

FOOD & CULTURAL HERITAGE



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Food as nutrition is a basic need and human right. But anthropologists, folklorists and historians teach us that food consumption, what we classify as food, how we prepare and eat food, also embodies deep cultural meanings. Food reflects history, carries traditions and reveals the identity of ethnic groups. Food marks every celebration in our life cycle and is socially constructed. Food is also part of a production system: it is taken from the earth or the sea and - by way of farmers and fishers - is delivered to markets, restaurants and other places of social gathering. Adan Rice is not only an agricultural product, it is also a cultural product of the people of the Highlands.



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These days, the public is increasingly committed to greener and healthier lifestyles. Many initiatives try to educate consumers, protect the environment, boost local economies and protect the cultural identity of food. They are ways to establish more transparency on the origin of food and develop trust between producers and consumers. Food is no longer an anonymous product. It is the mirror of specific economic, environmental and socio-cultural relations.



We do not need to be part of a traditional community in a physical sense to become actors of change for healthier lifestyles and the protection of bio-cultural traditions. Simply through our food choices we can help protect key biodiversity and maintain the value and cultural identity of food crops.



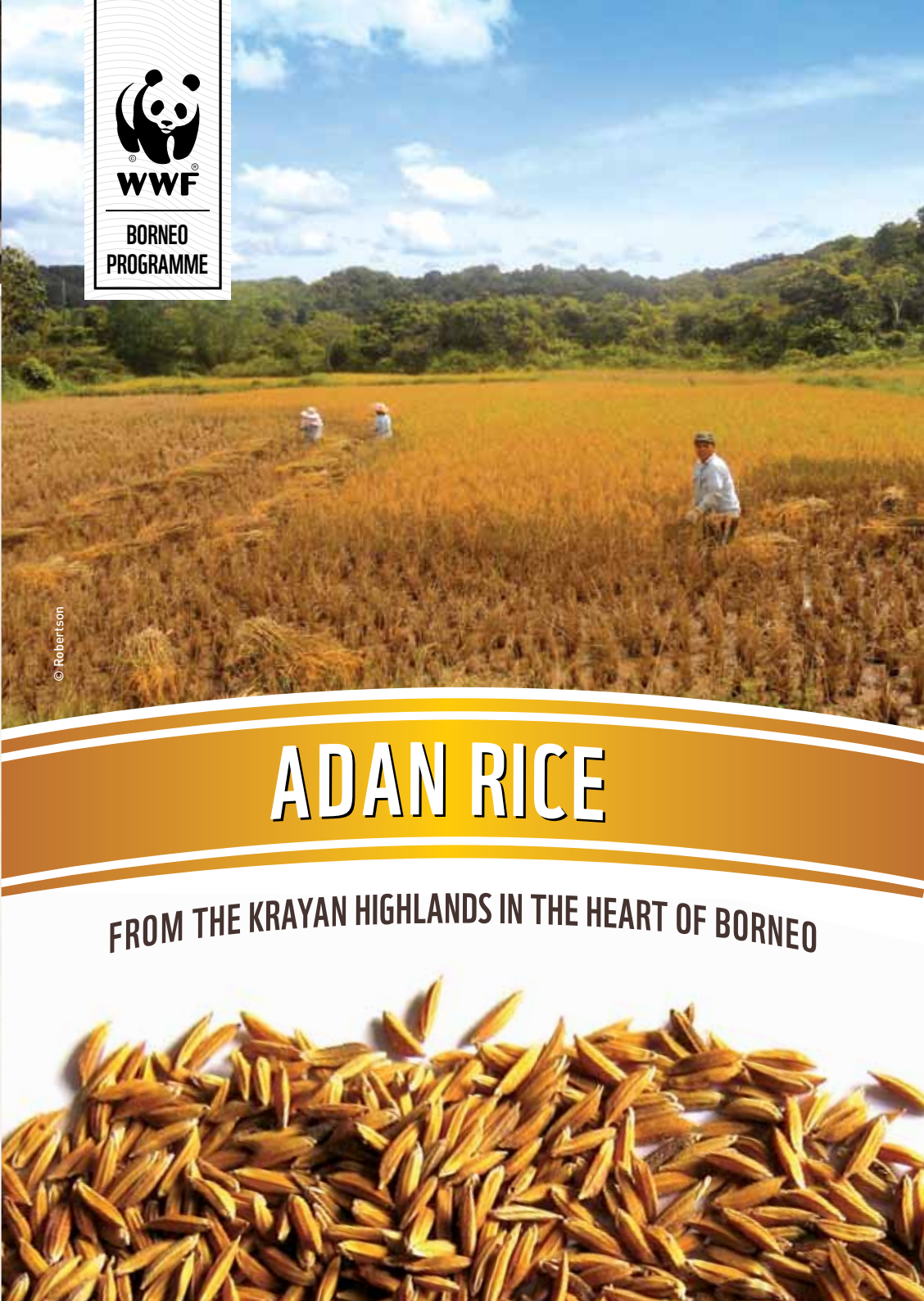
“We have no other homeland, save the Highlands of Borneo where we have lived for generations.”  
*(Lewi G Paru, Head of FORMADAT-Indonesia)*

FORMADAT

The island of Borneo is a treasure trove for biodiversity and culture. The Highlands are the homeland of several Dayak Indigenous Peoples: Lundayeh/Lun Bawang, Sa’ban, Kelabit, and Penan. Although they are now separated by the international border between Indonesia and Malaysia, the groups are linguistically and culturally closely related and share the same origin and homeland in the Highlands. Living in a relatively remote area, even today close social and economic interactions and interdependence are essential part of the life and resilience of these communities.

Learning from unsustainable development experiences in surrounding areas, the local communities were concerned that by intensifying the economic development of the area they would risk the degradation of the quality of the social and natural environment.

In October 2004, the Lundayeh/Lun Bawang, Kelabit and Sa’ban people of the Highlands of Borneo established a transboundary organisation. The Forum of the Indigenous People of the Highlands of Borneo -FORMADAT- aims at increasing awareness and understanding about the Highland communities, maintain cultural traditions and encourage sustainable development in the Heart of Borneo. The event was supported by WWF-Indonesia.







Paddy field in Kurid

# FOOD AND BIODIVERSITY IN THE KRAYAN HIGHLANDS

Many of the edible plants and fruits that we find on sale today originate from the forests or other ecosystems. Many of these crops were once domesticated by the ancestors of present day Indigenous farmers. Over time, some of these crops and plants have travelled across continents to become ‘staple foods.’ It was the active experiments and practices of local people that shaped the diversity in food choices that is available at present. Agriculture is a way in which we produce food, but also a way in which we manage the land and its resources, and shape economic, social and cultural relations.

The Highlands of the Heart of Borneo offer some enchanting views. Located at an altitude between 760 meters and 1.200 meters, temperatures are cool at night. The typical landscape is one of wide valleys interlaced with traditional paddy fields, bamboo stands and fruit trees embraced by slopes covered with dense forest.



The scenery is almost gentle. People and nature seem to have worked together well to shape the landscape in beautiful and sustainable ways. Over the centuries, local Indigenous Peoples have transformed the bottom of the valleys into rice fields and created a self-sustaining agricultural cycle integrated with water buffaloes husbandry. Locally, both wet and dry rice fields are planted. Gardens at the edges of the forests are cultivated and enriched with many fruit and crop species.



The agricultural cycle of rice in the villages of Buduk Kubul and Tang Payeh

A trip to the Krayan will surprise the visitors for its high agro-biodiversity. Survey results point out that, for example, over 40 varieties of rice are planted and cultivated in this area. The diversity of local food plants and resources is not just a good way to conserve biodiversity. It also preserves



the quality and variety of nutritional sources, and is an important way to build resilience and adaptability. By maintaining a variety of seeds and plants local people will be better able to cope with climate change or other environmental challenges.

## KRAYAN ADAN RICE

Adan Rice is the finest among the local rice varieties still cultivated in the Krayan and other parts of the Highlands. It comes in three different varieties: white, red and black. This rice is famous for its small grain, fine texture and pleasant taste. The high carbohydrate (white variety) and mineral content (black variety) of this rice contribute to excellent nutritional value.

The Adan Rice is cultivated according to traditional and organic practices by the farmers of the Highlands both in Sarawak and the Krayan (Kalimantan). Each family cultivates between one and five hectares of rice fields and the cultivation process is rather labor intensive. The fresh and clear water from the mountain streams is channeled by bamboo pipes or earth canals into



Krayan Adan Rice (white)

the fields. Buffaloes are not used for ploughing but are let loose into the rice fields after harvest to trample the earth, eat the weeds and fertilize the soil in the process, so that the rice fields are ready for the next planting season. Nurseries are prepared in July and the seedlings are planted shortly after. Harvest season begins in late December through February. Adan Rice is planted once per year.

In 2012, the Adan Rice from the Krayan Highlands was awarded the certificate of Geographic Indication (GI) by the government of Indonesia in acknowledgment of the unique characteristics of this rice and its place. Only rice from the Krayan Highlands can be promoted and marketed with the name of Krayan Adan rice. The Black Adan Rice from the Krayan was recently included in the Slow Food Ark of Taste products. (<http://www.slowfoodfoundation.com/ark/details/1982/black-adan-krayan-rice#.U5av56WpM7E>)