

Exploring the paddy field ecosystems of Sri Lanka

The PI of the project, Dr Finbarr is a terrestrial ecologist who has a research interest on maintaining or improving rice ecosystem health through conservation of beneficial species and enhancement of rice ecosystem functions. Finbarr leads research into landscape applications for improved rice ecosystem health. He has engaged in multidisciplinary, holistic approaches for maintaining biodiversity in rice ecosystems and enhancing the natural regulation of herbivore populations by beneficial predators and parasitoids. This work includes selection and proper deployment of herbivore resistant and tolerant rice varieties, design of agro-ecological and ecologically engineered rice production systems, and adaptation of rice crop management practices to specific landscapes and regions.

Source: <http://irri.org/about-us/our-people/specialists/finbarr-horgan>

Dr Finbarr's research interests lead him to explore the paddy field of the Southern Sri Lanka. He carried out a study together with TERN and students of Sabaragamuwa University to assess the agricultural practices quantify the use of agrochemicals, understand local farmers awareness on the impacts of pesticides and the willingness to convert to organic rice farming. The study also explored the cultivation of native paddy varieties. In the next stage, the study moved the Ma wee rice ecosystem and its ecological value. Further, Dr Finbarr's wide interest in paddy field ecosystems lead to a student research on the diversity of paddy field avifauna and the ecosystem services they perform. The study also consisted of a survey to assess the awareness of the local farmers on ecosystem services performed by the avifauna.

This an ongoing project.