

## RICE AS A WORLD CROP.

Probably there was a time when rice was not cultivated but this time is beyond the inception of our history.

World Crops (24) shows that as a part of a ceremony a Chinese Emperor planted rice in the year 2800 B.C. The report goes on to say that there was no trace of rice as a native plant of Egypt, Persia, Greece or Rome in early histories. It is not mentioned in the Bible but its culture is alluded to in the Talmud. There is proof of its cultivations in the Euphrates-Tigris Valley and in Syria in 400 B.C.

In his recent book, Efferson (10) states that the Ancient Egyptians did not know about the existence of rice, and that there is no reference to this crop in the Old Testament. He says that there are records to show that rice was grown in Java as early as 1084 B.C. and that soon after this period its cultivation gradually spread from India to Persia, Mesopotamia and Turkestan. Greek writers state that Indian rice reached Europe about 300 B.C. when it was introduced by Alexander the Great. From China rice was introduced into Japan, Korea, the Phillipines and other Pacific Islands. Rice came to the West Indies and British Guiana with East Indians who came to these parts as indentured immigrants even within the last century. Eventually, the cultivation of rice reached the United States and other South American countries.

Rice is the most important cereal grown. It is the staple food of more than half the world population. The greatest acreage of rice cultivation is concentrated in the areas of densest population in the tropics and sub-tropics viz. India, China. In these areas it is cultivated by the most traditionally primitive methods.

As far as the importance of cereal food crop goes, wheat is the nearest rival of this crop. Yet statistics show wide differences in production and yields of both crops. Efferson (10) states that the world acreage of wheat is about twice that of rice. In the five-year period preceding World War II, the global acreage of wheat averaged about 419 million acres <sup>yearly as compared with only 208 million acres</sup> for rice. By 1949, the

cultivated acreage of wheat had increased to 429 million acres as compared to 218 million acres for rice. In terms of total production, however, rice surpasses wheat by as much as 10 to 20 per cent. The pre-war world rice crop averaged 7.3 million bushels annually, while the average for wheat over the same period was only 6.0 million bushels. In 1949, the world rice crop increased to 7.4 million bushels while wheat increased to 6.1 million bushels.

The contrast between the overall relationship between the production of rice and wheat is accounted for by the wide difference in average yield per acre between the two crops. During 1935-39 period the world rice averaged 35.1 bushels per acre while that of wheat for the same period was 14.4 bushels. In 1949 the world rice crop gave an average yield of 33.9 bushels per acre while that for wheat for the same year was 14.1 bushels per acre.

The difference in the average yield per acre of rice between 1935-39 period and 1949 is most probably due to the large scale mechanized expansions of rice cultivations which is less intensive and gives lower yields per acre than the traditional hand methods of cultivation practised in the East.