



Pokkali Rice: Kerala

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Why in News

Farmers in West Bengal are experimenting with the pokkali variety of rice to tide over a crisis-like situation created by severe seawater incursion into paddy fields in the Sundarbans (owing to Cyclone Amphan).

Vyttila-11 varieties of pokkali seedlings were brought from Kerala.

Key Points

- The pokkali variety of rice is **known for its saltwater resistance** and flourishes in the rice paddies of coastal **Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts of Kerala**.
 - The **single-season paddy** is raised in saltwater fields between June and November followed by a season of fish-farming.
- The uniqueness of the rice has brought it the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** and is the subject of continuing research.
 - Several foreign research institutes, including the **International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines**, have been studying pokkali's gene pools and have identified a portion of DNA on one of its chromosomes that is crucial for salt tolerance.
- Given its ability to thrive under harsh climatic conditions and produce high yield, it can help in promoting **climate-resilient agriculture**.
- Pokkali has **medicinal properties** and its **higher value of antioxidants** and **low carbohydrate content** makes it preferable to those on a low sugar diet.
- **Vyttila-11** is the latest variety of pokkali developed by the **Kerala Agricultural University**.
 - It yields about **5 tonnes per hectare**.
 - The crop duration is about **110 days**.
- **Other GI Tag Registered Varieties from Kerala:** Kaipad, Wayanad Jeerakasala, Wayanad Gandhakasala, Palakkadan Matta and Navara.

- Further, the **Kuttanad below-sea level farming system** has been recognised by the **Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)** as a **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS)**.

It is unique as it practices **rice cultivation below sea level**.

Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems

- Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) was started by the FAO to safeguard and support the world's agricultural heritage systems.
- GIAHS are outstanding landscapes of aesthetic beauty that combine agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems and a valuable cultural heritage.
- **Three recognised GIAHS sites in India:**
 - **Pampore Saffron** Heritage of **Kashmir**.
 - **Koraput Traditional Agriculture** of **Odisha**.
 - **Kuttanad Below Sea Level Farming System** of **Kerala**.

Source: TH