

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1. Historical

Rice forms the principal food of more than half of the population of the world. The actual date of its first cultivation is not known, nor is its place of origin, though botanical and linguistic evidence (7) indicates this to be in South-East Asia, and there are records of rice sowing in China as early as 2,800 B.C. (16). There is no trace of rice as a native plant in the early histories of Egypt, Persia, Greece or Rome. It is not mentioned in the Bible but there is proof of its culture in the Euphrates Valley and in Syria 400 years before Christ (35).

The introduction of rice into South and Central America appears to have been relatively recent - at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century (17).

Although the crop has been an important food for hundreds of years it was not until about 1840 that any large export trade began and only from this date has the crop become of major commercial importance.

Machine milling, is of even more recent origin, and its development has created a demand for more uniformity in type of grain and hence the modern developments in breeding new varieties and in marketing and grading systems.