

Self-sufficiency in our rice needs: a small step towards a large goal

Annapurna is Auroville's biggest rice-producing farm. Tomas, one of the stewards, is the convener of the grain group and is deeply committed to Auroville's vision of self-sufficiency in food. Annapurna also maintains the Foodlink granary and procures, processes and stores grain from other Auroville - and some bioregional farms.

Achieving self-sufficiency in rice production and demand is by no means an easy task but not an impossible one. There are many facets to this challenge, and each of these challenges will have to be separately tackled to achieve the goal.

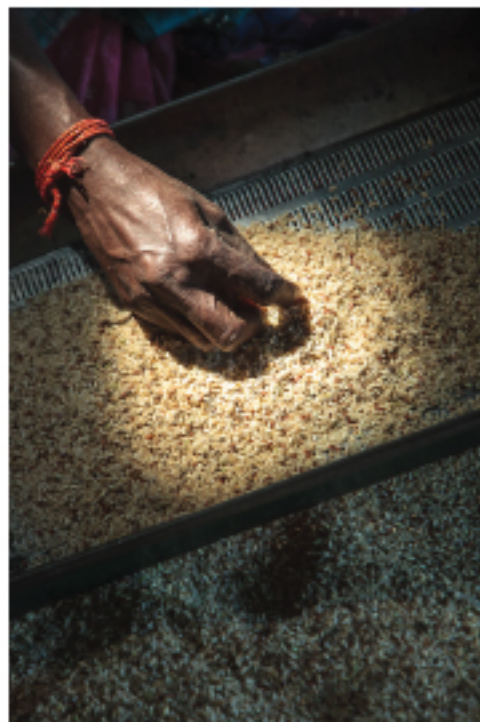
Because of the decentralized nature of Auroville, it is difficult to obtain data on how much rice (from Auroville or from outside) is being consumed by Aurovilians. In recent years fluctuations in demand have currently led to a shortfall in supply in Auroville grown organic Ponni rice at Solar Kitchen and Pour Tous Distribution Center (PTDC). **This year, we have taken up the objective of meeting the needs of the community for boiled/raw Ponni rice.**

The community's current demand for this kind of rice is approx. 9,500 kg/year as measured in terms of consumption at the Solar Kitchen and two distribution/sales outlets at PTDC and Foodlink. At pres-

ent, the Auroville farms produce about 6,000 kg boiled/raw Ponni rice per year. So a shortfall of 3500kg will have to be filled. Auroville's rice producing farms are right now doing efforts to increase their production to fulfill that demand in the years to come.

As we work towards the larger vision of self-sufficiency in rice, there will be an increased need for infrastructure that will have to be met over time. With increasing labour prices there is a need for further mechanization on the cultivation side. Processing by machine needs to be developed further, and storage space will also have to be increased to cater to the additional demand. At Annapurna we have a destoner, dehusker, polisher and gravity separator to process the paddy into rice, but the setup is done over many years and is not really well integrated. There is still a considerable amount of hand labor involved which need to be brought back and the process has to be developed to work more efficiently and improve the quality of the end product.

At Annapurna, a few more acres of irrigated rice cultivation (currently under development) can still be managed with the existing infrastructure, but to increase cultivation further would probably necessitate the digging of a new bore well and increasing the storage available.



Apart from Annapurna, rice is grown on large scale in Siddhartha Farm and Ayarpadi. All paddy (rice in the husk) goes after harvest to Annapurna. Here the grain is cleaned, dried and bagged and goes into storage. Total paddy production in recent years is around 27,400 kg, which after milling gives approximately 17,800 kg of rice. To ensure freshness, paddy is taken out of storage for milling into rice, only when there is an order for it.



Paddy is processed in different ways:

- **Complete rice (red and brown varieties):** where only the husk is removed from the kernel
- **Raw rice (Ponni varieties):** where the husk, bran and germ are removed from the kernel
- **Par-boiled rice (Ponni varieties):** where paddy is soaked, steamed and re-dried before husk, bran and germ are removed.

Fresh News from the farm ... Updates and short info



This is Kasthuri, she has been with us since around 20 years. She first has worked as a casual amma and has been regularly employed since 2004. She is a widow, comes from Sedarapet and is our senior grain processing lady in both age and skill. According to the records she is 57 years young.

Team



Rice harvest was done this year primarily by hand with some combine harvester. We harvested around 18000 kg paddy which will give us 10-12000 kg rice.



In February, Fred came out for a drone session. He flew his machine over the crop fields, orchard, dairy, ponds and buildings. The farm looks wonderful from above!



Visits

A group of students in Deepanam school decided they would like to learn more about cereal growing. They made two visits to Annapurna: one in November to look at rice planting and one in January to look at rice harvesting. They also had the opportunity to look at the machines necessary to process the rice once it was harvested. The students learnt a lot from growing their own small rice and millet patches in the school garden. by Priya, Buddha Garden



As kick-off for the Sunday farm and forest walks, Annapurna welcomed more than 100 visitors. Before starting the farm tour, we invited our guests to taste 5 different yoghurts in order to choose their favorite. On other occasions, we had a tasting session at PTDC and also at TLC school. Yoghurt 401 with its creamy and mild taste was the favorite and is now in production and for sale. by Isabelle for AV GreenCenter and Support group



With the Aspiration Program, we were once again welcomed at Annapurna. We brought our good mood and curiosity and were received with an amazing lunch. Tomas shared his personal journey and of course we walked around, learning more in detail about the different aspects of Annapurna and all the hard work that is done there. We went home inspired and in awe of the Annapurna team. Please let us all support Annapurna Farm!
by Karen for Aspiration Team