



AGRI MAGAZINE

(International E-Magazine for Agricultural Articles)

Volume: 02, Issue: 07 (July, 2025)

Available online at <http://www.agrimagazine.in>

© Agri Magazine, ISSN: 3048-8656

Rice Bean: The Underrated Super Legume We Should All Be Eating

*Surendra Choudhary

M. Sc. (Agri.) Entomology, College of post Postgraduate Studies in Agricultural Sciences, CAU (Imphal), Umiam, Meghalaya-793301, India

*Corresponding Author's email: surendragora5772@gmail.com

Rice bean is a promising crop that offers a multitude of benefits due to its high nutritional value, adaptability, and resilience. It's rich in protein, dietary fiber, and essential micronutrients, making it an excellent dietary supplement, particularly for people in developing countries. With its ability to thrive in challenging environments, rice bean has emerged as a potential solution for achieving nutritional self-sufficiency.

Keywords: Rice bean, Underutilized legume, Nutritional benefits and Sustainable agriculture

Introduction

Names like kidney beans, chickpeas, or lentils frequently spring to mind when we think about protein-rich legumes. However, are you familiar with rice beans? With good cause, this unassuming crop that has historically been produced in regions of India and Southeast Asia is quietly making a resurgence. It's time we shine a spotlight on this forgotten legume with a powerful nutritional punch.

What is Rice Bean

Rice bean (*Vigna umbellata*) is a warm-season perennial legume, often grown as a minor crop in Nepal and Northern India. short-lived crop usually grown as annually and often grown on hill slopes, fallow lands, or as an intercrop. Though it's been cultivated for centuries in tribal and rural regions, it hasn't quite made it into mainstream diets. But that's starting to change.

Nutritional Powerhouse

Don't be fooled by its small size—rice bean is rich in protein, dietary fiber, iron, calcium, and essential amino acids, making it a highly nutritious alternative to more common legumes. Compared to other legumes:

Nutrient	Rice Bean (<i>Vigna umbellata</i>)	Chickpea (<i>Cicer arietinum</i>)	Mung Bean (<i>Vigna radiata</i>)	Kidney Bean (<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>)
Energy (kcal)	336	364	347	333
Protein (g)	22–25	19.3	23.9	24.4
Carbohydrates (g)	60	60.7	62.6	6
Dietary Fiber (g)	7–10	17.4	16.3	15.2
Fat (g)	1.0–1.5	6.0	1.2	0.8
Calcium (mg)	268	105	132	83
Iron (mg)	7.8	6.2	6.7	6.7
Magnesium (mg)	160	115	130	140
Zinc (mg)	4.5	3.4	2.7	2.8
Lysine (g/100g protein)	7.3	7.5	6.8	6.6

- It has **more calcium than chickpeas**, **Higher iron content** than mung beans, which helps prevent **anaemia and bone-related issues**.
- A **balanced amino acid profile**, especially lysine, which complements cereal-based diets
- It's also **low in fat** and **gluten-free**, perfect for modern health-conscious eaters

Climate-Resilient and Farmer-Friendly

Rice bean isn't just good for you—it's great for farmers too. It's **drought-tolerant, pest-resistant**, and can grow in poor soils with minimal inputs. In a time when climate change is threatening food security, crops like rice bean offer a **resilient and sustainable option**.

How Can You Eat It

Just like other beans! You can cook rice beans into:

- Curries or soups
- Sprout it for salads
- Roast and grind it into flour
- Or blend it into snacks and traditional recipes

Its **mild flavour** makes it incredibly versatile.

Why Should We Care

In today's world, where malnutrition, hidden hunger, and the loss of crop variety are growing concerns, reviving traditional crops like rice beans is not merely a return to old practices—it's a step toward smarter nutrition. These crops can help strengthen local farming communities, add variety to our diets, and lessen our reliance on a limited number of major food crops.

Final Thought

Next time you plan a meal with legumes, don't just pick the usual lentils or kidney beans. Rice bean, though lesser known, is full of nutrition and deserves a spot in our diets. It's time we rediscover this hidden gem and include it in our food systems for a healthier future.