Agroecology monitoring by private sector companies in the global rice value chain.

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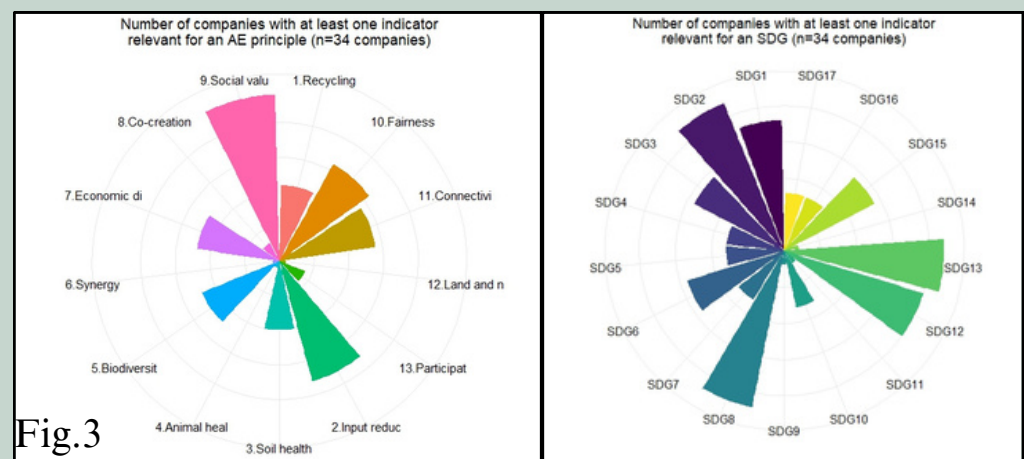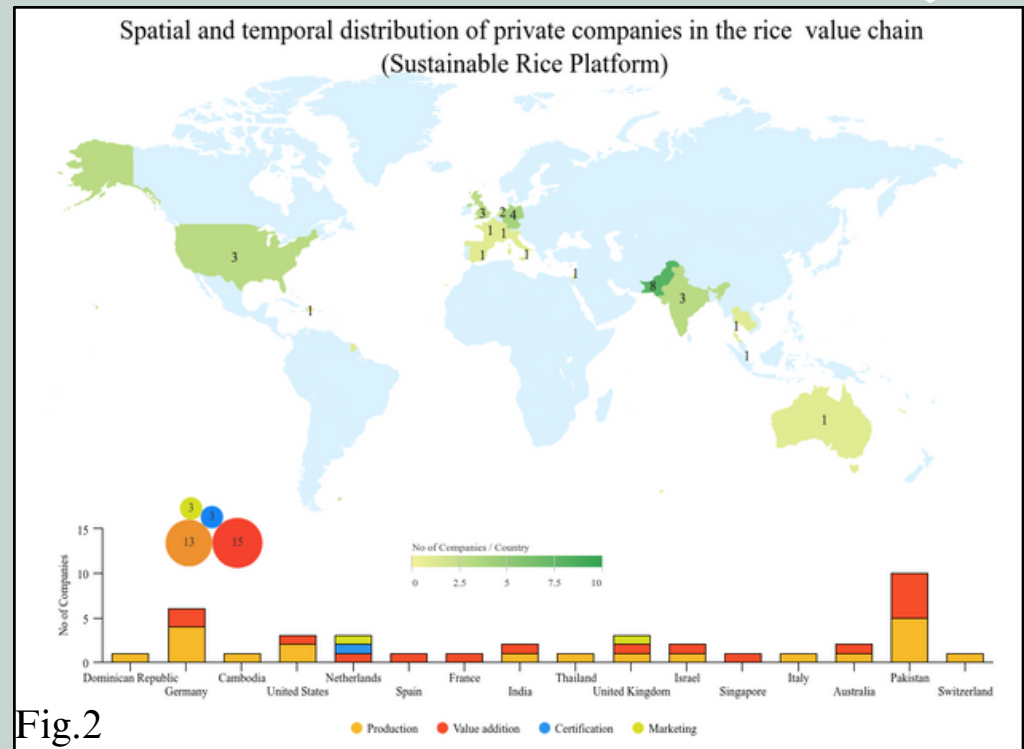
Introduction

- Rice is a staple food for over half the world's population.
- However, rice value chains are a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and the destruction of wetland ecosystems.
- In addition, they are often associated with child labour and gender inequality, unfair product prices, and inadequate compensation for farmers.
- Many companies have responded to these challenges by implementing sustainability monitoring practices, driven by consumers and policymakers pressure.
- *This study aims to examine the alignment of sustainability indicators with agroecology principles.*

Methods

- Qualitative document analysis of Sustainability reports and online content of 34 out of the 57 rice companies with membership to the Sustainable Rice Platform.
- Deductive codes were the 13 agroecological principles (fig. 1) as defined by Bivision's (2023) B-ACT tool.

Fig.1

Results

- 1/3 of the companies had GRI standard sustainability reports, primarily marketing and value addition companies (Fig. 2).
- Monitoring was done using digital tools, satellite images, farm visits, and reports from their suppliers.
- The most reported agroecology principles were; social values and diets, Input reduction and Fairness. (Fig.3)
- SDGs 13 (Climate action), 2 (Zero hunger), 8 (Decent work, and economic growth) and 12 (Responsible consumption & and production) were the most reported. (Fig.3)
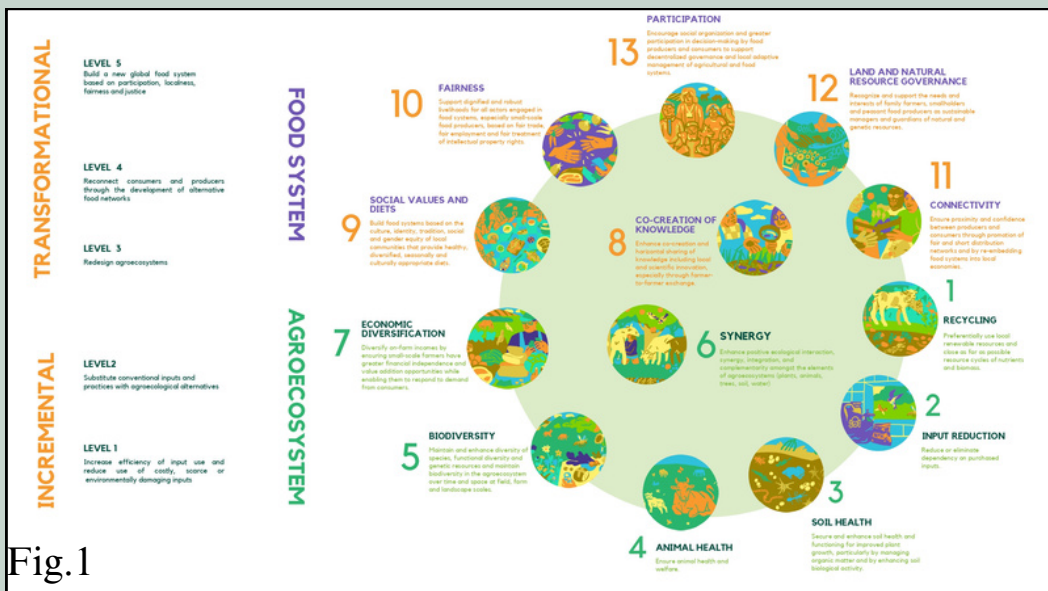

Fig.2

Fig.3

Discussion

- Sustainability reporting and standards are highly dependent on geographical location, policies, and target markets, thus the inconsistencies.
- There is limited monitoring at the production level due to smallholder production, and weak policies, especially in the LMICs.
- Challenges of data accuracy and completeness as well as irregularities in monitoring, confirmation, verification and enforcement of standards.

Conclusion

- To enhance agroecology in global supply chains, companies should adopt ethical monitoring practices, transparent reporting, and product labelling.
- Additionally, strict policies on agri-food certification, especially in LMICs, and adoption of global certification (ILO, global GAP and fairtrade) at the national level.

Reference

Bivision (2023): Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development. Business Agroecology Criteria Tool (B-ACT). Bivision. Zurich, Switzerland. Available online at https://www.agroecology-pool.org/b-act/, checked on 8/23/2023