

[Native Rice Varieties of the H're in Po E Commune, Kon Plong District, Kon Tum Province, Vietnam]

Video: https://youtu.be/tG_eD4Wniw

Subtitles and Transcript

00:00~

The H're perception is that their living landscape is the soulful ecology and is governed by the different Nature's Spirits. Their living landscapes have long been voluntarily preserved and nurtured by entire community members through their customary law system.

Landscapes and residents and their personality traits in the area altogether form a unique living landscape and human-ecological system that distinct themselves from the others.

The H're people in Po E commune viewed and classified and named different types of their living landscapes according to where the Nature's Spirits reside.

The highest peak "Vang Y Phu" of Violak village is home to the Spirit of Mountain, which has the ultimate Nature power. The Mount is the religious center of the entire village ecosystem. Vang Y Phu is "the Spirit of Mountain Mother". The customary law of the H're people natures and worships the Vang Y Phu. Vang Ha Leng (Ha Leng Stream) is representing the Spirit of Water. This stream is where maintaining the souls in both spiritual and material lives of the H're people.

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It is also the place for villagers to practice ritual and traditional festivals to welcome the water to the sacred place in every family's home. The customary law of the H're teachers that every village must organize ritual ceremony to worship the Spirit of Water in December every year. The main living source of the H're people here rely on planting rice. The Vang Y Phu Mountain and Vang Ha Leng Stream are the life-blood to nurture the Vi Nong and Violak rice fields.

According to the H're perception the interaction between Vang Y Phu, Vang Ha Leng and Vi Nong rice field is like the Yin-Yang relationship.

Vi Nong and Violak are places where products are produced to offer the Nature's Spirits but also sources of lives for entire villagers.

Therefore, the customary law only allows local indigenous rice varieties which have been long adaptive and that does not allow usage of pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

Rice fields are planted in only one season during the year. Such regulation is seen as the oldest local indigenous knowledge of the H're in Po E commune. This knowledge has been formed and practiced in agricultural production and natural resources preservation.

02:01~

Villagers also practice the fallow (land-resting) in order to restore soil fertility, limiting pests and weeds without having to use pesticides, chemical fertilizers.

These knowledge are beneficial in production of food, fresh food, protection of natural resources and biodiversity and also maintain the H're cultural identity.

Over generations, H're people in Po E commune have preserved local rice varieties which are suitable to weather conditions, geographical features and their culture.

As the ancient legend recounts, local indigenous rice varieties today were originated from one rice variety Given by the Nature's Spirit to an elder. Such rice variety has produced many different types of seeds. Each type of seeds then became one type of varieties as today.

03:03~

As the H're mothers from Violak, Vi K Oa and Vi Po E 2 villages shared they still maintain 23 different types of local indigenous rice varieties, including :

'Mao Co': rice is in greyish white, and are often used for making sacred cakes and wine in ritual and traditional festivals.

'Mao Nu': rice is in reddish white, and are often used for worshipping, making cake and wine and cereal; And is often cooked for women's eating after birth.

'Mao Hroa': rice is in nice red color, and are often used for making Tet cake and wine for traditional ceremonies and festivals.

'Mao Tdoang', 'Mao Tinh', 'Mao Net', 'Mao Diu' are often cooked for daily food and making Ghe wine.

However, due to pressure from population growth, more extreme weather conditions, climate change, drought, floods, H're families in Po E commune have gradually started to plant new rice varieties for "higher yield" and shorter crop time.

04:03~

These varieties are Mao Tram Thom, Mao Mong, Mao Krang, Mao Deo and Mao Mep Thom.

Dinh Van Theo – Party Secretary of Vi K Oa village: Generally, 69 families (70% of population) grow the Mao Mong rice varieties. Elders use native rice to make wine. The Mao Mong has two types. Sticky Mao Mong can be used to make cake or nuggets.

These new rice varieties are sown in April, harvested in August, two months earlier than the local rice varieties. They can avoid moisture, fungus, mound and damage to rice, due to the rainy season now arrives earlier during post-harvesting time.

Whereas local rice varieties are harvested in October; so, it is at risk of flooding or too much rain that would affect the yield due to also recent climate change impacts.

05:03~

In the situation of natural forests disappearance due to conversion to acacia and cassava plantations which cause water shortages, use of herbicides, soil nutrient depletion. If they focus too much on new hybrid rice varieties, they will gradually become more dependent upon outside seeds, herbicides, pesticides and chemical fertilizers. This will greatly affect the long-term social health and economic life of villagers as well as their entire living ecosystem and soulful landscapes.

While their cultural identity associated with local rice plantings might become further eroded or transformed over time.

Mr. Dinh Thai – Chairman of Po E Communal Farmer Union: Hybrid rice varieties could give high yield, but must use chemical fertilizer. If we overuse chemical fertilizer over time, it will cause hardened soil and adverse impact to human health.

Mr. A Chon – Deputy Party Secretary of Po E commune: Despite these challenges, with the active involvement of local authorities and responsibility of key villagers many parts in villages of Po E commune have attempted to preserving and maintaining local indigenous rice varieties. This contributes to maintaining and promote the unique cultural identity of the H're people which has been preserved since their ancestors for centuries.

06:25~

Ms. Y Nga – Deputy Chairman of Po E Communal People Council: Previously, 100% of residents in 7 villages of Po E commune planted their native rice. From 2010 until now, in two villages of Vi K Oa and Vi O Lak, local native varieties are increasingly lost. In the remaining 5 villages, native varieties are remained. The Council wants villagers from 2016 onwards to continue to preserve these native breeds.