

GI Tag Awarded to Kalanamak Rice¹

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If you think Basmati rice, a subject of many patent battles, is the best, here is Kalanamak rice. Known for its aroma and distinct taste, Kalanamak has now been awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Deriving its name from the black husk (*kala*) and a mild salty (*namak*) taste, it is considered as one of the finest rice varieties in the international market.

CG Naidu, Assistant Registrar of Trademarks and Geographical Indications, said the Kalanamak Scented Paddy Production & Conservation Society of Uttar Pradesh applied for GI status for the rice in February 2010 and an advertisement was published in GI Journal in May 2013. “It was granted the GI status in September,” he said. The GI tag is given to a product to indicate it has a specific geographical location or point of origin.

It surpasses Basmati rice – the variety with the highest trade volume in the international market – in every aspect except grain length, says Uttar Pradesh State Biodiversity Board in a document on agricultural diversity. It is soft, easily digestible and has a long shelf life. It

also has “greater head rice recovery after polishing and better elongation after cooking,” says the board.

According to the GI registry journal, grains similar to Kalanamak were found from excavation sites at Aligarhwa (Siddharthnagar, Uttar Pradesh) – identified as the territory of Buddha’s father, king Shuddodhan. The name ‘Shuddodhan’ means pure rice.

The Asian-Agri History Foundation quotes the works of Chinese traveller Fa Hien who said that when Lord Buddha visited Kapilvastu after attaining knowledge, the villagers asked him for *prasad* (gift). He gave them the grains, asking them to sow it in a marshy place. “The rice will have typical aroma which will always remind people of me,” he is supposed to have told them. According to folklore, the rice variety, if sown elsewhere, loses its aroma and quality [Singh et al. 2005. Rediscovering scented rice cultivar Kalanamak. Asian Agri-History 9(3):211–219 – Eds.].

The Foundation also says the first effort at conserving Kalanamak was made by the British who built four reservoirs

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in the area to increase its production. The rice, cultivated in Terai regions of Eastern Uttar Pradesh (Siddharthnagar, Sant Kabirnagar, Mau and Azamgarh

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districts), is seeing a decline in acreage and production.