

Rice is one of the world's most important food **crops**. It is a **grain**, like wheat and corn. Almost all the people who **depend** on rice for their food live in Asia.

Young rice plants are bright green. After planting, the **grain** is **ripe** about 120 to 180 days later. It turns golden yellow during the time of **harvest**. In some tropical countries rice can be harvested up to three times a year.

Each rice plant carries hundreds or thousands of **kernels**. A typical rice kernel is 6–10 mm long and has four parts:

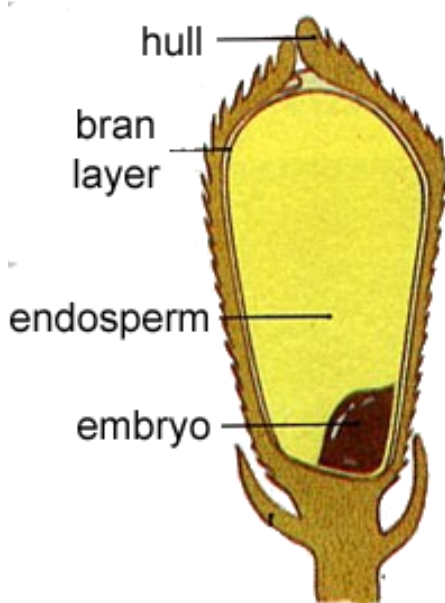
The hull is the hard outer part which is not good to eat. The **bran layers** protect the inner parts of the **kernel**. They have vitamins and minerals in them. The endosperm makes up most of the kernel. It has a lot of **starch** in it. The embryo is a small part from which a new rice plant can grow.

Rice grows best in tropical regions. It needs a lot of water and high temperatures. It grows on heavy, **muddy soils** that can hold water.

In many cases farmers grow rice in paddies. These are fields that have dirt walls around them to keep the water inside. The fields are flooded with water and **seeds** or small rice plants are **placed** into the **muddy soil**.

In southeast Asia and other **developing countries** farmers do most of the work by hand. They use oxen or water buffaloes to pull the **ploughs**. In industrialized countries work is done mostly by machines.

Two or three weeks before the **harvest** begins water is pumped out of the fields. The rice is cut and the **kernels** are **separated** from the rest of the plant. The wet **kernels** are laid on **mats** to dry in the sun.



After harvest, rice is **processed** in **mills**. First the hull and the bran layers are **removed** carefully so that the inner part of the **kernel** doesn't break. The endosperm is the white rice that most people eat because it is easier to cook. It is **enriched** with vitamins and minerals to make it better. Sometimes brown rice, in which the bran layers remain, is produced. Then it is **packaged** and sold.

Rice gives your body energy in the form of **carbohydrates**. It also has vitamin B and other minerals in it. Rice has little fat and is easy to **digest**.

Rice is in many other foods as well. It is in breakfast **cereals**, frozen and baby foods and soup. **Breweries** use rice to make beer. In Japan, rice **kernels** are used to make an alcoholic drink.

Most rice is grown in **lowland** regions but about one fifth of the world's rice is **upland** rice, which grows on **terraces** in the mountains. The world's farmers grow more than 700 million tons a year. 90% of the rice production comes from Asia. China and India are the world's biggest producers. In these countries rice is planted in

the big river plains of the Ganges and Yangtze.

Almost all of Asia's rice is eaten by the population there. Sometimes they don't even have enough to feed their own people.

Other countries, like the USA, produce rice for export.



Rice planter in Bangladesh

The biggest rice producers in the world (in millions of tons)	
China	184
India	137
Indonesia	54
Bangladesh	44
Vietnam	36
Thailand	29
Myanmar	25
Philippines	15
Brazil	12
Japan	11
United States	9

**WORDS**

- bran =the outer skin that you separate from the rest of the seed
- brewery = a place where you make beer
- carbohydrate = something that is in food like sugar and bread. It gives your body heat and energy
- cereal = a breakfast food made from grain and eaten with milk
- crop = a plant that is grown by farmers and used as food
- depend = if you really need something very much
- developing country = countries of the Third World that are very poor
- digest =to change food that you have eaten into material that your body can use
- enrich = to make something better
- grain = the seeds of crops that are used as food
- harvest = to gather crops from the field
- kernel =the part of a nut or seed inside a fruit
- layer =the material between two other substances
- lowland = a low area of land
- mat = here: material that you put things on
- mill = a building with machines that crush the kernels of rice
- muddy = wet earth that is very soft
- package = to put food into a bag or a box so that you can sell it
- place = put
- plains = an area of flat land
- plough = a farming machine that turns over the earth so that you can plant seeds
- population = the people of a country
- process = to make food in a way that you can package and sell it
- remove = take away, take out
- ripe = fully grown and ready to eat
- seed =the small hard object of a plant from which other objects grow
- separate =divide
- soil = the top part of the earth on which plants can grow
- starch = it gives your body energy and is found in foods like rice, potatoes
- terrace =flat parts of a hill or mountains
- upland = parts of a country that are higher than others