

When to Harvest

What is harvesting

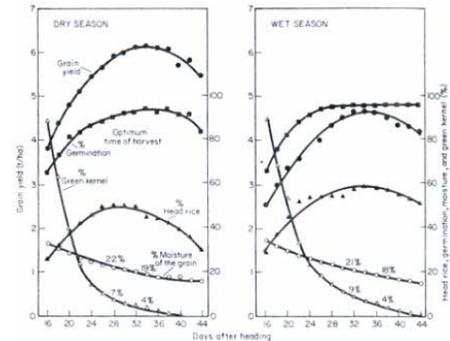
Harvesting is the process of collecting the mature rice crop from the field. Harvesting of paddy includes cutting, stacking, handling, threshing, cleaning and hauling of paddy. The goal of good harvesting methods is to *maximize grain yield*, and to *minimize grain damage* and *quality deterioration*. Harvesting can be done manually using sickles and knives, or mechanically with the use of threshers or combine harvesters.

Why is it important to know when to harvest

Correct timing of harvest is crucial in order to prevent crop loss. Grain losses may occur from rats, birds, crop lodging, insects, and shattering. Timely harvesting ensures good grain quality and high market value.

Harvesting too early will result in a larger percentage of unfilled or immature grains, which will result in a lower yield and in higher grain breakage during milling.

Harvesting too late will lead to excessive losses and increased breakage in rice. Timing of harvesting also affects the germination potential of rice seed.



How to determine when to harvest

There are different ways for the determining the correct harvest time:

Measuring moisture content

For harvesting the grain moisture content ideally is between 20-25% (wet basis).

Grains should be firm but not brittle when squeezed between the teeth.

Ripe grains per panicle

The crop should be cut when 80-85% of the grains are straw (i.e. yellow) colored.

Number of days after sowing

Generally the ideal harvest time lies between 130-136 days after sowing for late, 113-125 for medium, and 110 days for early maturing varieties.

Number of days after heading

In dry season harvest, an optimum time of harvest is 28 to 35 days after heading. In wet season harvest, optimum time is 32 to 38 days after heading

Other considerations

Harvesting also needs to be timed so that threshing can be done as soon as possible after cutting to avoid re-wetting and reduce grain breakage.

If the crop has a lot of surface moisture, e.g. from previous rainfall or early in the morning, it is advisable to wait to cut the crop until the surface moisture dried off.



Visual inspection of grain color



Take averages of the whole field

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