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读中国人物 讲中国故事 第一期 袁隆平与杂交水稻

Yuan Longping, father of hybrid rice



Yuan Longping (袁隆平) is a Chinese agricultural scientist and educator, known for developing the first hybrid rice varieties in the 1970s.. Yuan was born in 1930 in Beijing, but his hometown is De'an County, Jiangxi Province. He was an expert in hybrid rice and academician of Chinese Academy of Engineering.

Yuan, the honorary president of Hunan Agricultural University, has helped China work a great wonder -- feeding nearly one-fifth of the world's population with less than 9 percent of the world's total arable land.

It was that year when Yuan applied for Southwest Agricultural College and began his special connection with rice -- a staple food of the Chinese people that would become the focus of his lifelong research career. A discovery of a peculiar wild rice species by Yuan in the southern island of Hainan in 1970 became the prelude of China's decades of hybrid rice research. Three years later, he cultivated the world's first high-yielding hybrid rice strain with three lines, namely, the male sterile, maintainer and restorer.

In 1986, Yuan brought up the hybrid rice breeding strategy -- from the three-line hybrid rice strain to a two-line, and later on to a one-line variety. The two-line technique means that the hybrid rice seeds are cultivated with the male sterile and restorer lines



only, which will call for less complicated techniques, save labor and cut cost. Compared with its three-line predecessor, the two-line hybrid rice strain has higher yields and makes use of manpower and material resources more efficient, according to rice experts.



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In 1996, the Ministry of Agriculture formally established a super rice breeding program. Four years later, the first phase of the 10.5 tonnes per hectare target was achieved. The record was shattered three more times with jumps to 12 tonnes in 2004, 13.5 tonnes in 2011 and 15 tonnes in 2014. Now the target of 18 tonnes per hectare is about to be achieved, according to Yuan.

FROM CHINA TO THE WORLD

