

Chinese thumbs up for GM rice (Sat 30 Apr, 2005)

WARM-UPS

CHAT: Talk in pairs or groups about: rice / genetically modified (GM) food / pesticides / farmers / Chinese produce / food safety ... Change topics and partners frequently.

RICE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with rice. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

VERSATILE: Rice is one of the most versatile foods in the world. Write down the different ways you know of using rice in food. Add them to the list below. Which of them sound delicious or otherwise to you?

- a. boiled rice mixed with hot tea (a Japanese dish)
- b. rice for breakfast
- c. rice and curry
- d. savory rice crackers
- e. rice cakes
- f. rice balls with a pickled plum inside
- g. paella / risotto / gratin
- h. sake
- i. rice baked in milk and sugar (English dessert)
- j. a strawberry encased in sweetened pounded rice (Japanese sweet)
- k. other

STAPLE FOOD COMPARISON: Look at these staple foods from around the world and talk with your partner about how important each are to you. Research the ones you don't know:

bananas / pasta / cassava / tapioca / lentils / rice / bread / beans / sorghum / potato / yams

“HI! I’M RICE”: Adopt one of the staple foods above as your new personality. Introduce yourself to other staple foods (your classmates) and talk about your life as rice / bread / cassava etc.

2-MINUTE RICE DEBATES: Face each other in pairs and engage in the following fun 2-minute debates. Students A take the first argument, students B the second. Rotate pairs to ensure a lively pace and noise level is kept:

- a. Rice is better than bread. vs. Bread is better than rice.
- b. Brown rice is nicest. vs. White rice is nicest.
- c. American rice is tastiest. vs. Indian / Thai / Japanese rice is tastiest.
- d. Boiled rice is best. vs. Fried rice is best.
- e. Rice pudding (rice baked in milk and sugar) is delicious. vs. That's no way to use rice.
- f. Boiled rice is great for breakfast. vs. Boiled rice is best for dinner.
- g. Rice is more versatile than potatoes. vs. Potatoes are ten times more versatile.
- h. Rice is boring. vs. You must be joking.
- i. Sticky rice for me. vs. Real rice is fluffy.

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PRE-READING

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'research' and 'project'.

TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true or false:

- a. China has asked the General Motors car company to grow rice. T / F
- b. Chinese people have voted to allow the use of GM rice. T / F
- c. Chinese research showed genetically modified rice to be good for farmers. T / F
- d. GM rice yielded a ninety per cent higher harvest than conventional rice. T / F
- e. Pesticides used on rice in China kill 500 farmers annually. T / F
- f. China's government has given GM rice the green light. T / F
- g. China licensed GM rice over a decade ago. T / F
- h. If China OKs GM rice, it would have a big impact on world farming. T / F
- i. Farmers in developing countries are not interested in GM rice seeds. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | | |
|----|------------------|--------------|
| a. | green light | varieties |
| b. | full steam ahead | significant |
| c. | innately | posthaste |
| d. | strains | hesitant |
| e. | yielded | be adequate |
| f. | suffice | thumbs up |
| g. | reluctant | cry out |
| h. | zealous | inherently |
| i. | substantial | enthusiastic |
| j. | clamor | harvested |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. | the green | strains of rice |
| b. | go full steam | convince the Chinese government |
| c. | natural | to follow |
| d. | innately insect | ahead |
| e. | rice crops yielded | the trials for a decade |
| f. | his research will suffice to | resistant |
| g. | monitoring | GM-grain go-ahead |
| h. | reluctant | for GM seeds |
| i. | gives the | light |
| j. | farmers would clamor | a nine per cent higher harvest |

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READING:

ODD WORD OUT: Circle the word in each group of three (in italics) that does not fit.

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BNE: A ten-year research project on Chinese rice farming may have given Chinese authorities the green light to go full *steam / speed / stamina* ahead with using genetically modified (GM) rice. The study, published in the journal *Science* on April 29th, compared natural *varieties / strains / stresses* of rice with plants that had been modified to be innately insect-resistant. Data from trials in small farms revealed that farmers using GM rice crops *manufactured / yielded / produced* a nine per cent higher harvest than farmers using conventional rice, spent eight times less money on *insecticides / pesticides / homicides*, and were healthier. Pesticides poison some 50,000 Chinese farmers a year, 500 fatally.

Research leader Dr Huang Jikun hopes his research will suffice to *convince / woo / brainwash* the Chinese government into licensing GM rice for commercial use. China has been closely monitoring various trials since the 1980s. It has until now been *disinclined / reluctant / craving* to follow America's zealous lead for the commercialization of GM seeds. If the world's largest country gives the GM-grain *go-ahead / thumbs up / thumbs down*, the impact on farming worldwide could be substantial. The price of Chinese rice would greatly undercut that of any other rice-growing nation's prices, while developing-world farmers would *clamor / climb over each other / hike* for GM seeds.

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DISCUSSION

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. Did anything in the article surprise you?
- c. Did anything in the article worry you?
- d. What do you think of the idea of GM rice?
- e. Do you think genetically modified food is a good thing?
- f. What are the arguments for and against GM food?
- g. George W. Bush says GM crops would greatly reduce hunger in Africa. What do you think?
- h. How close is genetically modifying food to the cloning of animals?
- i. Aren't scientists genetically modifying us by genetically modifying food?
- j. GM food is new. We don't know the long-term effects. Is this dangerous?
- k. Do you think GM crops will change the countryside and our food chain?
- l. Are you a big rice lover?
- m. What role does rice play in your life?
- n. Could you live without rice?
- o. What is the best way to eat rice?
- p. Would you be happy to buy GM rice grown in China?
- q. Which country produces the tastiest rice?
- r. Should rice be baked in milk and sugar, with perhaps cinnamon, raisins or even strawberry jam added, as with British rice pudding?
- s. Did you like this discussion?
- t. Teacher / Student additional questions.

OPINIONS: In pairs / groups, write down the opinions of the following people or creatures on GM rice. Change partners and exchange opinions. Talk about whether or not you agree with these opinions.

- a. farmer
- b. organic vegetable grower
- c. Greenpeace activist
- d. very poor consumer
- e. scientist
- f. a wild animal that lives on farms
- g. an insect that needs the crops to survive
- h. supermarket owner

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HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on rice. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. STAPLE FOOD:** Research staple foods from around the world. Show where different staples are grown around the world and the different ways they are used.
- 4. FARMER:** Imagine you are a farmer somewhere in the world. Write a letter to your government explaining your opinions on genetically modified crops.

TEXT: The odd words out are underlined

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