

Rice Industry Development and Its Future Prospects in Taiwan

Yao-chung Teng¹

Abstract

Look back to the past 600 years of rice development in Taiwan, rice production was for self-sufficiency in the early days. After the Netherlanders invaded Taiwan in 1624, rice together with sugar and others became an important products for export. Right after World War II, promotion rice production for local demand and for export to earn foreign exchange for industrial development. Thus, rice production was increased sharply from 1,484,792 tons in 1951, to 2,712,985 tons in 1976. However, the local consumption from 1970s on was declined due to the rise in national income. Further, the rice price of the international market was low, there was no good market for Taiwan's rice. The accumulated stocks of surplus rice became a problem not only for agricultural sector, but also for financial sector of the government.

For reducing rice production, a series of diversified utilization projects for paddy field were laid out from 1984. It including Rice Production and Rice Crop Substitution Plan and Paddy Field Utilization in Relation to Upland Crop Rotation Program, all the targets of each plan were accomplished. In 2003, the total rice harvested area was 272,124 ha, rice production was 1,338,287 metric tons of unpolished rice, it is nearly reached the balance point of rice production and demand in Taiwan.

For the future prospects, first of all, rice is a staple food for Taiwanese, it needs to produce rice, at least, for self-sufficiency. Secondary, it has to maintain the irrigation and drainage system, in case of necessity, growing rice can be resumed. Third, it is better to emphasize on the good quality rice production to meet the requirement of local consumers. Fourth, rice should be an important member crop in the paddy and upland crop rotation system. Fifth, raising marketing competitiveness for rice industry through effective management should be concerned.

Key words: Rice of Taiwan, Varieties, Cultivations, Future prospects.

¹ Former Agronomist and Deputy Director, Kaohsiung District Agricultural Research and Extension Station.