

M S Swaminathan (left) and Norman Borlaug

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Working in Mexico, Borlaug had developed a special breed of dwarf wheat that resisted a wide spectrum of plant pests and diseases and produced two to three times more grain than the traditional varieties. Subramaniam knew that if successfully applied in India, this new variety wheat would fill its granaries to overflow – as it eventually did, heralding the Green Revolution in India.

However, India was predominantly a rice-eating nation – rice was cultivated in every region, from the hilly terrains of north and north-east to the coasts of south. With the specter of famine, shortages, and starvation hanging over the sub-continent, IR8 came as a boon to India. Nekkanti Subba Rao was the first farmer who planted and widely shared seeds of IR8 in India in 1967. The next year, IR8 was planted on 1,600 hectares in his village and the rest, as they say, was history. IR8 seeds were soon being distributed throughout the country.

Today, Subba Rao is affectionately called “Mr. IR8” and “Dhaan Pandit” in his community, due to his huge success in multiplying IR8 seeds. Incidentally, this pioneering farmer has also been instrumental in promoting and distributing Swarna-Sub1, a