



Thai Hom Mali Rice regain the status of the global rice champion

Thai Hom Mali Rice won the best rice in the world at the 12th World Rice Conference 2020 contest among 5 participating countries. Entire Thai rice exports for this year remained at 5.8 million tons due to the shortage of shipping containers. The estimate of rice export for 2021 is forecasted to be 7 million tons.

On December 4, 2020, Mr. Jurin Laksanawisit, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce, revealed that Thailand won “World’s Best Rice Award 2020” at the 12th World Rice Conference held during December 1-3, 2020. The event is the largest rice contest organized annually by The Rice Trader, USA. This success was considered the joint efforts among Thai farmers, rice millers, entrepreneurs, exporters and concerned government agencies.

The win will be the starting point for Thailand to move forward along with the Thai Rice Strategies (2020-2024) endorsed by the government. Thailand is determined to be the leading rice and rice products producing country of the world. Upon receipt of the best rice award, it will increase confidence among consumers and ensure the quality of Thai rice in the world market.

The rice strategies will focus on the development of 7 rice varieties including Hom Mali rice, Thai fragrant rice, soft cooking rice, hard cooking rice, sticky rice and color rice as well as developing at least additional 12 varieties to remain competitive in the global market.

Regarding the progress on rice trade dialogue with COFCO of China, only 300,000 tons is left for negotiation for future delivery. The Department of Foreign Trade is to expedite the export process which should be finalized very soon. In 2020, from January until December 2, Thailand has exported 5.1 million tons of rice (decreased by 28%), accounted for 108,100 million (decreased by 11 %).

Thai Hom Mali rice still dominates the market in many countries such as USA, Canada, Hong Kong and Singapore. Thailand is still competitive compared with Vietnam in terms of pricing. Except for Indian rice which has somewhat \$100 price difference per tonnage. Under the G-to-G rice trade negotiation with COFCO of China, the 8th round of talk was settled for 100,000 tons.

The remaining of 300,000 tons is expected to be concluded in due time as the deal on highspeed train has achieved significant progress.

Mr.Charoen Laothamatas, President of Thai Rice Exporter Association, informed that, in the contest there were 20 varieties of rice from 5 countries namely Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, China and the US. There were only 2 finalists, Thailand and Vietnam, as judged by famous chefs from various places. Finally, Thailand was named the World's Best Rice Award 2020.

"This was the 12th contest where Thailand has won 6 times. This reinforced that fact that Thai rice is great and second to none. Continuous development in accordance with the Thai Rice Strategies will make Thai rice the best in the world", said Mr. Charoen.

Moreover, the Hom Mali Rice submitted for the contest has been carefully selected. This year crop has been blessed with good water and abundant water. There has been cold condition in the Northeast which made the rice dry, translucent and fragrant. The past few years have been drought with low rainfall. Future research and development should focus on how to overcome mother nature as Thai rice is believed as one of the best and still competitive in the world market.

Mr. Chookiat Opaswong, Honorary President of the Thai Rice Exporters Association, said that the Hom Mali 105 variety selected to compete was from the crop season of 2020/21. A 2 kg rice sample was obtained from the Northeastern Thailand. This Hom Mali variety competed for the World's Best Rice in 2009 for the first time. The contest was held in the Philippines which Thailand was named the winner.

The winners for 2010, 2011 and 2012 were Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia respectively. While in 2013, Cambodia and the US were announced co-winner.

In 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017, the winners were Thailand & Cambodia (co-winner), the US, and Thailand won the title in those last 2 years respectively. Cambodia was again the winner in 2018 while Vietnam won for the first time in 2019 for its Hom Mali ST 25. This year, 2020, the Hom Mali 105 rice sample was shipped for competition. The attributes considered by the chef judges consisted of 2 parts which were general appearance, cleanliness and quality after cooking.

Rice exporters forecasted the export in 2020 to only reach 5.7 – 5.8 million tons, mainly due to shipping container shortage. Only 3 out of 20 containers booked can be accommodated.

The shipment costs have increased considerably which adversely impacted the export target. This will cause the rice trade to slow down at the end of this year. Exports of rice utilize more than 50% share of the shipping containers for the whole country. Ocean freight is the major transportation for rice. Rice export for 2021 is foreseen to be 7 million tons.

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