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**Growing** **and processing top quality rice will get you top money**

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**Notes to broadcaster**

These days, consumers are demanding more for their money and there is a lot of competition between local produce and foreign imports. So rice farmers have to produce a high quality product if they want to sell it at a good price. The following script highlights several important practices, including planting advice and storage recommendations that will help farmers improve the quality of their rice. With top quality rice to sell, they will have more confidence when promoting and marketing their crop. Customers will also more readily approach those farmers who offer good quality products.

*Signature tune to introduce program*

**Host 1:** Good morning, dear listeners of Radio Agro Canal. Today we’re going to talk about how you can get top money for your rice crop. It’s well known that African consumers are getting more demanding when it comes to their food, and especially their rice. A lot of people don’t even have time anymore to sort and clean their rice before cooking it.

**Host 2:** That’s right. So if you’re a rice farmer and you want to sell your rice for a high price, you have to make sure it’s a top quality product that customers will want to buy. It needs to be clean, with no dirt or sand in it, and easy to cook.

**Host 1:** Yes, and we want consumers to buy our local rice, which is better for our health and the local economy. To get high quality rice, there are several things you’re going to have to do. Plant only one variety per plot, harvest at the right time, keep different varieties separate at all times, and make sure there is no sand or dirt in the rice. Lastly, remember to always use the most effective methods to dry and store the rice.

**Host 2:** Let’s start by talking about rice varieties. When it’s time to plant, take care not to mix the seeds of different varieties. Otherwise, you’ll get all shapes and sizes when you harvest, and that will cause problems during milling. The smallest grains will pass without being milled if the calibration of the grader is wide. Or, if the calibration is small, the big grains will break before passing through the sieve.

**Host 1:** So rice isn’t like maize, and it shouldn’t be mixed at planting. If you have several varieties you want to grow, plant only one variety in each plot. That will make milling easier.

**Host 2:** If you take this advice and plant a different variety on each plot, you’ll have to make sure the varieties stay separate at harvest time. You should thresh, dry and store them separately to have a uniform product at milling. If you mix up the different varieties, the rice is difficult to cook because each variety has its own cooking time.

**Host** **1:** The next thing we should mention is the timing of your harvest. If you harvest too early, the rice will contain too many green grains. These grains will turn into flour when you mill them.

**Host 2:** That’s true. But on the other hand, don’t wait until the panicles become too dry. The right time to harvest is five weeks after flowering, or five weeks after the appearance of the panicle. You can easily see this yourself.

**Host** **1:** The change in the colour of the grain is probably the best way to tell that your rice is ready to harvest. Usually, it’s ready when the colour of almost all the grains shifts from green to fairly straw-coloured. This partly depends on the variety of rice.

**Host 2:** So let’s say it’s five weeks after flowering and it’s time for threshing. Threshing is the process of separating the paddy from the panicles. It’s at this time, during threshing, that sand and bits of dirt can get into the rice and really ruin it.

**Host 1:** However, if you are careful, it is possible to avoid these contaminants in the rice. First, threshing has to be done in a clean place. It may be on a tarpaulin, on sewn bags that you spread on the ground, or on cemented soil.

**Host 2:** That’s right. In some parts of Benin, farmers thresh manually on a tarpaulin under a mosquito net. In this way, they avoid mixing the grains of different varieties and keep dirt out of the rice. Even if they have a pedal thresher or power thresher, they still work on a tarpaulin so that dust and dirt doesn’t get into the rice.

**Host 1:** But all that is not enough. Winnowing has to be done repeatedly after threshing to ensure that all the contaminants are removed from the rice.

**Host 2:** Before we go further, let’s quickly summarize all the steps we’ve mentioned so far.

**Host 1:** Okay, we’ve explained why mixing varieties should be avoided, when to harvest, and how threshing should be done so you don’t get dirt in the grain.

**Host 2:**  That’s right. But these precautions alone do not always ensure good quality rice. We still have to dry and store the grain. Indeed, without these last two steps, you cannot be sure you will get high quality rice.

**Host 1:** Let’s talk about the best way to dry rice.

**Host 2:** If you dry your rice on the ground or at the roadside, impurities may get into the rice. It’s much better to dry your rice on a tarpaulin. And remember, at all times avoid mixing different varieties.

**Host 1:** Don’t dry the rice for too long under the sun. If the rice becomes too dry, it breaks. Instead, dry your rice for just a couple of hours in the sun, making sure you turn it over every now and then so it dries evenly. After a few hours, continue drying it in the shade.

**Host 2:** To make sure the rice is dry enough, take a bit of it and rub it between your hands. If the hull rubs off easily, this means the rice has the right dryness. You can also take a grain and test it with your teeth. If it crunches, then the rice is dry and ready for storage.

**Host 1:** Even if your rice has dried well,you can’t be sure of its quality. You have to make sure that your storage place does not allow moisture to enter the rice. If you’re not careful, the rice can take on more moisture and grow mouldy. For example, this could happen if you store rice directly on the soil, even cemented soil.

**Host 2:** So it’s definitely not a good idea to store paddy directly on the ground. Instead, make sure there is a barrier between the rice and the soil. For example, when you store rice in a bag and put it on top of some dry wood, it preserves well and does not decay. Make sure to leave a space between the bags so that air can flow around them and pests can be easily controlled.

**Host 1:** Remember that all of these practices must also be followed during and after milling. They will help you to better conserve your milled rice.

*Fade out background music and hold under host*

**Host 2:** Processing and storing high quality rice is the best way to compete with imported rice.Dear rice growers, collectors and processors, now that we have talked to you about the best practices to improve rice quality, please go ahead with producing good quality rice. It is in your best interest! That’s all for today’s program. Thanks and goodbye!

Fade in music then fade out

**Note**

If you would like a copy of video programs about different rice technologies, please contact: Mr Jonas Wanvoeke at Africa Rice Center, j.wanvoeke@cgiar.org, +229 21 35 01 88, 01 BP 2031, Cotonou, Benin. Please consult: <http://www.africarice.org/warda/guide-video.asp> to view the available videos.

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