

## BENEO joins forces in ambitious sustainable rice farming project in Vietnam

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BENEO, a leading manufacturer of functional ingredients for food, feed and pharma is partnering with international non-governmental organisation, Rikolto, and climate technology company, CarbonFarm, to launch a three-year project, funded by the Government of Flanders, promoting sustainable rice production in Vietnam.

As one of the world's largest rice exporters, Vietnam relies heavily on this staple crop for both economic stability and food security. However, the industry faces significant challenges related to sustainability, climate and environmental impact. Globally, rice cultivation practices account for around 10% of anthropogenic methane emissions and more than a third of irrigation water worldwide. Vietnam's farming sector struggles with inefficient water use, overapplication of fertilisers and pesticides, and the burning of rice residues – all of which contribute to soil degradation, biodiversity loss, and higher greenhouse gas emissions.

Sustainable rice production can almost halve greenhouse gas emissions and reduce water usage by 30%, without any loss in yield. To reduce the environmental impact of rice production and encourage the transition to sustainable, climate-resilient rice cultivation, an integrated approach is essential. This is the driving force behind the new project launched by BENEO and its partners. Funded by the Government of Flanders with approximately 800,000 Euros, it is part of the Flanders International Climate Action Programme.

The project, which kicked off in April during a Belgian state visit to Vietnam, will train at least 1,000 farmers in Vietnam's Mekong Delta as of summer 2025 on sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural practices in line with the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) standards. This includes guidance on efficient water management and responsible use of pesticides and fertilizers, with demonstration fields used to showcase practical applications of sustainable rice farming. Innovative technologies, such as satellites and digital logbooks, will be used to monitor the farming practices and scientifically measure emissions and water usage.

As part of the project collaboration, BENEIO is responsible for developing the market for SRP-certified rice ingredients, with Rikolto leading the training of Vietnamese farmers and CarbonFarm, a climate-tech company focused on decarbonising rice cultivation, will deploy digital and satellite tools to support data collection, sustainability assessments, and project validation.

BENEIO's production site in Wijgmaal, Belgium, will process the SRP-certified rice into high-quality starch, flour and protein ingredients for the food and pet food industries. BENEIO aims to process at least 10,000 tonnes of sustainably grown rice throughout the three-year project, with the first rice volumes expected to be available in the autumn of 2025. BENEIO is already sourcing SRP-certified rice from other origins, ensuring manufacturers can use BENEIO's high-quality ingredients to optimise texture and nutritional composition in a wide range of products.

By developing the market for SRP-certified rice ingredients, an innovative value chain model is being scaled up, connecting small-scale farmers to markets, and creating additional incentives for cultivating sustainable rice. The initiative contributes to BENEIO's sustainability strategy, the "Healthy Planet Plan", and reflects its commitment to promoting sustainable agriculture, supporting farmers, and providing environmentally and socially responsible solutions to the market.

Roland Vanhoegaerden, Operations Managing Director for Specialty Rice Ingredients at BENEIO, comments: "This initiative clearly demonstrates BENEIO's dedication to climate mitigation actions, sustainability and its proactive approach to addressing global challenges through innovative solutions. We are proud and excited to leverage BENEIO's longstanding expertise in producing and marketing functional ingredients in collaboration with our project partners and Vietnamese farmers to reduce the environmental impact of rice production."