

# SHRIRAM's Wheat Story

**W**heat followed by rice is the 2nd largest food crop cultivated in India on about 30 million hectares. Wheat yields in major wheat growing States of India show large variations due to soil health, irrigation availability, number of cold days and temperature during winters, and prevailing agronomical practices. For example, wheat yields in irrigated, high agri-input intensive areas of northern India (Punjab, Haryana, and Western Uttar Pradesh) are above 4.5 tonnes per hectare, while yields in central and western States (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh & Bihar) are relatively lower (2.4 – 2.8 tonnes per hectare).

Most commonly grown wheat varieties are experiencing fatigue, and the agriculture scientist in Public & Private Sector are busy developing new wheat varieties with higher yield potential, disease tolerance and better grain quality. Wheat varieties, hitherto, were released by public

sector organizations in India, and given that seed production and marketing are administered by public sector institutions. The new wheat varieties have been slow to make inroads due to inadequate seed multiplication, distribution and extension activities. Vulnerability of the wheat crops to Stripe (yellow) rust in North Western States, delayed sowing in the North Eastern Plains zone owing to rice-wheat cropping cycle and earlier than the normal rise in temperature during February-March at grain filling stage are other major areas of concern that need to be addressed.

Aware of these problems, limitations and, therefore, opportunities to make its own space, Shriram Fertilisers & Chemicals (unit of DCM Shriram Ltd. New Delhi), perhaps the only private sector organization decided to begin the Wheat Variety Development Project in 2005. A team of experienced and renowned wheat breeders led by World Food Prize Laureate and Padma Shree Dr. Sanjay Rajaram, could develop, identify and release

5 new wheat varieties for North-West, East and Central Zones. With excellent seed production mechanism and stringent field & laboratory quality control system in place, the farmers reaped excellent yields.

Farmers of East Plain Zone, after a long time, could find their dream variety in 'Shriram Super-303' giving 3-4 quintal/ acre yield benefit, besides its high degree of tolerance to Helminthosporium disease and good grain quality, suitability for late sown conditions and tolerance to lodging due to its sturdier tillers. Farmers in central zone, cultivating wheat under limited irrigation, terminal stress and heat problem, have also witnessed similar success story of 'Shriram Super-111' wheat variety. Besides yields, better and bold grains and good chapatti making qualities of these varieties, have made the variety the first choice of farmers of Central Zone. It is worth mentioning here that a woman farmer of Chindwara (Madhya Pradesh) was awarded the 'Krishi Karman Award' of 2012-13 by



'Krishi Karman Award' given by Hon'ble President to a lady user farmer of Super-111 from Chindwara, MP





Features & benefits of Shriram Research wheat are demonstrated on demonstration fields



Dr. Sanjay Rajaram, The World Food Prize Laureate interacting with Punjab farmers during a field day on Shriram Research Wheat



Prominent display Shriram Research Wheat at a retail outlet



'Mandi' shows help the farmers to recall the name of Shriram Wheat varieties and helps him in taking a buying decision

Hon'ble President of India, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, who cultivated Shriram Super-111 in the very first year of its commercialization.

Knowing that for any of the wheat variety to become popular among farmers of Punjab and Haryana, it has to have high degree of tolerance to stripe rust disease which often attains epidemic proportions like the one in Rabi 2013-14. Shriram Fertilisers & Chemicals are ready for full scale launch of two varieties from Rabi 2016. These varieties have high degree of tolerance to prevailing strains of stripe rust and higher yield potential. Since beginning the wheat project in 2005 and release of first two varieties Shriram Super -152 & Super -172 in Rabi-2009, Shriram's wheat seeds are maintaining leadership market share because of farmers' acceptability.

Notwithstanding the fact that the yield benefit and quality of a product is ultimate, creation of awareness and interest among farmers and the dealers in a particular product are very important. Consequently, utilising the company's strength of reaching the farmers, extensive on-field promotional campaigns in the entire targeted marketing territories are regularly conducted, involving field demonstrations, farmer meetings, field days, crop shows and distribution of educational handbills. Processes for on time Quality Control results including 'GOT' test, processing, packaging and transportation are also streamlined for on time delivery of quality seeds of Shriram Research Wheat seeds.

'Wheat team' at Shriram Fertilisers & Chemicals are working with clear objective of helping wheat farmers

in all the major growing states to get at least 5 quintal per hectare yield increase over prevailing varieties, and get higher market price with better grain quality to make wheat as preferred crop for cultivation.

With collaborative efforts of Public and Private sector, if we could succeed in helping farmers to increase the targeted yields by adoption better adapted varieties in varied agro-climatic zones, it is possible to get an increase of another 10 million tonnes by adoption in about two-third of the total wheat acreage. There is need to harness the production, distribution and extension potential of private sector organisations like Shriram Fertilisers & Chemicals and many others, and collaborative Research & Development for developing better varieties.