

Wild boost for Australian Rice in the North

The School of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences is collaborating on a project to enhance the development and production of Australian Wild Rice in North Queensland.

A joint project with the University of Sydney, the study aims to develop a breeding program to improve and test the growth of 'Tropical' Australian Wild Rice in Townsville, and other areas of North Queensland.

Livestock and Production Lecturer and JCU Project Leader, Chris Gardiner said the presence of the native Australian Wild Rice in the northern region is potentially important for the development of a rice industry in northern Australia.

"The undomesticated native wild rice populations found in Northern Queensland are important for their genetics, which includes possible drought tolerance, cooking quality, disease resistance and nutrient richness, which may be transferred to domestic cultivated white rice," he said.

According to a fellow researcher from the University of Sydney, Dr Lindsay Campbell, globally there are more than 30 species of wild rice with four species of wild rice in Australia, of which two are potentially commercially important and grow in the Townsville region.

"Australia has a very good domesticated rice industry based in Southern Australia, and we hope to establish a tropical equivalent," he said.

Australian wild rice currently grow in tropical areas in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland.

"There's a possibility for the wild rice to be an industry of its own as 'boutique' rice."

To initiate the breeding program, JCU currently has a field plot to study the different ecotypes of local native wild rice and Sydney University has a controlled environment glasshouse to assess the agronomic characteristics of some lines of wild rice.



See:

http://www.jcu.edu.au/vbms/public/groups/everyone/documents/newsletter/jcu_138508.pdf