

European Rice.

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EUROPEAN RICE FIELDS, A TREASURE TROVE OF BIODIVERSITY

Rice grows on land submerged under water, forming man-made agroecosystems that have always been the habitat of a great variety of animal and plant species. It is no coincidence that rice growers are said to “cultivate water”. It is like that today, and it has always been like that!

The paddy field is a sentinel watching over the territory. They call it an environmental management, but, for those who live with it day in, day out, it is always fascinating.

When we talk about rice grown in Italy, France and Portugal, we are not merely talking about a food production sector, but a system that creates a harmony between the territory and the agricultural world. Here biodiversity - that is, the great variety of organisms that make ecosystems alive - is an integral part of the agricultural activity, and its conservation is essential for the success of rice farming.

Due to these peculiarities of rice cultivation in a temperate climate, many European paddy fields have been included in Natura 2000, the European Union’s network of specially protected areas with the most valuable species and habitats.

The environment and agriculture, or human activities and natural processes, thus find a positive balance in rice fields managed with methods that follow the criteria of environmental sustainability.

EUROPEAN RICE CULTIVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

The rice system of Italy, France and Portugal looks ahead to the agriculture of the future, with practices that, thanks to new precision farming technologies, can optimize production while respecting the environment. Here knowledge is combined with the cutting-edge technology for increasingly sustainable rice cultivation.

The approach to sustainability consists, first of all, in a careful and responsible use of the necessary resources for rice cultivation, above all, water. While it can be considered that the large amount of water used in rice cultivation is not intrinsically “lost”, since, during the crop cycle, it is put back into circulation at the territorial level, this resource must still be managed with all the necessary care, so that it is put back with very same original quality.

In the sector, we are also seeing an intensification of the development of techniques aimed at guaranteeing greater sustainability. Among these is the use of the green manure of catch crops, involving the sowing of plants useful for fertilizing the land between one harvest and another. Then there is the winter submersion of the soils, which supports the typical biodiversity of aquatic environments.

Another is land conservation that brings conspicuous energy savings by offering the environment the possibility to regenerate itself independently. Finally, there is precision agriculture which carefully controls the quantities of fertilizers and active ingredients within plots, in order to maximize production while minimizing impact environmental.

In short, the protection of water resources and the protection of soil resources go hand in hand, affecting each other, and being intimately bound. Traditional techniques combined with innovative approaches are the principles on which the sustainability of rice

cultivation is based, and this forms a useful weapon in the fight against climate change by promoting the storage of carbon dioxide in the soil and minimizing the release of the greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.

THE VALUES OF EUROPEAN RICE

The panoramas that distinguish European rice cultivation represent a landscape heritage of great importance. Indeed, for centuries, rice fields have been the nerve centre of many agricultural realities, with communities and traditions developing around the cultivation of this precious and nutritious food.

Rice cultivation has never ceased to be standard bearer of cultural and economic values that find their maximum expression in rural areas. In Europe, these values include the conservation of the rice-growing landscape, the preservation of local traditions, experimentation with innovative techniques, the offer of employment for areas suited to cultivation, and the creation of a supply chain with a strong determination to protect and defend rice cultivation.

The result of all this? Food that is highly controlled from the earliest stages of production and whose unique taste encapsulates goodness, traditions, and respect for the land and for the people who work and live there.

WHERE THE QUALITY OF EUROPEAN RICE COMES FROM

In addition to the doubtless advantages that the sustainable production of European rice has for local communities, the product, coming from Italy, Portugal and France, is a guarantee of quality and food safety. The varieties grown in these Mediterranean countries

have unique aroma and taste characteristics that make them ideal for both traditional dishes and the most innovative recipes. They make unique and unrivalled products that arise from tradition and renew themselves through varieties ever more in tune with the tastes of consumers. Indeed, to conceive future varieties, we always start from what we already know. More than a technique, this is the philosophy of the rice supply chain in European rice producing countries that ensures rice cultivation is increasingly sustainable, in the awareness that the fields, the people who work there, the research laboratories and restaurants are all valued elements of a whole.

In this way, the European rice supply chain creates a system capable of living in total harmony, so that after the harvest, European rice can reach the tables of consumers who are aware that they have bought the very best rice possible. Not just any rice, but rice that is recognizable.

Rice that has been produced in lands to be discovered and recognized for their value. Value that comes from their uniqueness!



www.sustainableEUrice.eu

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