

IRC Contributed Event

Feminization of agriculture, rice-farming women's health, and implications for agricultural productivity

Time and venue

Monday 15th October 2018 afternoon at 14.30-16.00 hours
Orchid Rm4206, Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Singapore

Moderator

Ms. Minh Le, Oxfam's Global Agriculture Advisor

Panelists

- Ms. Sabarmatee, Founder and Secretary, Sambhav, NGO, Odisha, India
- Dr. David Dawe, Senior Economist, FAO's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
- Dr. Ranjitha Puskur, Theme Leader, Catalysing Innovation for Health, Equity and Resilience, International Rice Research Institute
- Ms Sarojeni Regnam, Executive Director, Pesticide Action Network Asia and Pacific (PAN-AP)
- Dr. Pascal Gbenou, Rice Farmer; Chairman, Framework of the West African Network of Farmers and Agricultural Producers Organizations (ROPFA); and Founder, SAIN agricultural farm school, Benin

Background

More women are engaged in rice cultivation than in any other single livelihood activity, as many as half a billion women or more. Their knowledge, skill and labor produce not only food and income for their families but contribute to global food stocks. Cultivating rice is physically demanding work throughout the cropping season and performed in hot, wet and unsanitary conditions. Current research and development strategies tend to focus on improving rice productivity through new seeds and agrochemical inputs, assuming the availability of cheap or unpaid female labor, and introducing new inputs or technologies without adequate consideration for their impact on women's time, poverty or health, nor addressing deeply-rooted social norms that prevent women from gaining greater economic independence and improving their well-being. This side event aims to contribute to the debate of "transformative science" through the lenses of multiple stakeholders and how science and practice can move the rice sector toward greater productivity through improved gender-parity.

Program overview

Following a brief video greeting by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, the moderator will introduce the panelists and a short video about the impact of rice farming on women's bodies. Panelists will then be invited to make brief comments about their perspectives and experiences related to trends in the feminization of agriculture and in rice, and implications for farm productivity and food security. Topics will include effects of the use of pesticides, working conditions for women, labor issues, mechanization effects, and benefits of farmer-led innovations like System of Rice Intensification. This will be followed by two rounds of questions for the panelists about how to integrate women's health concerns and gender inequality aspects into research and policy, with a 10-minute question and answer session after each round. The session will conclude with a summary of key points.