks in Karnataka has become vulnerable to blast disease and other infestations.
- Demand by customers in urban areas for red rice which is rich in fibre and protein.
The red variety gets its rich colour from an antioxidant called **anthocyanins**, which are also found in deep purple or reddish fruits and vegetables. The compound is believed to have properties that can reduce inflammation, allergy, prevent risks of cancer and help in weight management.

Sahyadri Megha

- Sahyadri Megha is a red variety of paddy that is **resistant to blast disease and rich in nutrients**.
- It was developed under the **hybridization breeding method** by cross-breeding the best among the '**Jyothi**' variety with that of '**Akkalu**', a disease-resistant and protein-rich paddy variety.

- The new variety will be notified under the **Indian Seed Act 1966** shortly after which it will become part of the seed chain.
- **Key Attributes**
 - The **protein content in it is 12.48%, higher** than the other red rice varieties grown.
 - The **yield per hectare** from 'Sahyadri Megha' is around 65 quintals, substantially higher than other red paddy varieties.
 - It is a **medium-term paddy** that can be grown when there is a delay in the onset of monsoon. It can be **harvested after 120 days of sowing**.

Blast Disease

- It is caused by **fungus Pyricularia grisea (P. oryzae)**.
- Also known as **rotten neck or rice fever**.
- First recorded in India during 1918.
- Expected grain loss : 70 to 80%.

Source : TH