**Kernal Basmati**

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Well done both, government and rice trade under the umbrella of REAP, for protecting the brand name Kernal as linked to Pakistani basmati Super Kernal.

Super Kernal got the name from Kernal Basmati, a basmati variety of early 1960s.

Basmati rice is a special type of aromatic rice, that has long and slender grains with high cooking quality when grown in its traditional area locally named as ‘kallar tract’ in Pakistan and some areas in India, famous being Dehradun.

The first ever basmati variety ‘Basmati 370’ was approved on selection basis and released in 1933 for general cultivation by Rice Farm, Kala Shah Kaku (now Rice Research Institute, Kala Shah Kaku).

Later on, another basmati variety named Kernal Basmati, through farmer’s selection became popular and widely spread among the rice farming community on its distinguished merits. It had high salt tolerance and could grow with unfit ground water and harsh climate, extra-long grains, and easy threshing (manual) compared to the original and only land race of Pakistan and India: Basmati 370. All other quality characteristics (aroma, softness, kernel elongation after cooking, etc) were at par with the Basmati-370.

[Defeat evident on Maryam Nawaz's face: Dr Firdous](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2020/defeat-evident-on-maryam-nawaz-s-face-dr-firdous)

Several newspaper articles revealed that during the 1965 war between Pakistan and India, the seed of Kernel Basmati crossed over to India for the first time. Then, the Indian rice industry took full advantage of these traits and used it to the maximum for its basmati breeding programmes and exponential export growth. In India, Kernal Basmati has many names; Pakistan Basmati, Basmati 386, HBC 19, Karnal Local and Taraori Basmati with many different spellings.

India still hides its prized possession such as the traditional Pakistani land race variety like Basmati 370, while it was evolved in Pakistan and has been under cultivation in the paddy fields of Pakistan since 1960/61. It seems hard to understand why our scientists and traders did not own it and the both stakeholders have been trying to bury it for long.

In the best interest of the Pakistan and rice industry, I wish the trade before was as vigilant to protect its commercial interests as it is now. In the past, on safeguarding Basmati Interests, we let Indian trade” off the hook “on many occasions. For example, in 2004, we have been intentionally hiding the authentic proof of showing to international authorities, how India is showing Pakistani evolved Basmati varieties as Indian traditional Basmati varieties?

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There is no doubt that both traders and researchers are responsible for this who have put Pakistan on the defensive. In this regard, please see my articles entitled “India commercially exploits Pakistani basmati,” published in the Nation, and “Indian basmati varieties originate from Pakistani kernal,” published in the Business Recorder in February, 2004.

Pakistan just had to confront Indian trade. We didn’t. Why? Instead in August 2004, we struck a trade deal. India included our Basmati variety, Super Basmati (a mega variety released in 1996) in their list and Pakistan included the Indian variety, so called Pusa basmati (dubious duplicate?). This gave India great leverage in the international marketing of basmati.

Whenever I tried to raise the voice against this injustice. I was labelled as the one who is “watching and protecting his personal interests” due to the linkage of “Kernal” Basmati to my late father Col [R] Syed Mukhtar Hussain.

[PIA to dismiss 50pc of staff under its restructure plan](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2020/pia-to-dismiss-50pc-of-staff-under-its-restructure-plan)

Researchers have proved themselves too weak in protecting and promoting their scientific research of finding DNA markers enabling differentiating Basmati rice varieties from the other varieties. Pakistan did not make any protocol on DNA testing of Basmati as India did. We should have done it. Pakistan research institutes with high tech laboratories did not participate in collaborative trials of basmati. Two labs of India participated. I didn’t get any response from the government or research industry to do the needful. Research had to find one DNA marker to separate the Indian variety Yamini (CSR30). Pakistan would have benefitted in millions of dollars and at the same time countered the once again bogus Indian narrative of traditional versus evolved.

On the policy side, our biggest blunder has been not fighting the patent case against Rice Tek in the late 1990s. Why didn’t we challenge them? I have no idea. India fought the case and won it for both India and Pakistan. The knowledge they gained, in fighting the case, was applied in future basmati trade wars with Pakistan.

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Despite all this we finally managed to get a bigger share in European market due to the pesticide issue faced by Indian traders (Poetic justice). My past experience of the rice trade, research and of the government watching Basmati interests are very disappointing and disheartening. All three let down Basmati badly. In my view no one can stop the real potential Pakistan basmati.

The day border trade with Iran is legally opened an economic revolution will come. One million tonnes of the Iranian basmati market has been waiting for us for long, besides other agriculture commodities. The Vikings in the old ages used to make their ships only from the corner tree of the forest which is considered to be the strongest, as it goes through the greatest stress and strain during its growth. Both, Kernal Basmati and Pakistan, share the same predicament. Both shine, perform, excel and deliver under pressure.