PREFACE

Rice is the staple cereal food of about half of the world's population. It is a herbaceous grass plant with erect habit and wide adaptability under terrestrial and wet land conditions. The rice plant belongs to the genus *Oryza*. *Oryza* consists of about 24 species of which two are cultivated. The two cultivated species are *Oryza sativa* L., the Asian rice and *Oryza glaberrima* Steud, the African rice. The efforts associated with green revolution have helped to improve the harvest index of *Oryza sativa* from 0.3 to 0.5, thus increasing production and productivity considerably. However, green revolution has brought about certain consequences in terms of soil decline and loss of habitat specific diversity of the crop. Ecofriendly farming practices and efforts to conserve the niche specific diversity of crops are being made now everywhere in the world. Efforts to standardise farmer friendly conservation techniques are also in progress. Under such circumstances the present study has been carried out so as to collect native rice cultivars of Kerala state of India from farmer sources, to analyse their variability and to standardise a farmer friendly cloning technology as a measure of conservation. Even though high tillering rices are being considered as high yielders, recently the concept of rice idiotype is getting modified and high density planting of optimum tillering varieties is at the onset of recommendation. Hence a study has been carried out to analyse the relative contribution of rice tillers of different status to effective yield.