

The European market potential for specialty rice

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Imports of European rice are increasing and specialty rice such as the aromatic basmati is gaining popularity. Most of the growing interest comes from northwest Europe, where rice is neither produced nor consumed traditionally, with the United Kingdom taking the lead. The rising demand for healthy and sustainable food is opening up opportunities for specialty rice with organic and fair trade labels.

Contents of this page

- [1. Product description](#)
- [2. What makes Europe an interesting market for specialty rice?](#)
- [3. Which European countries offer most opportunities for specialty rice?](#)
- [4. Which trends offer opportunities or pose threats on the European specialty rice market?](#)

1. Product description

Rice is one of the most important staples for human consumption. Over 40,000 rice varieties are cultivated worldwide, which are commonly classified into four major categories: *indica*, *japonica*, *aromatic* and *glutinous rice*. Most of these varieties belong to the Asian rice species (*Oryza sativa*), or the lesser-known African rice (*Oryza glaberrima*).

Specialty rice can be defined as rice with different grain shape, size, colour, chemical composition, nutritional content and cooking characteristics than the common long-, medium- or short-grain types. Specialty rice varieties include aromatic rice such as basmati and jasmine rice, glutinous rice used for risotto, sushi or paella and coloured rice. Additionally, wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*), which is actually a water grass seed, is also consumed.

Table 1: Rice species and types

Asian rice (<i>Oryza sativa</i>)	Indica	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long grain• (Aromatic rice)
	Japonica (temperate or tropical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medium grain• Short grain
	Aromatic rice	
	Glutinous rice	
African rice (<i>Oryza glaberrima</i>)	See also Africa Rice Center	

Wild rice (<i>Zizania aquatica</i>)	(wild rice is not actually rice but the seed of a type of water grass)
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Several of the rice varieties are available as an organic or fair trade product. The possibilities for differentiation of rice are endless, although marketing can be challenging for niche varieties.

Table 2: Examples of rice varieties

Basmati rice	Basmati is an aromatic type of rice with a long slender grain. The aroma is accentuated by the ripening of the grain. Basmati rice is cultivated mainly in India and Pakistan.
Jasmine rice	Jasmine is a long-grain aromatic rice variety. The grains are slightly sticky after cooking. Jasmine rice is cultivated in Southeast Asia (Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos). Most of Europe's rice imports consist of Thai jasmine rice.
Black rice	The colour of black rice is due to a strong antioxidant called anthocyanin. Black varieties can be glutinous or aromatic. They are cultivated in different parts of Asia such as in Thailand, China and Indonesia.
Red rice	Red rice varieties are usually consumed as a whole grain or unhulled rice. The bran layer has a distinctive red colour instead of brown. Red rice has a nutty flavour. Both the Indica and Japonica type have red rice varieties.
Arborio rice	The traditional rice for risotto is Arborio rice, a Japonica variety produced in the Po valley in Italy. Arborio rice is sometimes replaced by cheaper Asian alternatives of short to medium rice with high starch content.
Bomba rice	The traditional Spanish dish paella uses locally cultivated short-grain rice varieties, such as Bomba rice or Bahia rice. These Spanish varieties that are cultivated in the Calasparra and Valencia regions are known to absorb liquid very well.
Kalijira rice	Kalijira rice is a medium-grain fragrant rice from Bangladesh and the Bengal region of India, often called "baby basmati" because of its small size.
Koshihikari rice	A short-grained japonica rice, considered by many to be the finest short-grain rice in Japan.

Kuthari rice	Kuthari or Matta rice is a red (parboiled) rice from Kerala, India.
Mochi rice	Mochi is a specific variety of glutinous rice used for traditional Japanese rice cakes, desserts and puddings.
Buthanese red rice	Bhutanese red rice is a red japonica rice. It is a medium-grain rice grown in the Kingdom of Bhutan and is semi-milled, leaving some of the reddish bran behind on the rice.
Thai red rice	Thai red rice or red cargo rice is comparable with jasmine rice, but with the red coloured bran.
Shahi rice	A premium basmati variety, also known as royal pulao rice.
Wild rice	Wild rice is not an actual rice variety, but a grass. The grains are long, slender and dark coloured. Wild rice is mainly grown in North America.

See also: the [Rice glossary of The Nibble](#), the [Types of rice by the rice association](#) in the UK, [Ricepedia.org](#) and the [Rice Almanac](#) by CGIAR/GRIISP (Global Rice Science Partnership), or the [Guide to rice varieties in FineCooking](#).

In European trade statistics, different rice varieties are not differentiated. The trade codes are mainly based on different processed rice products: unprocessed (paddy rice), brown rice (husked), white rice (milled) and broken rice. Husked and milled rice are the most important types for the specialty rice trade.

With brown rice and coloured rice, the bran is always intact. White rice is milled, meaning the husk, bran and germ are removed. After milling, the rice can be polished, resulting in a seed with a bright, white, shiny appearance. Rice can also be parboiled. This rice is partially boiled in the husk, thereby preserving most of its nutrients. Black or purple rice is mainly glutinous, while most red rice is of the indica variety.

Table 3: Product codes in the Harmonised System (HS) used for trade statistics

1006	Rice
100610	Paddy rice (includes the inedible husk)
100620	Brown rice (husked)
100630	White rice (semi-milled, wholly-milled, whether or not polished or glazed)
100640	Broken rice

See also the [Classification of rice in Access2Markets](#)

2. What makes Europe an interesting market for specialty rice?

The importation of specialty rice from non-European countries is increasing. Products that are in particular attractive to the European market are husked or milled long-grain indica rice, such as basmati rice.

Rice importation is expected to increase

Europe is not self-sufficient in rice. Around 60% of the demand is fulfilled by Europe's own production, leaving a need to import 1.8 million tonnes of husked and milled rice. The [EU Agricultural Outlook 2020-2030](#) expects the demand for imported rice to grow until 2030 (see Figure 1). Over the next decade the importation will increase by roughly 250,000 tonnes, although this volume only pertains to the EU-27, not the United Kingdom.

Most need for Indica rice

Europe's production mainly consists of the Japonica variety (about 75%), which is mostly produced and consumed in Southern Europe. Europe is a net exporter of Japonica rice. The traditional Asian variety Indica is more popular in northern Europe. There are long-grain and aromatic varieties of indica, such as basmati and jasmine rice.

Room for growth in non-producing countries in Europe

Averaging 6 kg per capita per year, Europe's rice consumption is much lower than the global average 54 kg per capita. This suggests that there is room for further exploration and development in the rice market. Per capita annual consumption of milled rice ranges from 3.5 to 5.5 kg in non-rice-growing countries in northern Europe to 6 to 18 kg in southern Europe.

The rice that is traditionally consumed in countries such as Spain and Italy tends to consist mostly of local rice varieties. In non-producing countries in Europe, consumers are not attached to particular rice varieties and are therefore more open to new rice varieties and specialty rice.

Figure 1: Rice production in and imports to the European Union (EU-27), in millions of tonnes, and human consumption, in kg per capita



Source: EC (2020), [EU agricultural outlook for markets, income and environment, 2020-2030](#). European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Brussels

Milled and husked rice are the main import products

Milled (white) rice and husked (brown) rice are the most important kinds of rice for importation to Europe, including when it comes to specialty rice varieties. Milled rice has the advantage of being more lightweight which is convenient for logistics and being less susceptible to fungus and mould. Milling, or removing the bran, can be a value added process that is performed in the country of origin. By offering an value added process, you increase the margin on your product.

In 2020, the total European trade value of milled or semi-milled rice was €1,882 and the figure for husked rice was €941 million. The trade value of milled rice is significantly higher due to the higher price.

Broken rice is a by-product of rice processing. Many European consumers consider broken rice to be inferior, but traditional or Asian consumers value it more as an affordable rice with fast-cooking and flavour absorbing properties. Broken rice (non-specialty) is also used for products which involve further processing, such as breakfast cereals, pet food, beers, starch and flour. Unprocessed paddy rice (in the husk) is not preferred in the trade except for seeding.

Increasing trade with developing countries

Indica rice is a typical commodity that is sourced in developing countries. Aromatic and coloured rice varieties are generally not produced in Europe and these are imported mainly from Asian countries. The importation from non-European suppliers is increasing as the demand for these rice varieties is growing. Favourable trade conditions help sustain this growth.

Total imports in 2020 were especially high. This was likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused consumers to buy more staple food with a long shelf life. The import volume of husked rice has grown larger than milled rice – the United Kingdom’s share in imports of husked rice is particularly large. The type of rice imported (husked/milled) depends on price development and preferences, but is also regulated by dynamic trade tariffs; import duties can vary depending on the volumes imported.

With favourable trade tariffs, come growth opportunities for a wide variety of supply countries, especially for the [Least Developed Countries](#) (countries that benefit from the ‘Everything But Arms’ regime), [CARIFORUM](#) members and the EU [Overseas Countries and Territories](#) (OCTs). The imports under the ‘Everything But Arms’ regime are expected to increase by 4.6% per year by 2030. Specific basmati varieties from India and Pakistan are also exempted from import duties.

As a supplier, you can profit from the market expansion and favourable trade conditions, and explore the opportunities for specific rice varieties with different characteristics in terms of nutritional value, aroma or colour.

Basmati is the most popular specialty rice variety

The most popular variety of specialty rice is basmati. This aromatic or fragrant rice has become a popular variety with a great many European consumers. Much of the imported husked rice, and import growth, consist of basmati varieties. High-quality basmati can be stored and aged for a better flavour before being sold in the market.

Europe imported 371,000 tonnes of basmati rice in 2019/2020 and this figure will approach 400,000 tonnes in 2020/2021 (see Table 4). The latest data is not complete due to the exclusion of the UK, the largest basmati buyer. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom are the biggest importers, followed by Italy, Belgium and France.

Due to trade issues and sanctions in Iran, a major basmati buyer, more basmati rice was sent to other destinations including Europe. And despite logistical problems due to the COVID-19 outbreak, Europe imported a record volume of basmati rice. The European demand for basmati is expected to remain strong. Popular basmati varieties include Pusa Basmati, Super kernel as well as basmati 1121.

Table 4: European imports (EU+UK) of basmati rice, in tonnes

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21*
PAKISTAN	212,711	249,970	232,575
INDIA	112,791	121,102	105,286
Total	325,502	371,072	337,862

Source: European Commission [Rice export and import licences](#)

*Note: No data is included for the United Kingdom after January 2021.

Tips:

Keep up to date with developments in the rice trade through news sites such as [Rice News Today](#) and [World-grain.com](#).

Check the current trade preferences and import tariffs for different rice varieties from your country through the [TARIC consultation](#) or via [My Trade Assistant on Access2Markets](#).

3. Which European countries offer most opportunities for specialty rice?

The majority of the imported rice goes to north-western Europe. Western Europe is more interested in quality, while eastern Europe is more flexible and focused on the price. In southern Europe you will encounter the most competition with local varieties. The strong imported rice market in north-western Europe provides opportunities if you are looking to enter the market with new or special varieties.

- The United Kingdom, France and Germany are the largest rice importers overall.
- The Netherlands forms an important point of entry for rice into Europe from various origins.
- Belgium and Italy have an important share in the milling industry.
- Germany and France have the most developed organic rice markets.

*Note: No data is included for the United Kingdom after January 2021.

Table 5: Retail sales and consumption of organic products and organic production area for rice, in 2019

	Organic retail sales [Million €]	Organic consumption per capita [€/person]	Organic retail sales growth (1 year) [%]	Organic retail sales share [%]	Organic area for rice [ha]	Share of organic area for rice [%]
France	11,295	173	13%	6%	2,904	19%
Germany	11,970	144	9%	5%	-	-
Italy	3,625	59	4%	3%	19,988	9%
United Kingdom	2,678	39	4%	1%	-	-

Netherlands	1,211	71	4%	4%	-	-
Belgium	779	68	11%	3%	-	-

Source: [FiBL Statistics](#)

United Kingdom: leader in the basmati consumption

The United Kingdom (UK) is an important market for rice exporters. It is the largest European importer of husked and basmati rice and it offers a good market for different rice varieties. British consumers have embraced aromatic rice varieties as well as convenience rice.

The UK imports more husked rice from overseas than milled rice; in 2020 it imported approximately 330,000 tonnes of husked rice versus 127,000 tonnes of milled rice. Much of the milled rice is imported from European rice millers.

The UK is home to rice brokers such as [Jackson Son & Company](#), rice millers such as [S&B Herba](#) (part of [Ebro Foods](#)) and offers a market to multiple brands. The leading brands are [Ben's Original](#) (part of [Mars Incorporated](#)) and [Tilda](#) (part of [Ebro foods](#)). Brands such as [Tilda](#), [Laila](#) and [Kohinoor](#) focus mostly on special rice varieties, such as basmati, while companies such as [Ben's Original](#) and [Veetee](#) also cater to the convenience market with microwavable rice.

A large Indian and Pakistani population drives up the consumption of rice, and more specifically, of basmati rice. The UK is the largest consumer of basmati rice in Europe. A large volume is sold through ethnic wholesalers, but the market is mature enough to introduce differentiated varieties in supermarkets as well, such as aged basmati in [Tesco](#) and [Sainsbury's](#) or [extra long basmati](#) and [basmati mixed with wild rice](#) in [Ocado](#). The reason for the recent drop in the 2020/2021 statistics, is that data was no longer included for the UK in 2021 due to the Brexit (Britain leaving the EU). According to trade data, rice imports remained strong in 2020.

There is also a good market for ethical brands. [Ethicalconsumer.org](#) ranks the ethical and environmental record of 22 rice brands in the UK. [Kilombero rice](#) from Malawi, sold by [Just Trading Scotland](#), [Clearspring rice](#) and [Organico Rice](#) score the highest in terms of social compliance and sustainability. The lowest scores go to the major brands and retail chains [ASDA](#), [Tesco](#), [Uncle Ben's](#) and [Sainsbury's](#). The organic market is still underdeveloped with only 1% of the food sales being certified organic. A company that is trying to change that is [TrueRice](#), which has launched a sustainable and premium quality organic rice.

As a result of the Brexit, the United Kingdom, is able to negotiate its own trade agreements. A possible outcome is that the country will become less dependent on the rice supply from mainland Europe. This may open up opportunities for more direct trade with Asia or milling activities in origin.

France: interest in fragrant and organic rice

France is among the larger importers of rice of non-European origin. The importation of long grain fragrant rice and basmati is combined with the consumption of local rice varieties from southern Europe. France has a particularly strong market for imported milled rice and offers opportunities for organic rice.

The import value of milled rice from non-European suppliers has been increasing since 2017, from €127 million to €173 million in 2020. Long grain rice varieties are mainly supplied by Cambodia or Thailand, or as parboiled rice via Italy or Spain. Fragrant rice ("riz parfumé") from southeast Asia is popular in France. Husked rice (mostly basmati) has mostly been imported from Pakistan since 2018, and before that from India. According to [Statista](#), basmati remains the most popular rice in French households (see Figure 7).

Other popular rice varieties from the region include [Riz de Camargue](#), which is produced in the south of France

and has a production volume of around 80,000 tonnes of unprocessed paddy rice per year. Italian risotto rice (arborio) is also widely available.

The demand for organic food is relatively high, which makes France a good market for selling organic rice. Despite the fact that France is only a minor producer of rice, 19% of the rice production is organic – the highest percentage of all EU rice producing countries. Imported organic specialty rice is available as well, such as [Carrefour's own brand of organic basmati rice](#). Specialised companies such as [Autour de Riz](#) and [Alter Eco](#) supply organic and fair trade rice, including [red rice from Thailand](#) and a niche variety, [red Pacha rice from Sri Lanka](#).

France will continue to offer a market for different specialty varieties, as well as for organic and fair trade rice. At the same time French consumers are increasingly looking for local (organic) products, which are considered more sustainable and healthier. So it will be important for suppliers to emphasise their efforts in sustainable production and differentiate their rice from that of the competition.

Germany: a large non-traditional market with a niche for fair trade and organic rice

Germans are not big rice consumers, but with a population of 84 million people, Germany is still one of the key rice markets. Specialty rice is mostly sold through specialised and food service channels. Most rice, however, is imported from or via other EU countries.

Germany's rice consumption is stable, reaching approximately 6 kg/capita per year. The share of organic food sales is 5%, which is high compared to other major rice importing countries in the EU. Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands are Germany's main rice suppliers. The non-European supply is divided mainly among India, Myanmar, Pakistan and Thailand.

Most food retailers and supermarkets sell different varieties of rice, including basmati, jasmine, risotto and sushi rice. Besides private label brands, they sell rice brands such as Oryza and Reis-fit – these are [Reiskontor](#) brands and are part of [Euryza](#) and Ebro Foods.

More specific rice varieties can be found more easily somewhere other than general grocery markets. The company [Amira Basmati Rice GmbH Eur](#) (part of [Amira Nature Foods](#)) sells different varieties of basmati rice, such as smoked basmati and 1121 basmati, as well as jasmine rice brands with a different aroma and cooking qualities. [Rickmers Reismühle](#) supplies specialty rice such as red rice, wild rice and 'Punjab Basmati' to the food service market. And wholesalers such as [Transfood](#) sell a wide variety of specialty rice brands.

There is a niche market for fair trade rice. The sales volume of fair trade rice went up from 772 tonnes in 2016 to 1236 tonnes in 2020 according to [Statista](#). Many of the fair trade brands can be found via the [product finder on the TransFair](#) website (select "Reis und Quinoa").

There is potential for specialty rice on the German market, but developments outside the specialised segments should be expected to go slow.

Netherlands: tradition in trade

The Netherlands is an excellent hub for rice trading. The total trade volume is growing and there are opportunities for common specialty rice varieties as well as for niche products.

The import value of husked and milled rice in the Netherlands increased from €106 million to €182 million in the period from 2016 to 2020. Husked rice from India and Pakistan, consisting of 77,000 tonnes of basmati rice, plays a key part in Dutch imports. In 2020, milled rice imports came mainly from Thailand, India, Cambodia and Pakistan.

Although some of the original Dutch rice millers such as [Lassie](#) (Ebro Foods) and [Van Sillevoldt Rijst \(VSR\)](#) (Euricom) are now in foreign hands, much of the rice trade still passes through the Netherlands. Most of the imported rice is milled and distributed to other EU countries. Germany is the main export market for milled rice from the Netherlands.

With a history in trade and exposure to international cuisines thanks to immigrants of Indonesian and Surinam origin, the Dutch market has itself also adopted a wide range of rice products.

Supermarkets tend to offer a diverse range of rice: rice for risotto or sushi, aromatic basmati and jasmine rice (often called 'pandan rice'), but also niche products such as [black rice](#) and [aged basmati](#). The most exotic brands can be found in traditional and ethnic shops (often called 'tokos') such as [Tjin's toko](#) or [Amazing Oriental](#).

Belgium: Home to leading production sites

Belgium may not be the largest rice importer from non-European countries, but it is the largest market overall in mainland Europe for husked and broken rice.

The reason why Belgium is such a major player in the rice market, is because of the presence of several major rice companies. The main one is [Mars Food](#) along with two of its main European production sites for its brand Ben's Original. However, a large share of their inputs is supplied by rice farms in Spain and Italy. The aromatic rice is mainly imported from Pakistan. Another company, [Herba Ingredients](#), specialises in natural and gluten-free rice ingredients for food manufacturers such as producers of infant formula and pet food.

Belgium and the port of Antwerp offer a strategic location for international rice processors, but in the Belgian home market, rice often has to compete with potatoes. So it is not an easy market for specialty rice. Still, the leading supermarket [Delhaize offers more than 40 different rice products](#). The retail is dominated by brand leaders Ben's Original and [Bosto](#), but also includes (organic) basmati, jasmine, risotto, bomba rice for paella and the French Camargue rice.

Italy: Europe's main rice producer

Italy is the largest rice producer in Europe, but also one of the main importers of non-European rice.

Italy produces mainly japonica rice. In 2019, japonica production reached nearly 1.1 million tonnes, while less than 400,000 tonnes of indica varieties were produced. This translates into a total milled rice volume of approximately 900,000 tonnes. Carnaroli, Arborio, Roma, S.Andrea, Baldo, Vialone Nano and Balilla are among the main varieties.

A growing share consists of organic production; the organic production area was nearly 20,000 ha in 2019. Italy receives the most funding in the EU in the project [Sustainable EU Rice](#), a 3-year project in existence since 2019 aimed at promoting European Japonica rice and highlighting the environmental sustainability of EU rice production.

Italy will continue to play an important role for foreign suppliers. The country has ample milling capacity and the consumption of indica rice varieties is increasing. People in Italy mainly consume the medium long rice grains, but consumption of indica rice increased from 74,000 tonnes in 2015/2016 to almost 126,000 tonnes in 2019/2020. The long-grain Indica rice is the main imported rice in Italy. Imported husked rice comes mainly from Pakistan and India, of which almost 50,000 tonnes is known to be basmati. Thailand exceeds Pakistan and India in the supply of milled rice.

Italy is home to the European Rice Company ([Euricom](#)), one of the largest rice companies in Europe, and several rice mills such as [Agrover](#) and [Mundi Riso](#) that combine local Italian rice with imported aromatic rice varieties.

Tips:

Adapt to the preferences of your target market or focus on the market with the most potential for your specific product. For example, prioritise the UK market if you want to sell husked basmati rice, but focus first on France and Germany if you are offering organic rice.

Get more specific information about potential buyers from different countries by visiting trade fairs in Europe such as [SIAL](#), [Anuga](#) or [Biofach](#).

4. Which trends offer opportunities or pose threats on the European specialty rice market?

Specialty rice has the potential to eventually be offered by mainstream retail as ethnic groups grow and interaction with non-traditional consumers increases. Opportunities for organic and fair trade rice are also increasing because of the focus on healthy and sustainable food.

From ethnic food to a diverse mainstream market

Specialty rice such as aromatic basmati and jasmine, risotto and paella rice varieties, and to some extent coloured rice, are now traded through the mainstream channels. Consumption of the most specific varieties is highest in the ethnic markets.

[Ricepedia](#) states that specialty rice such as aromatic varieties have been introduced with the arrival of large numbers of immigrants from Southeast Asia and has been adopted as both a staple and gourmet food by a discriminating public over the past several years. With the increasing integration of different nationalities, European consumers have been exposed more and more to transnational dishes.

Countries where consumption of rice by ethnic populations is high, such as the UK (Indian, Pakistani population), France (East Asian) and the Netherlands (Indonesian, Surinam) offer opportunities for further diversification of rice specialties. Ethnic consumers may have specific preferences for different basmati cultivars. But in these countries, the demand for specialty rice may eventually come from native populations, rather than being limited to ethnic groups.. This development to a mainstream market will largely depend on consumer knowledge about rice.

As a supplier, you have to find partners that are willing and able to promote new rice varieties.

Figure 9: Ethnic rice consumption is a driver of speciality rice becoming more mainstream



Source: Photo by [RODNAE Productions](#) from [Pexels](#)

Organic and brown rice as part of a healthy diet

Consumers in Europe are increasingly aware of the need for a healthy diet. Organic rice and husked rice, including certain specialty rice, can be a healthy choice for consumers looking to improve their diets.

Brown or husked rice is consumed throughout Europe as a healthier alternative to milled white rice, since the rice bran contains important minerals, vitamins and fibre. Most EU countries endorse the importance of wholegrain consumption or have dietary guidelines. Countries that have the highest [whole grain intake across](#)

Europe, including brown rice, are Germany (130g/day), the Netherlands (86g/day), Sweden (79g/day), Denmark (73g/day) and Finland (71g/day).

Black rice (high in antioxidants, vitamin E and iron) and red rice (high in fibre and antioxidants) are among the husked rices consumed. Wild rice is a niche variety with a relatively high protein content. Parboiled rice is also available as instant rice and for its improved preservation of vitamins.

In the health food segment, your main focus as an exporter is supplying a pure and pesticide-free product. This often means meeting higher standards of quality than are imposed by the legal regulations. Pesticide residues are a key reason for consumers to buy organic rice. Organic rice is gaining market share. According to the [FiBL & IFOAM report The world of Organic Agriculture](#), the European Union imported 256,000 tonnes of organic rice in 2018, which means 10.9% of the imported rice was certified organic.

Sustainability in rice production will become the norm in the future

There is a growing focus on sustainable rice production. Several industry players support or are involved in activities to make rice production more sustainable. As an exporter your rice has a higher chance of being accepted in Europe if it was grown sustainably. However, according to some industry sources, organic rice (also considered sustainable) is showing stronger development than sustainable rice as a result of the industry's efforts.

Rice is one of the world's main food crops, but it also produces 10 to 12% of the global methane emissions due to human activities and has a significant impact on water use. Irrigated rice cultivation uses 30-40% of the world's freshwater. To make rice cultivation more sustainable, new or other production methods are needed, such as [regenerative agriculture](#) and the '[system of rice intensification](#)' (SRI).

International organisations and private companies have joined forces in [The Sustainable Rice Platform \(SRP\)](#) to transform the global rice sector by improving smallholder livelihoods, and reducing the social, environmental and climate footprint of rice production, offering the global rice market an assured supply of sustainably produced rice. Together with industry leaders, SRP introduced world's first voluntary [Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation](#).

One of the founders of the SRP, the German service provider in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development ([GIZ](#)), established a Food and Agriculture Cluster in Thailand. The cluster works together with some of the leading rice companies, such as Ebro, Mars Food and Olam. It aims to strengthen farmers with [projects](#) and training in sustainable rice production, such as the [Sustainable Aromatic Rice Initiative \(SARI\)](#).

Olam International has introduced [AtSource](#) to measure sustainability and show social and environmental impact in agricultural supply chains. In a project aimed at [cutting the rice's carbon footprint](#) in Thailand, more than 12,000 rice farmers were trained in the principles of the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP).

Emerging market for fair trade rice

The size of the rice market and the number of farmers involved, makes rice a suitable product for fair trade. There is an emerging market for responsible rice, although it is still a very small market managed by a few brands and fair trade organisations.

The fair trade rice production of [Fair Trade International](#) amounted to 55,316 tonnes in 2019. So it is very niche compared to the total demand for rice in Europe, or even compared to the consumption of jasmine and basmati rice. It targets a different type of public that is conscious and socially engaged, but it has the potential to become a new standard just as it has for coffee and cacao.

Fair trade also provides opportunities for producing countries that are otherwise ignored by rice traders. For

example, the [Kaporo Smallholder Farmers' Association \(KASFA\)](#) in Malawi is able to sell a premium aromatic Kilombero rice with the help of the fair trade organisation [JTS \(Just Trading Scotland\)](#).

Story telling is important for fair trade rice. You need to show a transparent supply chain and find companies or organisations that specialise in fair trade and that can help share your story in Europe.

Tips:

Find out how you can improve your agricultural practices. Watch the videos about the [ways rice farmers can use regenerative agricultural techniques and the SRI \(system of rice intensification\) on Quora](#) and on the webpage of the [SRI International Network and Resources Center](#).

Try to sell a specialty rice variety that has an organic or fair trade certification, as that will increase the value of your product on the European market.

Learn more about trends by reading the CBI study on [which trends offer opportunities or pose threats on the European grains, pulses and oilseeds market](#).

[ICI Business](#) carried out this study on behalf of CBI.

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