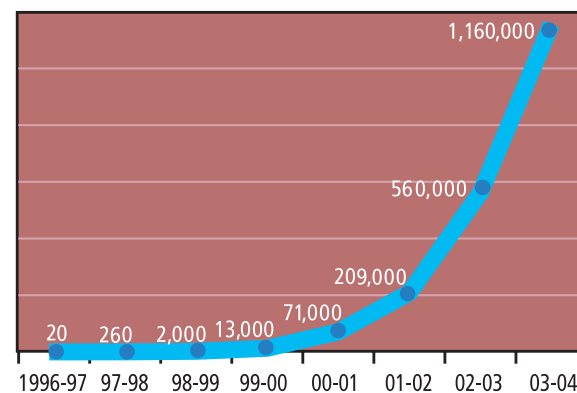


Transforming Agriculture in South Asia with Technologies that Benefit Farmers and the Environment



Through RWC efforts, hundreds of thousands of farmers in the Indo-Gangetic Plains have begun using ecological farming practices that save time, fuel, water, and other inputs, and foster more diverse cropping. These include reduced tillage, use of raised soil beds to grow wheat, rice, and other food and cash crops, surface seeding, and making better use of fallow lands.

The transformation has just begun. The Indo-Gangetic Plains is home to nearly 1 billion people, many of whom live in extreme poverty. Stagnating yields, declining productivity, and degrading soil and water resources are threatening the rice-wheat cropping rotation from which countless inhabitants derive their food and livelihoods. Rice-wheat systems occupy 13.5 million hectares across the region, and thus significantly impact on the environment.



Thanks to RWC efforts, farmers on nearly 1.2 million ha sowed their wheat seed directly into harvested rice paddies without plowing, during the 2003-04. Net benefits in India and Pakistan through higher yields and lower land preparation costs amounted to more than USD 100 million in winter 2003 alone. The practice saves more than 50 liters of diesel per hectare—representing 75 million liters region-wide, worth more than USD 40 million yearly—and helps avoid the release of huge amounts of greenhouse gases.

The Rice Wheat Consortium for the Indo-Gangetic Plains (RWC) includes the national agricultural research systems of Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan; several international centers of the CGIAR (CIMMYT, IRRI, ICRISAT, CIP, IWMI, and recently AVRDC) and various advanced international institutions (Cornell University, IAC, Wageningen, IACR, Rothamsted, CABI-UK, CSIRO, ACIAR, and the IAEA). The Consortium was established in 1994 as an Ecoregional Initiative of the CGIAR. In 1998, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) was assigned convening and leadership responsibilities.

RWC Support

Over the years a consortium of generous partners has supported the RWC, including the following:

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- The Directorate General, International Cooperation of the Government of the Netherlands (DGIS).
- The CGIAR Finance Committee (support obtained with help from the World Bank).
- The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).
- The Department for International Development, UK (DFID).
- The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- New Zealand, through what is now known as NZAID, and in collaboration with Massey University.

National research systems of the participating countries have also provided funding and significant in-kind support for RWC activities, and international centers like CIMMYT and IRRI have drawn on their own unrestricted funds to ensure that work goes forward.

