

When to harvest



www.rkbassam.in

Introduction

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

Why is it important to know when to harvest

Correct timing of harvest is crucial to prevent crop loss. Grain losses may be caused by insect, disease, rodents, birds, lodging 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 lower yield and cause higher grain breakage during milling. Harvesting too late will lead to excessive shattering losses and increased breakage in rice. Timing of harvest also affects the germination potential of rice seed.

How do we determine when to harvest?

There are different ways to determine the correct harvest time.

Moisture content

Grain moisture content is ideally between 20 and 21% (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 colored (i.e., yellowish).

Number of days after sowing

Although this depends upon the variety/hybrid, growing season, establishment methods, agronomic practices, climatic condition and agro-ecology, generally, the ideal harvest time lies more than 140 days for long duration, 120-140 days for medium duration and less than 110 days short duration varieties/hybrids.

Number of days after heading

For dry season harvesting, an optimum time 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 scheduled in such a way, so that threshing can be done as soon as possible to avoid any moisture gain through dew/rain mediated wetting.

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

