

## **Success of Rizana in SRI cultivation to influence Government agricultural program in the Eastern Province**

Mohammed Ismail Rizana, a woman farmer in Ampara District, has achieved almost 80 bushels of rice harvest from her half-acre paddy field by adopting SRI rice cultivation methods. This was demonstrated in a public crop-cut survey conducted by the Department of Agriculture with the participation of the Deputy Director of Agriculture in Ampara District, the Research Officer-in-Charge for the Department of Agriculture Samanthurai, and Agricultural Instructors for the Addalachenai area. This is almost a 45% increase over the average rice yields in this area.

Rizana, mother of one boy and two girl children (5, 8 and 4 years, respectively), used to cultivate her half-acre field every season. It fulfilled the rice requirements of her family for most of the year (most families in rural Sri Lanka eat rice for all three meals).

*“But gradually it became a problem. Increasing crop diseases and pest attacks required more and more chemical fertilizers, pesticides and weedicides. But the prices of these inputs have increased rapidly, and we can’t afford them anymore. Recently the weather patterns started to change also. Last year we had large floods in the area. We were not able to cope with those changes too. With the changes in the climate, most farmers here are facing water shortages too. We had no other option than giving up our paddy field.”*

But the new system gives her a new hope,

*“For SRI method, I don’t need any chemical fertilizers or pesticides. So that saves me a lot of money. SRI system requires less water, so I can cope up with the water shortages too.*

*“Under this system, the paddy plants are growing stronger, and they are resistance for pest attacks and diseases, I can see that in my field. So I don’t need to put much of external inputs, other than some organic fertilizers. With the gradual increase of soil fertility, I will be able to reduce them too. This system also required a lesser amount of seed paddy, which also saved me money.*

*“Now I’m getting an increased harvest, my children will eat poison-free rice, and they will be healthier. I can use the increased income for the betterment of my children.”*

Human Elevation Organisation (HEO), an OXFAM Australia Partner in Ampara which introduced the SRI technology to Rizana and other community members in Addalachenai, has organized a field visit for government agricultural officers in Ampara District to come see the field of Rizana. Yaseen Iqbal, Research Officer-in-Charge for the Department of Agriculture in Samanthurai, said:

*“Whole world is facing a food crisis. We have to rethink our agricultural practices. Without protecting nature, we won’t be able to face the crisis. This is an important approach in addressing the food security and environmental conservation needs of the country. As Government officials, we are also quite keen in promoting these kinds of techniques among farmers. We are more than willing to work with communities and civil society organizations to promote environmental-friendly agricultural practices.”*

M.I. Ziyath, the government's Agricultural Instructor of the area, is also convinced by the success of Rizana. *"We will work to promote these kinds of sustainable agricultural systems in the area. We have already initiated a sustainable paddy production society of farmers. We have more than 40 members in it now. Next season, all of them will cultivate at least ½ acre each, using environmental-friendly agricultural practices. We are going to start a compost fertilizer production plant in these areas. Through that plant we will be able to produce 30 metric tons of organic fertilizers to cater the needs of the farmers."*

OXFAM Australia through its Food Security and Sustainable Livelihood Program is promoting SRI cultivation as a means of ensuring food security for the most marginalized communities in the country. At the moment, OXFAM Australia is working with more than 400 farmers in promoting SRI cultivation.



Rizana with a SRI plant



The crop-cut survey in front of government officers



Research officer and OAu Program Manager in the field

**(Article provided to SRI-Rice by Chaminda Fernando, 2012)**