

Category	: International Rice Research Conference
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Keyword 1	: Farmers' perspectives
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Title of Entry	: Trait preferences of rice varieties in South Asia: A gender analysis
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Abstract : The adoption of new varieties is not only driven by high yield/income but also by other considerations defined by the roles women and men play in farms and households and, their access to resources. Not accounting for these could result in low or discontinued adoption. In Bangladesh, the adoption rates of new stress-tolerant rice varieties remain low ranging from 9-27% (Ahmed et al. 2016). Understanding farmer trait preferences to inform demand-driven breeding requires understanding context-driven gendered differences in access to resources and assets, and roles. Other intersectional factors like income also come into play influencing preferences. This paper examines the varietal preferences among men and women farmers based on a household survey conducted in seven divisions of Bangladesh and five districts of Odisha, India with samples of 1,500 households each. Findings in Bangladesh and Odisha show that women and men have similar preferences for traits but only differ in ranking. In Bangladesh, men are more likely than women to prefer production and agronomic traits such as high yield, easy selling, and shorter duration. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to mention product/culinary traits including good taste, high milling recovery, white color and non-glutinous rice. Low income groups prefer traits that will support their food security such as more tillers, easy selling, good taste, and shorter maturity. The higher income groups generally prefer market-oriented traits including high milling recovery, higher market price, and fodder for livestock as they sell higher proportion of produce and own more cattle. Unlike Bangladesh, women in Odisha are more likely than men to prefer agronomic traits. This could be explained by their high participation (71%) in crop production trainings. Poorer households focus on disease resistance, reduced weed incidence, drought and submergence tolerance to protect their yield and support their food security, while those above poverty line prefer milling quality as they sell a higher proportion. It is critical to have a nuanced understanding of gendered trait preferences, so breeding programs can respond to the real needs and demands of end users and this would contribute to higher and continued adoption.

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