

Thai ministry launches "Think RICE, Think THAILAND" project

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The Department of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand has introduced a project called "Think RICE, Think THAILAND" to encourage international community to pay attention to consumer health and to raise awareness on the national crop by providing a wider range of knowledge, ranging from national agricultural history, standards and Thai rice quality.



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Rice is central to the diets, communities and cultural identity of more than 1.6 people across the world - particularly in Asia. The Thai verb "to eat" (kin khao) literally means to "eat rice". "Rice is an incredibly important global crop. More than half of the world's population depends on rice as its primary source of calories," says Russell Reinke, Outcome Theme Leader - Improving Health through Safe and Nutritionally Enhanced Rice at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), an establishment that focuses on nutritional security and supports innovations that will improve health benefits of eating rice.

Speaking of health benefits, red, black and brown strains of rice may be less well known than their white counterparts, but they are extremely nutritious. "Red and black rice are immense sources of antioxidants. Red rice possesses flavonoids, as well as proanthocyanidin, which are good sources of antioxidants. Brown rice is also a good source of dietary fibre and is rich in rice bran oil," says Nese Sreenivasulu, Outcome Theme Leader - Facilitating Rice Research through Enabling Technologies; Head of Grain Quality and Nutrition Center at the IRRI. "Lately, Thailand has been looking into developing healthy rice, like red jasmine rice. Red jasmine rice is aromatic and offers antioxidant properties, which provide benefits like antidiabetic and anti-cancer properties."

Thailand's red, black and brown strains includes Red Hom Mali Rice, a much lower glycaemic index (GI) than other strains of rice, is suitable for diabetics as it keeps blood sugar levels low.

Riceberry Rice is rich in antioxidants and fiber, which aids digestion and lessens the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

Khao Hom Nil Rice contains antioxidants, anti-diabetic and anticancer properties, not to mention how it is also used to make shampoo - as it is claimed to help prevent premature grey hair and hair loss.