



International Conference of Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka 2015 (ICSUSL 2015)

## Development of mobile dryer for freshly harvested paddy

TMR Dissanayake<sup>a</sup>, DMSP Bandara<sup>a</sup>, HMAP Rathnayake<sup>a</sup>, BMKS Thilakarathne<sup>a</sup>,  
DBT Wijerathne<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Institute of Postharvest Technology, Jayanthi Mawatha, Anuradhapura, 50 000, Sri Lanka*

<sup>b</sup>*Ministry Of Agriculture, Rajamalwatta, Baththaramulla, 10 120, Sri Lanka*

### Abstract

Presently, due to an increase in usage of large scale mechanical threshers and combine harvesters, moisture content of freshly harvested paddy is being high as much as 18-24%. The mechanical threshers or combine harvesters with elevated capacity enable for both harvesting and threshing at once. Thus the paddy harvested all over persists with high moisture content that affects adversely in unit operations of paddy processing such as cleaning, storing, and milling. The research was conducted to overcome this problem by developing a mobile paddy dryer that can be used at field level for freshly harvested paddy. A mobile dryer, one ton capacity, was developed and tested for drying freshly harvested paddy. The performance of the mobile dryer was evaluated in terms of overall thermal efficiency, heat utilization factor, coefficient of performance, total heat efficiency and head rice yields. The overall thermal efficiency of this dryer was 46.83%. The average heating efficiencies namely heat utilization factor and total heat efficiency were 0.82 and 0.72 respectively. The coefficient of performance of the developed dryer was 0.18. The head rice yields of freshly harvested paddy after drying at 60 °C air temperature was of 73.78%. The overall drying performance of the dryer was found to be good.

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Peer-review under responsibility of International Conference of Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka 2015 (ICSUSL 2015).

**Keywords:** drying; movable paddy dryer; freshly harvested paddy;

### 1. Introduction

Excess moisture in harvested paddy if not removed quickly has an adverse effect on grain losses and milling quality of rice. Excess grain moisture can alter final characteristics of the rice.

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +94-714-192-964 E-mail address [mrtdissanayake@yahoo.com](mailto:mrtdissanayake@yahoo.com)

Short- and medium-grain varieties are generally harvested at 20 to 24 % moisture content and long-grain varieties at 18 to 21 % moisture content and this moisture levels have to be brought down to 14% or less by drying before subsequent storage and processing as quickly as possible<sup>1</sup>. Using combine harvesters leads to harvest paddy with high moisture content because both harvesting and threshing actions have to be done simultaneously without field drying. Farmers do not have facility to dry paddy before storing due mainly to unavailability of drying yards and dryers at farm level. At bad weather conditions, drying mats used for sun drying are rendered useless. Storing paddy with high moisture content leads to spoilage of the paddy. Microbes found on the freshly harvested paddy grow under these conditions and produce a wide variety of volatile compounds that impact the flavor/aroma of the milled rice obtained after milling of the paddy<sup>2</sup>. This paddy may also give higher broken rice percentage.

Hence, the Institute of Post Harvest Technology initiated this research project on development of a portable dryer for freshly harvested paddy. This study aims to develop a dryer having capacity 1 MT per batch to dry freshly harvested paddy at the field itself just after harvesting, in order to remove excess moisture of the paddy and to test the performance of the dryer with freshly harvested paddy at air flow rate of 6 m<sup>3</sup>/min and temperature 60 °C that is emphasized by Chakraverty and More<sup>3</sup> in 1983. It is expected that this developed dryer will enhance the quality of freshly harvested paddy by reducing the moisture content up to the allowable limit for safe storage thus enabling farmers to keep their paddy for longer periods. According to the Standardization of Sri Lanka, allowable limit of moisture content for storage is 14%.

## 2. Methodology

The dryer designed at the Institute of Post Harvest Technology, Sri Lanka consists of the following components: drying chamber, bucket elevator, suction blower, fan, kerosene burner, screw conveyer and movable gate (loading hopper) shown in figure 1. Freshly harvested paddy is fed to the screw conveyer through movable gates at both sides of the dryer. The screw conveyer at bottom of the drying chamber moves paddy to bucket elevator at front side of the dryer. The bucket elevator feeds paddy to spreader at top of the drying chamber and it is allowed to pass through the drying chamber using the gravitational force and collected by the screw conveyer. The paddy comes in contact with a cross flow of hot air and is mixed while flowing down through the drying chamber. The paddy is re-circulated until its moisture content is brought to the desired level. Suction blower removes moist air and dust from drying chamber. Bag prepared using cloth is fixed to suction blower and this bag releases cleaned air to environment while keeping dust particle in the bag.

A kerosene oil burner (Model: SL-3L, Korea) is used as an air heater in this dryer. Temperature of drying air could be controlled in this kerosene oil burner. The drying air temperature is kept at 60 °C. Bucket elevator and screw conveyer were operated using electric motor of capacity 200 W. To determine the performance of the mobile dryer, three drying tests were conducted with mobile dryer for freshly harvested paddy at a temperature of 60 °C. A minimum air flow rate of 6 m<sup>3</sup>/ min was maintained for all experiments<sup>3</sup>.

The performance of the mobile dryer was evaluated in terms of overall thermal efficiency; heat utilization factor, coefficient of performance, total heat efficiency and the head rice yields.

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