

Central African nation Burundi gets eleven new and improved rice varieties

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Recently, the Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Burundi (ISABU) released eleven new and improved rice varieties that are resilient to climate change, disease-tolerant, high yielding with great nutritional value, and with good grain quality. These rice varieties were released in collaboration with the International Rice Research Institute-Burundi under World Bank's variety development program through the Great Lakes Regional Integrated Agriculture Development Project (Projet Régional de Développement Agricole Intégré dans les Grands Lacs or PRDAIGL). Moving forward, ISABU will provide breeder seeds to individuals or groups of farmers who intend to produce basic seeds each season. Commercial seeds will also be multiplied by producers who eventually will sell them to farmers. On July 26, 2022, the members of the governing agency for seed chain in Burundi such as the CTNHV (Commission Technique Nationale d'Homologation Variétale - National Technical Committee for Variety release) met in Bujumbura to analyse the results of the Distinctive Homogeneity Stability and Agronomic and Technological Value trials presented by the Burundian authority responsible for seed control and certification, Office National de Control et de Certification des Semences (ONCCS). The eleven released varieties include two (2) high-zinc rice varieties, two (2) aromatic supa type varieties, three (3) high-yielding long rain varieties, three (3) drought-tolerant varieties, and one (1) variety tolerant to rice yellow mottle virus (RYMV), an endemic virus affecting many African rice-cultivating areas. These new rice varieties will be a crucial addition to the Burundi farmers' cropping system that relies on local cultivars. The released aromatic varieties once grown by farmers at high scale will reduce the volume of imported aromatic rice from Tanzania and help the country save currencies needed for importation. On the other hand, the RYMV-resistant varieties will be grown to replace the RYMV-susceptible varieties in the Western and Eastern part of the country. As for zinc biofortified lines, they will add nutritional value and help kids' growth in the families where rice is the main source of food," said Julie Nduwimana, a researcher at IRRI Burundi.



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