

## VOA Special English Agriculture Report

### RICE PLANT GENE MAP

This is Bill White with the VOA Special English Agriculture Report.

The American company Monsanto has announced what it calls a major development in efforts to identify all of the genes found in rice. It says scientists working in the United States have produced the first plans for a genetic map of the rice plant.

Monsanto says it will share its information freely with other researchers around the world. The company says it hopes the findings will lead to increased production of the food crop.

Monsanto Company researchers made the announcement in Beijing, China. China is the largest producer of rice in the world.

Rice is the world's most popular food grain. Last year, almost 600 million tons of rice were grown around the world. However, Monsanto notes that current rice production levels will not meet the needs of a growing world population 25 years from now.

The work on the rice plant gene map was done mainly in the laboratories of Leroy Hood at the University of Washington in Seattle. Mr. Hood and his team used a method known as gene-sequencing to make a map of the genetic material. The map is said to be about 85 percent complete.

Monsanto provided financial support for the work. The company says it will provide all of the information to the

International Rice Genome Sequencing Project. This project includes ten research teams around the world working to produce the complete genetic map of rice.

The company's announcement means a complete map of the genetic material of rice could be finished within three years.

Mr. Hood says his results show the work of genes in creating rice plants. He says scientists will have more than enough information to create a rice plant after they examine his work. Mr. Hood says scientists could use the information to produce more rice and more nutritious rice. And they could use the information to protect rice crops against insects and a lack of water. This could help feed more people. He also says the findings might lead to similar genetic mapping of other major crops, such as corn and wheat.

Chinese scientists praised Monsanto for sharing the information. They said it will help them carry out their own research. They said the findings will help Chinese farmers plant more productive rice within four or five years.

This VOA Special English Agriculture Report was written by George Grow. This is Bill White.

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