

WHOLE GRAIN



TEXAS RICE FARMERS: TIM & LINDY GERTSON PAGE 6



FARM TO TABLE TO TV PAGE 7

THE GAME OF TRADE
A TRADE CASE ROAD MAP

The international marketplace overflows with opportunities — particularly for U.S. rice. However, it is a complicated place full of pitfalls, perils, and hurdles. But there are also risks. Sometimes fiscal rules are bent, sometimes broken. When a member of the 239-country World Trade Organization (WTO) feels another member is breaking the rules, they can bring what is known as a **TRADE CASE**. It's a tricky game. A lengthy and costly process, trade cases can take three years from start to finish and be difficult to win, and may trigger some kind of retaliation. As the U.S. rice industry urges the United States government to bring such a case against a rice-producing country we don't believe is following the rules, here's a look at the basic steps:

USTR lawyers review evidence to determine if there is a winnable case.

NO

WINNABLE?

START

Rice industry believes a foreign producer is violating trade rules

Industry, USTR, USDA, and others gather evidence of violations (illegal subsidies, etc)

Panel issues report (can take 10 months)

REPORT

TRADE CASE: FROM START TO FINISH PAGE 18

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Reflecting on My Time as Chairman

BY DOW BRANTLEY

This summer, the U.S. rice industry will be halfway to what looks to be another huge crop. On a more personal note, this summer I will reach the end of my two year term as chairman of USA Rice.

While I find it hard to believe it's been almost two years already, I am ready to pass the baton to a new industry leader. It's not that I haven't enjoyed every moment of being your chairman – I have. But this role has added to my already full plate, enormous responsibilities and demands on my time.

I have spent time away from my farm and my family to attend to rice business that benefits us all – from near countless meetings with elected officials and policymakers in Washington, DC, to representing the U.S. rice industry at a trade show in Cuba. And from visiting a key customer in our largest market – Mexico, to a trip I'll make in a few months to check on our trade with Colombia – an increasingly important market for us. Add to this serving as a cleared agriculture advisor to the U.S. Trade Representative and opening up my farm to host delegations from Iraq, Canada, the media, and the U.S. foodservice sector, and the hours and hours of conference calls, USA Rice business meetings, and preparation that goes into all these meetings, and being in this top spot at USA Rice has been a bear at times.

But being an effective leader is about standing for something more important than yourself. More important than one family, one farm, or even one state. It's about seeing a path forward that benefits an entire industry, and giving of yourself whatever is required to get there.

There are always bumps along the way – from the mundane – a late flight and missed connection – to the hugely consequential – a questionable global trade deal that we're still sorting through – but at the end of the day, we grow personally, professionally, and hope we leave our constituents a little better off than we found them.

Of course I'm not really going anywhere. I'll still serve on many committees and be an active member of USA Rice. I'll still share my farm, and my opinions; I'll attend the business meetings, and make trips to Washington as needed. But I'll also look forward to spending just a little bit more time at home.

I hope as you read this issue of the *Whole Grain*, you'll think about all the people who make all the activities and events described possible. From the volunteer industry leaders to the paid staff, and from the



"... being an effective leader is about standing for something more important than yourself. More important than one family, one farm, or even one state."

elected officials who represent us to the third party surrogates who help spread positive messages about U.S.-grown rice.

The U.S. rice industry has a good team, and I thank you all for the opportunity to be a part of it. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some farming to attend to. 



Clockwise from upper left: The author and his father, participating in a White House event, chatting with Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, Brantley opened his farm to a delegation from the Iraq Grain Board.

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USA Rice is the global advocate for all segments of the U.S. rice industry with a mission to promote and protect the interests of producers, millers, merchants, and allied businesses.

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IN MEMORY: DALE BUMPERS

BY BEN NOBLE



Senator Bumpers (right) and the author sometime in the not so distant past.

LITTLE ROCK, AR — Dale Bumpers, a legislator and businessman from Charleston, Arkansas, who served as Governor of Arkansas from 1970-74 and U.S. Senator from 1974-98, died in Little Rock on January 1, 2016.

Bumpers championed many causes to benefit Arkansas during his four years as Governor and 24 years in the U.S. Senate, and his contribution to Arkansas agriculture is still recognized today. While serving as chairman of the Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee, Bumpers was instrumental in bringing national and international distinction to Arkansas agriculture.

During debate over the 1985 Farm Bill, he and Former Senator David Pryor famously filibustered the pending legislation due to the potential economic damage that the draft bill could have on the Arkansas rice industry. During the filibuster, Senators Bumpers and Pryor worked in tandem to fill Senate floor time while negotiations took place. At one point in the debate, the Senators literally read rice recipes from a cookbook into the Congressional record to extend their control of the floor. Eventually, a compromise was reached and the rice industry was spared significant program reductions.

Senator Pryor remembers Bumpers as “a talented and dedicated public servant whose common sense and wisdom were respected by all who knew him. He took a long-term view and, with a combination of wit and sound judgment, was someone you could count on to see the way forward in any situation.”

Over the course of his Senate career, Senator Bumpers secured more than \$80 million for facilities and programs within Arkansas, including the USDA-ARS National Rice Research Center in Stuttgart that was eventually named in his honor. His passion for research was evident in his work and he focused early on solving the challenge of feeding an ever expanding world population through increases in agronomic research.

Current Arkansas Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Cynthia Edwards who served as Bumpers’ ag staff and traveled all over the state with Bumpers while he was governor, said, “Bumpers was most curious about and interested in all types of agriculture and respected the producers and the risks and challenges they face daily. He insisted on knowing how a policy or law would impact a farmer or rancher ‘on the ground’ - - was it too burdensome, did it make sense, what exactly would it mean to their daily life, etc. He understood the importance of agriculture to the state and really wanted to make things better for producers. I had lots of opportunity to talk with Senator Bumpers as we traveled statewide to various meetings and events, and he would often use those personal stories and details in committee meetings, hearings, and speeches to make a point.”

A point, undoubtedly on behalf of Arkansas’ farmers. Senator Bumpers’ leadership, vision, and dedication will be missed, but stand as an example for us and future leaders. [WS](#)

Arkansas Rice Executive Director Ben Noble served on Senator Bumpers’ staff in the ‘90s. The Senator referred to Ben as “an Ag aide...of sorts,” probably because he wasn’t sure what Ben actually did.

PICS OR IT DIDN’T HAPPEN

BY COLLEEN KLEMCZEWSKI

ARLINGTON, VA — 8.25 seconds. According to recent studies, that’s the average attention span of adults today. For perspective, that’s almost a full second less than the attention span of the infamously ill-focused goldfish.

In an increasingly digitized world, information is just a click away. But technology and this accessibility of information is a double-edged sword, especially in regard to platforms like social media where people are likely to scroll past anything that doesn’t immediately capture their interest. Without captivating imagery to supplement online posts, people won’t even give you eight seconds.

For the past few years, USA Rice has made a conscious effort to make use of quality images at every turn. If you read our Daily, you may have noticed every story includes a picture or graphic; no picture = no story. More recently this has extended to our social media posts to encourage overall shareability and ensure our messages reach the widest audience possible. A central message for us is putting a face – an American farmer’s face – to rice. We need to show people how hard rice farmers work to consistently produce a safe, nutritious, and delicious crop. USA Rice relies heavily on visuals to ensure this important message doesn’t get lost in all the noise online.





“... I share pictures of our rice farm to show people what I was born to do.”

— Jimmy Bernard, a rice farmer from Holland, Missouri

To help tell the story of rice visually, USA Rice has reached out to farmers in Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas to serve as “social media ambassadors” by providing weekly picture and video updates from their farms. These “Check-ins from Rice Country” will be posted on USA Rice’s Facebook and Twitter accounts and will assist consumers in visualizing the journey of rice from your farm to their table.

This initiative capitalizes on consumers’ rising interest in how their food is grown and also humanizes the men and women who work year-round to provide a top-quality crop.

From planting through harvest, consumers will witness the different stages of rice farming as if it were happening in their own backyards.

Only two percent of the American population is directly employed in agriculture, meaning most people in the United States are far-removed from the farm. Social media serves as a powerful tool to educate urban America about rice and the importance of agriculture. Posting quality images with these posts increases the likelihood of people taking time to absorb our messaging, share these posts with their friends, and hopefully think U.S. rice when they go to the grocery store.

“Through social media, I share pictures of our rice farm to show people what I was born to do,” said Jimmy Bernard, a rice farmer from Holland, Missouri. “I get a lot of questions about rice and I think social media really helps people understand more about it through pictures. It’s a great platform to educate the public about U.S. rice and share my passion for growing such a vital crop.”

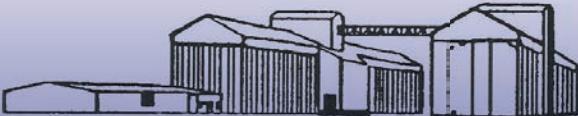
Growers are encouraged to share their pictures of the 2016 rice season using the hashtag #ThinkRice or by emailing pictures to cklem@usarice.com to be posted on USA Rice social media accounts.

And remember, as far as the general public is concerned – if there aren’t pictures to look at, it might not have happened. 

Colleen Klemczewski is the social media coordinator for USA Rice and though she believes some things may have happened even if there aren’t photos, she prefers to be reassured with digital images.

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USA RICE OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

MEET THE FARMER: TEXAS' TIMOTHY GERTSON

Whole Grain: *How did you get into farming and how long have you been at it?*

Timothy Gertson: I started farming in 2008. After graduating from Texas A&M with a degree in agricultural engineering, I took a job as the plant engineer at the nation's largest ethanol plant located in the Texas panhandle. I always had a plan to return home to our family farm and when an opportunity opened up for my cousin and me to lease a large farm, we began an operation together in late 2008. We call our operation G5 Farms to recognize that we are the fifth generation in our family to farm rice in Texas.

WG: *What are you growing?*

TG: This year I'm growing 1,500 acres of rice – all long-grain, 400 acres of sorghum, and 220 acres of organic corn. This is our first time to grow corn or anything organic. In the past we also have grown wheat and soybeans. The rice I grow is a mix of hybrid and conventional depending on land and timing. We've grown Dixiebell on contract for Riviana to be used specifically for Minute Rice for several years.

WG: *What do you like most about farming?*

TG: My favorite thing to do is take my three boys to the field with me: Jacob (4), Nathan (2), and Michael (born in February). Jacob and Nathan love to go to work with daddy. Jacob puts on his rubber boots and trudges through the mud to check water with me, and Nathan loves to ride in the tractor and the combine. The middle of the summer is my favorite time of year (as long as I am not behind on water) because there's nothing like a swim at the well in the heat of the day for a relaxing, refreshing break.

WG: *Did you go to school to be a farmer?*

TG: This is a funny question. I would say if you have a degree in accounting, engineering, business, environmental science, computer science, or agronomy then you went to school to learn about a piece of farming. If you have a degree in ALL of these things, then you went to school to be a farmer! My degree is in agricultural engineering, but I guess the rest of the knowledge I've acquired has been trial by fire picked up through all the years working on the family farm. Thankfully, my cousin and partner, Daniel has a complementary skill and knowledge set to mine.

WG: *What are some of the biggest challenges farmers face?*

TG: Right now I believe the biggest challenge for rice farmers is our government limiting access to global markets. What most Americans do not understand is that U.S. farmers feed the world, not just Americans. We have a safe and affordable food supply that should be shared with the world. It is a shame when politics gets in the way of providing desperately needed nutrition.

WG: *How do you think rice farming benefits the economy and the environment?*

TG: Rice cultivation, much like most other crops, provides a ripple effect through the economy in every rice growing region. The industry provides jobs through every pay and skill level all the way from hourly laborers to research scientists. Rice fields also serve as important habitat for migratory waterfowl in every rice growing state.

WG: *What would you say to consumers to encourage them to think U.S. rice when they are preparing their next meal?*

TG: Eat rice, potatoes make your butt big! Just kidding...sorta. U.S. rice is a safe, affordable, and adaptable culinary option. I think adaptability is what is most unique about rice. It is not specific to just one ethnic cuisine or specific



I WAS HUMBLLED TO HAVE BEEN SELECTED as one of the top 10 finalists in the nation and to have the opportunity to attend the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) convention in Orlando. While there I met more young farmers than I knew existed and all with remarkable résumés. Some had grown their family operations and others had started their farms from scratch. Several of the contestants had vertically integrated their operations all the way to retail. This probably impressed me more than anything. Retail marketing and advertising are an entirely different ballgame from other farming challenges.

The biggest common denominator among all the contestants was our willingness to take risks and try new practices. Growth will never come to an operation with a stagnant mindset. The new generation of farmers has to be flexible in their agrarian practices in order to meet a rising food demand with less labor and less natural resources.



Timothy and his wife, Lindy, were named winners of the 2015 Texas Farm Bureau Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher competition. Timothy also won the Texas Farm Bureau's Discussion Meet, which encourages problem-solving through cooperative discussion among young farmers and ranchers. The Gertsons represented Texas at the American Farm Bureau annual meeting in January in Orlando, Florida.

meal. It can be served at any time of the day and pairs perfectly with almost any protein.

WG: *What is your favorite rice dish?*

TG: Rice pudding. Hands down. With raisins. My wife hates it, which is great. When I cook it, the whole pot is for me.

WG: *What do you feel is the most important story that American farmers need to tell?*

TG: The typical American farm is still a family operation with dads and sons and grandfathers all working the ground through generations. Farmers care deeply for the ground they work and the food they grow. Some operations have grown to significant size, but that is out of necessity to survive the roller coaster called the commodity markets.

WG: *What do you do for fun off the farm?*

TG: I like to build furniture. I think I am a half decent carpenter. Before I had kids I built quite a few pieces for our home. Now most of my free time is spent playing pirates and ninjas, or Darth Vader, or Batman.

WG: *What do you want everyone to know about you – the rice farmer?*

TG: I take a lot of pride in the grain I produce on my farm. I find great satisfaction knowing that the actions I take every single day are helping to provide sustenance to the world. I literally watch the world's food supply grow on a daily basis. This is a blessing and a responsibility that I believe distinguishes farmers as the primary caretakers of our environment. 

LEGENDARY TV CHEF VISITS RICE COUNTRY

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

CROWLEY, LA — It often feels like TV celebrity chefs are a dime a dozen — most morning news programs have one in residence, and there are at least two 24 hour food and cooking networks overflowing with culinary personalities. And while they all have some unique take on their craft, few have a résumé like Sara Moulton who recently filmed an episode of her show on a rice farm here.

Sara Moulton was a protégée of Julia Child's, the executive chef at *Gourmet* magazine, food editor at ABC-TV's *Good Morning America*, and one of the very first TV chefs on the Food Network. Her current show, *Sara's Weeknight Meals*, is in its fifth season on public television and beginning in late April, viewers will be able to watch an episode called "Louisiana Style," filmed on location at the Thibodeaux Ag Group's rice and crawfish farm with Randy Thibodeaux.

During the filming, Randy taught Sara about the complex conservation relationship between rice, crawfish, and waterfowl, and shared some Cajun cooking secrets with the master chef.

"She asked me how much spice my recipe called for and I told her, 'the right amount,'" Thibodeaux said with a smile. "She wanted to know number of tablespoons and teaspoons. I told her, Cajuns don't cook like that, don't worry it'll be right."

And the crawfish étouffée the team cooked was perfect, despite the fact Randy didn't have any measuring spoons handy.

"I loved it here in Louisiana — the people were so nice and the area is so beautiful," Moulton said. "In particular I was really fascinated by the relationship between rice farms and the crawfish — I didn't know how important a job the crawfish were doing for the rice farmers, but it's just great — in their own way they help get the fields ready for next season and in the process provide another crop for the farmers — tasty crawfish!"

"We're so happy Sara chose to visit a rice farm here in southwest Louisiana because it was the perfect opportunity for us to share with her and her viewers the great sustainability story that is U.S. grown rice," said Fred Zaunbrecher, a rice farmer and chairman of the USA Rice Domestic Promotion Committee, who attended the shoot. "Consumers need to realize that when they choose U.S. grown rice, not only are they reducing food miles and supporting family owned farms, they are helping the local environment because of the sustainable practices of the U.S. rice industry." [WE](#)

You can check local listings for air times in your area and read about the episode on Sara's website at www.saramoulton.com.

Michael Klein is the editor of the *Whole Grain* and attempted to eat his body weight in crawfish during the show taping.

Lights! Camera! Action! TV chef Sara Moulton and her film crew join LA rice farmer Randy Thibodeaux as he harvests crawfish and prepares étouffée for an episode of Moulton's *Sara's Weeknight Meals* on PBS.



"... I didn't know how important a job the crawfish were doing for the rice farmers, but it's just great."

— Sara Moulton, celebrity TV chef

2014 RICE LEADERSHIP SESSION IV: INFORMATION AND IMPRESSIONS

BY ALLISON “A.J.” SABINE

*“Laws are like sausages,
it is better not to see them being made.”*

—Otto von Bismarck

WASHINGTON, DC — For the uninitiated, a visit to Washington, D.C. can leave you both inspired and confused—quite often at the same time. Confused not only because of the logistical divisions of the city—with its complicated street grid and temperamental traffic circles—but also as the epicenter of lobbying and lawmaking. In my case, Washington, D.C. has inspired me for more than a dozen years. Session IV of the Rice Leadership Development Program is intended to explain the legislative process and inspire action through active engagement and interpreting information—despite the confusing nature of our legislative process.

USDA/NASS

Session IV attempted to pull back the bureaucratic shroud of the alphabet soup of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) — the nation’s largest federal agency. It succeeded in revealing the USDA as a valuable resource for both row crop farmers and rice industry leaders as well.

First, Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) economist Rachel Trego introduced the class to a few of the myriad tools USDA and the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) uses to compile data on agricultural production and more specifically, rice. For example, NASS statistician Bianca Prunedra explained how information provided for the Ag Census is compiled, and how NASS then uses that information to publish the Rice Stocks Forecast. This critical information allows rice growers and marketers alike to see where the market is headed.

Second, and perhaps the most interesting to me in terms of developing new markets for rice, was the USDA’s Foreign Market Development Program. Ms. Trego explained how that program works to increase market share in overseas markets, identifying threats and opportunities.

Finally, if you’ve ever asked yourself how the World Agriculture Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report comes together, William Chamber’s presentation on the extent of the analysis that goes into the WASDE held the answer. The fact that the World Ag Outlook Board locks itself in the office while the crop information is analyzed struck me as remarkable. Chambers, along with Dr. Dath Mita at USDA, utilize satellite imagery to analyze global crop production to assess the viability of the rice crop growing in foreign markets. Mita explained that weather data and FAS field reports are compiled to give growers here in the United States up-to-the-minute data on what other rice growing countries are producing. Dr. Mita shared that shadows and cloud cover can diminish the effectiveness of satellite imagery. Overall, our visit to the USDA and seeing their use of all that data was awe-inspiring.

USA Rice Meetings

The Rice Leadership Program prepares you to lead, and it was quite interesting to watch Rice Leadership Development class alumni applying the skills they learned. I felt I was a part of an organization to which I could contribute. While I am no “rice policy wonk,” I honestly felt I could contribute to many of the discussions held during the various meetings of growers, millers, merchants, and the World Market Price Subcommittee thanks to my experiences in the Leadership Program.

Congressional Visits/DU Congressional Luncheon

Visiting with your Congressman is democracy in action. When you consider how few members of the rice community take the opportunity to speak with their Member of Congress, it is not hard to understand how important it is to build those relationships.

In the course of my work in public relations at the Louisiana Farm Bureau, we tell stories. We advocate a position. Nothing is more effective than advocacy — purposeful storytelling — when it comes to creating new markets, changing adverse regulations, or creating more economic freedom for small agri-business owners. Effective advocacy means rice millers, growers, and merchants communicate their concerns and ideas with their Member of Congress. It’s everyone’s duty to visit with your Senator or Congressman to explain why



The Rice Leadership Program prepares you to lead, and it was quite interesting to watch Rice Leadership Development class alumni applying the skills they learned.

Left: 2014-16 Rice Leadership Development Class, back row, from left: John Munger, Jonathan Hobbs, Derek Haigwood, Will Reneau, A.J. Sabine, Jeremy Jones, Clay Shaefer, and Chuck Wilson.

Seated, from left: Larry Haugen, RiceTec; Nicole Van Vleck, American Commodity Company; John Rauber, Jr., John Deere; and The Rice Foundation Chairman Todd Burich.



2016 RICE AWARDS



their votes matter to you. Although it may be obvious, it's critical to let them know we are paying attention to those votes and they have an impact back home.

I have traveled to the U.S. Capitol just about every year for the past dozen. In that time, I have created and maintained relationships with Congressman Charles Boustany (R-LA) and others from my home state of Louisiana. They know me by name. One can only achieve this type of relationship with face-to-face meetings. It works. It's that simple. If we as an industry don't take the time to create relationships, then we have no excuse when unfavorable legislation passes which adversely affects our industry.

Many send advocacy letters to their Congressmen, but sitting across from them in their office is tremendously effective.

This year we had the opportunity to visit one-on-one with House Ag Committee Chairman Michael Conaway (R-TX) and Ranking Member Collin Peterson (D-MN). As a class, we spoke directly with these important policy makers about the Farm Bill, access to Cuba, and the Trans Pacific Partnership. The communication was made more powerful because we were there in person.

Moreover, we as a class extended our networking with partners such as Ducks Unlimited during their Annual Congressional Luncheon. Networking affords us the opportunity to build coalitions and broadens our resources, advancing the dialogue between growers and conservation professionals.

The rice industry, and future Rice Leadership Development classes, will only achieve their legislative goals by coming to the Capitol and building relationships with their House and Senate representatives.

It's like my grandfather once said, "if you want something done right, do it yourself." He wasn't talking specifically about advocacy, but he may as well have been.

Conclusion

Sure, navigating the maze of Washington, D.C. as a tourist can be downright confusing. Some would argue that finding a path through Washington politics can be just as confusing. Many, especially during a Presidential election, would describe the process as frustrating. I would argue that the Rice Leadership Development Program prepares you to lead—even through the maze. No one naturally understands in-depth policy or the complicated world of international trade and crop estimates.

However, over the last two years, and concluding with Session IV, I feel competent and prepared to make an argument for the advancement of an industry that has not only fed my family for a generation, but also feeds the world. In fact, my experiences with the Rice Leadership Development Program, have inspired me to seek a place on the (1) Government Affairs Committee; (2) Communications Committee; or, (3) the Domestic Promotion Committees to further my leadership and policy development skills.

In closing, I would like to thank Chuck Wilson, Betsy Ward, and the staff of USA Rice. In addition, I'd like to thank The Rice Foundation, John Deere, American Commodity Company, and RiceTec for their continued financial support of the Rice Leadership Program. 

Since 1994 A.J. Sabine has worked as a broadcaster, writer, videographer, and host in various markets around the country, including South Carolina and Virginia. Currently, A.J. promotes rice and the rice industry through a series of television segments known as "Feasting on Agriculture" and works as an attorney in private practice in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

At this year's Government Affairs Conference in Washington, DC, USA Rice presented its Distinguished Service Award to Deputy Ag Secretary Krysta Harden for her leadership in implementing the 2014 Farm Bill. Outstanding Congressional Staff Awards were given to Daniel Ulmer, legislative assistant to Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), and Chris Jones, legislative director for Representative Rick Crawford (R-AR), for their tireless work on behalf of the U.S. rice industry. The award included a framed photo of a rice field (above) taken by California rice farmer Mary Wurlitzer.



AR rice farmer Dow Brantley (left) and Crawford staffer Chris Jones.



MS rice farmer Curtis Berry (left) and Cochran staffer Daniel Ulmer.

2016 GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS CONFERENCE





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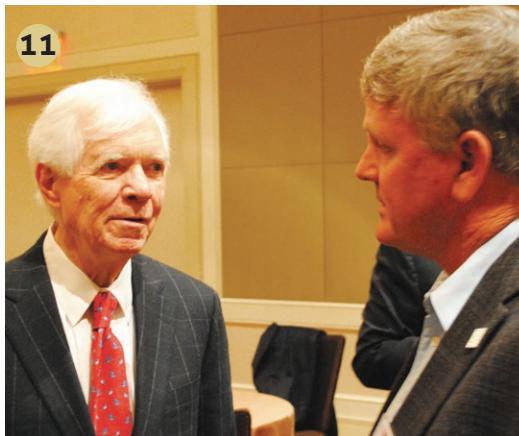


9

- 1: 2014-16 Rice Leadership Class visits the newly established Cuban Embassy in Washington, DC.
- 2: NRCS Chief Jason Weller (left) gets conservation tips from LA rice farmer Jeff Durand.
- 3: Don't mess with the Texas delegation or Rep. Randy Weber (far right).
- 4: MO rice farmers Blake Gerard and Paul T. Combs prep for their next visit.
- 5: USA Rice Chairman Dow Brantley (left) in deep with FSA Administrator Val Dolcini.
- 6: Rep. Bruce Westerman (third from right) wades into a crowd of Arkansas rice farmers.
- 7: LA rice farmer John Owen goes live with RFD-TV.
- 8: LA rice farmers are all ears as Rep. Charles Boustany (far right) talks trade.
- 9: TX rice farmer Linda Raun photobombed by House Ag Committee Chairman Mike Conaway during a TV appearance.
- 10: CA rice farmers Nicole Van Vleck and Al Montna flank Senate Ag Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Jerry Moran.
- 11: Senate Appropriations Chairman Thad Cochran one-on-one with AR rice farmer Joe Mencer.
- 12: CA rice farmer Leo LaGrande (left) and Rep. John Garamendi.



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A CONVERSATION WITH CHAIRMAN CONAWAY

WASHINGTON, DC — Congressman Mike Conaway is serving his sixth term in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing Texas' 11th Congressional District in the center of the state. A native Texan, Conaway graduated from Odessa Permian High School in 1966 after playing on Permian's first state championship football team. You might know about Permian if you are familiar with the book, movie, or television show *Friday Night Lights*. Conaway earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in accounting from Texas A & M University-Commerce in 1970, served in the Army at Fort Hood, and worked with George W. Bush as the chief financial officer for Bush Exploration. An ordained deacon in the Baptist church, Congressman Conaway and his wife, Suzanne, live in Midland and have four children and seven grandchildren. The Chairman always makes time for USA Rice during the groups' annual Government Affairs Conference (see page 11) and he was kind enough to sit down with the Whole Grain in March.

Whole Grain: *How did you go from being a Certified Public Accountant in Odessa, Texas to Chairman of the powerful House Agriculture Committee?*

Chairman Mike Conaway: It's serendipitous in that I lived in Odessa, Texas—I grew up there and was living in Midland when Larry Combest decided to hang it up after a distinguished career as Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, creating a special election. So I ran. As a result of running, I discovered that Congressional District 19 was pretty heavily agriculturally based and I better start learning something about that issue.

When Texas redrew the map in 2003 I ran in '04 in District 11, which was even more ag-centric and as a result of having talked to folks throughout all of 2003 and 2004 I understood that I needed to be on the Agriculture Committee and I was going to have a pretty sharp learning curve to make that happen, but I'm glad I did. Interest in agriculture comes with the District so that's how I got into ag. Plus, I was one of those folks who ate at least 3 times a day so I was always deeply involved in the retail end of production agriculture.

WG: *Protecting the provisions in the current farm bill is certainly a priority for the rice industry. How confident are you that you can keep the bill's opponents at bay to ensure the five year Farm Bill survives for five years?*

MC: That's part of the argument. It's a five year deal—producers, creditors, banks, lenders, and other equipment manufacturers make decisions based on the program being in place for five years. Right, wrong, or different—whether it's good or bad, it will be what they have to work with for five years. That's a bit of a contract so to speak with the

folks. The reason we do it every 4 or 5 years is to refresh it, to flush the things that don't work, to put new things in that do and to adjust it, but it gives those opponents a legitimate opportunity to go at it. They are opportunists and they will come at us during the ag appropriations bill if we bring that to the floor – they'll come after crop insurance I suspect. Part of our argument will be that this was a five year deal, but I'm going to need a lot of help from a lot of folks to withstand that assault.

WG: *Commodity prices are at their lowest point in years while input costs have remained constant or increased, making it increasingly more difficult for producers to break even, let alone make any money. Farm incomes are down 56 percent since 2013. What do you see happening in the next Farm Bill to further strengthen the farm safety net and do you think USDA or Congressional intervention will be needed before the next Farm Bill to keep farmers afloat?*

MC: The thing that hurt us in the 2014 Farm Bill was high prices and there were those, particularly in the Senate, who were on record as saying, "Well, we'll never see low prices again." And so they structured the Title I programs to assume that prices would never go down. Well, not the case.

So a big difference between '14 and '18 is that we'll have had the real world experience of prices going down, and that will then inform us and help inform others as to how we need to structure or restructure the programs to better reflect the realities that prices do go up and prices do go down.

That drop in farm income you mentioned, by the way, is the third worst drop since 1919 of any three year span. The other two were 1919-21 and 1929-32. So it is a meaningful drop.

You hear others say, "Well, they've had three good years

and they're able to withstand these hard times for a little bit." Well, that may be the case for long-term farmers, but we've got a bunch of beginning, new farmers in there who don't have that kind of depth and they need the program.

And by '18, I don't think USDA's projection on commodity prices holds true. I don't think anybody's going to argue that a five year drop in production income is something that anybody can withstand on their own. So we'll have lots of things working for us that worked against us in '14.

We would all like to be writing farm bills in good times, but they're not written for good times, they're written for bad times. And we're in bad times right now.

WG: *Nobody likes talking in hypotheticals. So hypothetically, if control of the Senate swings back to the Democrats in 2016, how do you think that impacts the writing of the next Farm Bill?*

MC: The Senate Democrats were the ones who were the most adamant about prices never going down again and so they'll have to come face to face with that reality. They'll need to understand the decisions they made and pushed through the system and the impact it's had on production agriculture.

I hope that it also allows production agriculture to come face-to-face with those Senate Democrats to say, "Hey, we backed your play against what the House wanted to do, and it didn't work." I hope they're more direct in their comments to the Senate Democrats who basically got us into this position as we understand it.

Anyway, we'll see what happens, but hope springs eternal and my hope is that I'll have Pat Roberts, Chairman of the Senate Ag Committee, as a partner in writing the '18 Farm Bill.



“When times are good the farm bill should stand on the sidelines and when times are bad, as they are now, then it ought to kick in and do what we intended it to do, which is what’s happening now.” — Chairman Conaway

WG: With the 2014 Farm Bill you decoupled SNAP (food stamps) and the rest of the bill to get it passed. Do you think you’ll have to do that again?

MC: A little premature to have that conversation. I said we’d do a two year deep dive on food stamps. The \$80 billion plus a year that we spend on that program—it has not had direct oversight in a long, long time. We’re putting it through the ringer so to speak, trying to figure out what’s working and what’s not working, so we’ll have an opportunity to reflect on the best practices.

I’m open to hear from a lot of folks on the wisdom of leaving the bill parts together or taking them apart. I do know this: I need an urban-rural coalition that is not simply based in food stamps. It’s got to be broader than that.

I’m trying to help production agriculture educate urban America as to why it’s important that we have a sound safety net for production agriculture.

The fact that urban consumers pay the lowest amount for their food costs of any developed country in the world is lost on them. They just assume it’s always going to happen. They assume food shows up in the grocery store by magic, not knowing all of the things that go on—the hard work, the risk taking, all of the things that production agriculture does, and their reliance on a safety net that keeps them in business in hard times—why that’s important to them.

It’s a pocketbook issue, but they just don’t know it. It’s not that they’re not thinking about it, it’s just that they’re so disconnected from production agriculture and the way we’ve gentrified our country. We need an education to go on and I need a lot of help doing that so that’s part of what I’m doing is trying to create that awareness in urban America as to why a vibrant, strong production agricultural system is important to rural America and why both of those are important to urban consumers because it’s their pocketbook.

WG: We see what we believe to be pretty clear violations of WTO commitments from competitor nations such as Viet Nam, Thailand, and others. The Obama Administration has been reluctant to take up a trade case, although we’ve seen signals that may be changing. Can you and the Committee do anything to help U.S. growers who feel that they are not actually competing with just a grower in another country, but actually with the entire government of that country?

MC: We need to call on the system to do a better job of protecting our producers than I believe they are currently doing. Obviously, it’s an executive branch detail that they’ve got general control of, but we need to add our voices to those. That said, there are lots of moving parts on whether or not to bring a case and we have to understand that. We took a case against Turkey on steel - they were dumping. And they retaliated almost immediately on cotton with no basis whatsoever. Turkish cotton producers didn’t do it. The Turkish government did it. So it’s never quite as simple as us bringing the case and having no other reactions, but that being said: I do believe our team needs to do a better job of protecting our guys.

WG: Cuba is a hugely important potential market for us, but when we met back in February, Ranking Member Collin Peterson (D-MN) said he thought the market was 10 years away. Do you agree?

MC: I don’t have a date, but I do know that your one customer down there, Alimport, that’s got to change. I mean



you can’t have a system where our producers can only sell to one individual and have that make sense.

There are a lot of reforms that need to go on in Cuba and we’ll see how quickly those happen. If all this magic of having American tourists go down and they suddenly become a democracy, freedom breaks out, and political prisoners are released from prison, they begin to start letting their people know what the baseball box scores are from the Cubans playing on Major League Baseball teams, then it will be quicker than 10 years.

But if Mother Nature doesn’t catch up with the Castros any quicker than it has, which I thought it would have by now, then nobody knows.

We’ll see how it goes. This Administration has mishandled the work. It was inevitable that we would normalize relations with Cuba, but we should have insisted on more than one entity that could buy from our producers. Things that help the Cuba human rights issue just a little bit and make the Cubans lives just a little bit better. But the President abandoned that all together. He never intended to do anything like that, and so, I think he has done a disservice to everyday Cubans by letting that regime off the hook.

WG: Do you have any sense of how a President Trump, a President Cruz, a President Clinton, a President Kasich, or a President Sanders would be for agriculture? Have you ever had any conversations with any of them on the topic of agriculture?

MC: I have not had a conversation with any of them. In fact, we had a small group meet with Trump in D.C. and some of the folks who had already endorsed him, folks he hadn’t met, and so I asked a couple of them, “So you met with him. What do you think? What’s his agriculture policy?” And they said, “Oh wow. Well, that didn’t come up.” So I don’t have any idea. But I will work with whoever it is.

We’ll have a little time to try to educate. You’ve seen some comments from some of the candidates that make it pretty clear they don’t know what they’re talking about. They’re going to have to learn a lot. About why production agriculture is important, why rural America is important to the heartbeat of this nation.

Rural America is the safekeeping spot for all the values that make America great — on which we’ve built this entire system. If we destroy that, accidentally or on purpose, then the whole underpinning of this country becomes unwrapped.

By helping any President understand that production agriculture is the core of America—and by extension a vibrant, rural America—which can’t exist without production agriculture being profitable.

The good news is we’ll have a couple of years of experience with whoever the new President is before we get to the point of working on the Farm Bill.

I want to try to get the ’18 farm bill written and passed through the House before the current bill expires. It’s a bit of a novel approach, I understand that. I look around at folks who have been working ag policy in this city a long time, and when I make that comment, I know they’re all rolling their eyes at me because every Chairman who ever stepped up to the job has said they’re going to get it done before the current one expires. But, if you don’t aspire to something then you’re not going to have it happen. We’ll see what we can do. There’s a lot of moving parts and I’m excited to be in this role.

WG: When your term as Chairman is up, what do you want to be remembered for here?

MC: Behind me is the Golden Plow Award that American Farm Bureau gave me. And I told them that it was way too premature. You really can’t lay claim to being Chairman of House Agriculture unless you’ve done a Farm Bill and I haven’t done one yet.

In effect, I’m going to earn that every single day between now and then. If you don’t get a Farm Bill done for whatever reason then you really let the system down. That’s my job and I hate, I really hate letting people down. I’m going to work really hard not to let that happen. And maybe this idea that urban Americans are just a little bit better informed about where their food comes from; how hard that is and how important that is. If we can start doing the ’18 Farm Bill and creating that initial awareness and interest there and grow that over time that would be a couple of really good things to put my hat on.

WG: Rice plays a huge role in Tex-Mex cuisine, do you have a favorite rice dish?

MC: All of the above. I love rice and I’m not pandering to your guys by saying that. I eat a lot of rice - every chance I get. I don’t have a specific favorite other than how it’s associated with Mexican food. That’s probably the cuisine that I eat most. I like white rice with cilantro and other things in it as opposed to Spanish rice, but either way, I do eat a lot of rice. 

SOUTH KOREA IS A TRICKY, BUT VALUABLE MARKET FOR U.S. RICE

BY BILL FARMER

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA — As in most of Asia, rice is culturally significant in South Korea, however, per capita rice consumption has been declining for years — down to 138.9 pounds last year, which is still five times the per capita consumption in the U.S. This nation of 50 million people and limited natural resources is heavily dependent on imported agricultural commodities, although they are self-sufficient in rice production, producing 4.3 million metric tons of short grain on almost two million acres last year.

In 1995, under a Uruguay Round minimum access quota system, South Korea began importing low to medium quality short and long grain rice, mostly from China and India. But that changed in 2001 when South Korea began importing U.S. rice. California-grown Calrose medium grain cracked the market and is still the only U.S. rice that Korea imports although they have tendered for U.S. long grain rice on several occasions in the recent past without making purchases.

CARVING OUT TABLE RICE

An extension of the Special Exemption (see side bar) for rice was negotiated with Korea in 2005, which mandated a doubling of 2004 rice imports by 2014. The U.S. insisted upon a “table rice” component of the minimum access quota that would require 30 percent of imported rice to be auctioned as table rice for foodservice and retail uses. Without this, all of the imported U.S. rice would have been absorbed by the processed food sector for uses such as rice wine and rice snack producers and would have lost the origin identity USA Rice has been working to establish.

TARIFFICATION

In 2014, South Korea announced a new tariff-based system for its rice imports to begin on January 1, 2015. The new system, which voids all previous provisions, such as country specific quotas and our hard-fought table rice provision, calls for South Korea to import 408,700 tons of rice each year (at a tariff of five percent) and allow over-quota imports under an announced 513 percent tariff that is clearly designed to cut off imports at 408,700 tons, or about nine percent of domestic consumption.

In the first year of this scheme, South Korea imported, as expected, 408,700 metric tons of rice. What was perhaps unexpected but welcome news, was that the U.S. accounted for a record 38.4 percent, or 157,117 metric tons, worth \$142.6 million dollars!

U.S. milled medium grain accounted for 40,000 metric tons for table rice purposes, or 67 percent of the total table rice imports. The rest of the U.S. rice is destined for the food processing sector.

USA Rice has been making the claim that our rice is superior to that of China, Thailand, and other origins through a wide variety of promotional activities, and the table rice tenders have allowed us to prove it by putting U.S.-origin rice directly on South Korean plates. Every year the U.S. table rice sells out quicker and at higher prices than all other imported origins.

But how did we get here?

REVERSE TRADE MISSIONS

USA Rice hosted five Korean reverse trade missions (RTMs) to the U.S. from 2005 through 2010, and a sixth one in 2013 to familiarize key food trade with our industry and products. And we see results, with the participants in the RTMs frequently being the most active in tenders for U.S. table rice.



The Rice Special Exemption

Three countries claimed the extreme sensitivity of rice and used “special treatment” provisions to restrict imports during the implementation period of the WTO. Developed countries were to phase them out by 2000; 2004 for developing nations. The exemptions included strictly defined conditions, including minimum access for overseas suppliers.

The countries were: Japan, Republic of Korea, and the Philippines. Japan and Korea have given up the special exemption, but the Philippines has extended their special treatment for rice to 2017.



U.S. rice recipes and rice menus will be developed and presented to this group of rice users specifically to integrate U.S. rice into a company's operations.

Top officials from the Korean Rice Foodstuffs Association were also included in the outreach. Their member companies use the 70 percent of imported rice that is not auctioned off as table rice. At the conclusion of the RTMs, the participants perceived U.S. rice to be superior to rice imported from other origins – just what we wanted – and the rice wholesalers who participated in the RTMs enthusiastically recommend U.S. rice to their retail customers.

USA Rice also coordinated two visits by aT, the Korean government's rice importing authority; to the southern U.S. in 2010 so that they could research southern medium and long grain rice. The success of these RTMs and the continuous trade servicing by USA Rice is clearly demonstrated by the speed with which U.S. rice is auctioned off, and the higher prices Korean businesses are willing to pay.

The RTM USA Rice conducted in 2013 was with a large Korean group comprised of major wholesalers, large food manufacturers, and mass catering operators. The participants showed a willingness to develop U.S. rice in their businesses or apply U.S. rice in their operations.



A cooking demonstration at a South Korean rice market, using U.S.-grown rice, attracts an audience.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Now that U.S. rice is preferred over other import origins by rice wholesalers and their retail customers, it's time to focus more attention on the food manufacturers, foodservice suppliers, and foodservice companies that acquire their imported rice from the Korean Rice Foodstuffs Association.

U.S. rice recipes and rice menus will be developed and presented to this group of rice users specifically to integrate U.S. rice into a company's operations.

This "one-on-one" activity has worked well for us in Japan for a number of years and we think it will work very well in Korea too. Under the new tariff based import regime there are no more country specific quotas for imported rice, making this a great time for us to protect and grow "our share" of this market above the 150,000 tons we now typically supply. 

Bill Farmer represents the U.S. rice industry in Asia and loves introducing Asian people to U.S. rice.



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COLOMBIA'S NEW SCENE

BY SARAH MORAN

ARLINGTON, VA — El Niño's high temperatures and lack of rainfall has caused hardships throughout Latin America. In many areas, what little water there is must be preserved for drinking water. Agriculture throughout the region has been hit hard and there will continue to be humanitarian impacts for months to come. Faced with these challenges, in December 2015 the Colombian government announced an emergency decree for imports of an additional 200,000 MT of rice in 2016. Any rice coming in under this emergency decree is subject to the prevailing tariffs, i.e., 56 percent for Paraguay, 65 percent for Mercosur, and 80 percent for the U.S., Thailand, and others. It appears Uruguay has secured the lions' share, with Paraguay and Brazil also gaining some tonnage.

Due to the strong dollar and Colombia's emergency decree announcement, there was some trepidation as to what the monetary value of the auction rents would be from the most recent February 2016 tender for 65,972 MT of U.S. rice. All of the tonnage was awarded, and while the rents reduced slightly from their high of \$426.25/ton in February 2015, the auctions will still result in significant funding for rice research here at home (see graph below.)

Earlier this year, many of the importers said they were hedging their bets and participating in the auction because they weren't sure if the additional 200,000 MT would actually be imported; it wouldn't be the first time a government announced a measure and then backtracked on it. Take for instance the February 22 announcement from the Colombian government that they would eliminate all duties on imports of rice and increase the emergency decree to 400,000 MT, with the aim to reduce the price of rice for consumers and control inflation. Within two days, and after negotiations with rice producers, the government rescinded the statement.

It's this uncertainty that puts an "I'll believe it when I see it" pall over some government announcements. Now that the importers are certain that the emergency decree will be fulfilled this year, this may affect the rents for the next TRQ auction in June. If the effects of El Niño are even more dire than first projected, additional imports through the emergency decree could come into Colombia, further distorting the price of the rents that have been averaging \$350/ton for the past year.

Many Colombian millers have stated that if the current restrictions on paddy rice were eliminated, there would be no need for these imports of milled rice from other origins. The strong



Top: Rice from many origins on supermarket shelves in Bogotá.
Bottom: Restocking rice at a Bogotá market.

How it Works

Companies interested in importing U.S. rice into Colombia duty free bid for that right during a tariff rate quota (TRQ) auction; the price per ton they are willing to pay is called a "rent."

Those rents are collected by Colombia Rice Export Quota, Inc. (COL-RICE) which was established in 2012 as a result of the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, and net revenue from COL-RICE operations is split 50-50 between the U.S. and Colombia.

The U.S. portion is then allocated to the six rice producing states based on their three year production average and is to be used exclusively for rice research.

U.S. rice can be imported into Colombia outside of the TRQ but it is subject to an 80 percent duty. That duty remains at 80 percent through 2017, and then will be phased out by 2030.

TOTAL TRQ RENTS, 2012-2015 (USD)

Arkansas	\$16,610,422
California	\$7,954,342
Louisiana	\$5,058,372
Missouri	\$2,106,170
Texas	\$2,021,984
Mississippi	\$1,996,407

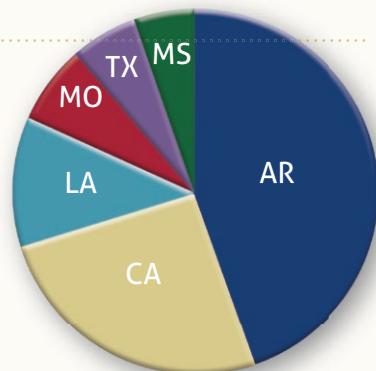


FIGURE 1: The Colombia - U.S. TRQ has put \$35.75 million towards rice research over the past four years.

U.S. dollar in relation to the Colombian peso has accelerated the need to look to other origins. USA Rice has been working with the U.S. government for several years for them to take on and reduce and/or eliminate these onerous restrictions.

Changes to restrictions on U.S. paddy rice are awaiting the results of an epidemiological study of false smut in Colombia that should be finalized this spring. While pressing for these changes, USA Rice has also commenced a consumer "pull" strategy by conducting promotions with the hotel, restaurant, and institutional (HRI) sector, with plans to commence in-store demonstrations targeting Colombian consumers this year.

As Colombia, and other countries in the Western Hemisphere, look to other origins to supply their rice, USA Rice continues to differentiate the U.S. product by promoting its strong food safety record, reliable quality, and excellent logistics.

"There is a lot of great quality rice here in the fields of our rice producing states and given that about half of our product is exported, we rely on USA Rice to help develop and grow these international markets so that we can move this rice," says Brian King, chairman of the Western Hemisphere Promotion Subcommittee. "In a changing world where there are new exporters and suppliers of good quality rice, it's imperative that we take advantage of successful trade policies, such as the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, and develop a strong promotional presence in this new market so that we can create a lasting consumer preference for U.S. rice." 

As a Maryland native born not far from Columbia, MD, Sarah has to continually remind herself the correct way to spell Colombia.



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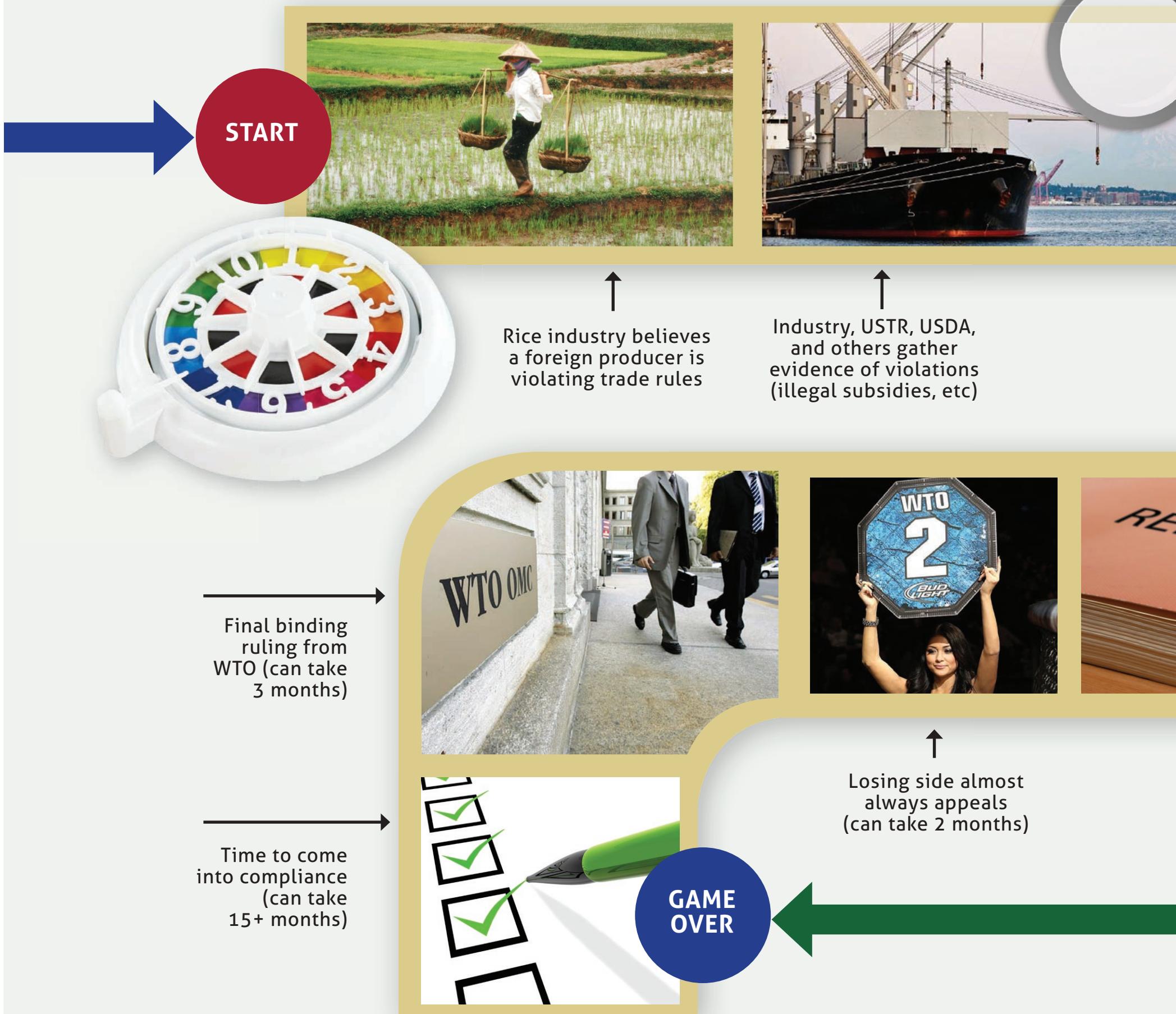
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THE GAME OF

TRADE

A TRADE CASE ROAD MAP

The international marketplace overflows with opportunities — particularly for U.S. rice. However it is a complicated place full of pitfalls, perils, and hurdles. But there are also rules. Sometimes those rules are bent, sometimes broken. When a member of the 139-country World Trade Organization (WTO) feels another member is breaking the rules, they can bring what is known as a **TRADE CASE**. It's a tricky game. A lengthy and costly process, trade cases can take three years from start to finish, can be difficult to win, and may trigger some kind of retaliation. As the U.S. rice industry urges the United States government to bring such a case against a rice producing country we don't believe is following the rules, here's a look at the basic steps:



USTR lawyers review evidence to determine if there is a winnable case



BACK TO WORK

NO

WINNABLE?

YES



SETTLED?

U.S. government and defendant country use WTO consultations to attempt to resolve issues (can take 2+ months)

Panel issues report (can take 10 months)



NO

YES

WTO seats a Dispute Settlement Panel (can take 2+ months)



2016 CONSERVATION CHECK IN

BY PETER BACHMANN



ARLINGTON, VA — It's finally spring and we're well into the 2016 planting season! And while it's hard to believe that anything else could be on a farmer's mind besides getting their crop off to a good start, more than 200 rice farmers across the nation are currently finalizing paperwork and drawing up plans for their Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracts.

EQIP is a voluntary program implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) providing financial and technical assistance to farmers to plan and install practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, and related natural resources on working lands. There are a number of EQIP practices available that are utilized by rice farmers but available assistance is limited, and there has been steep competition in the past from other row crops like corn and soybeans along with the livestock industry.

EQIP is one of the eligible programs offered under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) in the 2014 Farm Bill and is an innovative way to provide conservation outreach by leveraging private and public funding and encouraging diverse partnerships. Our industry example is the USA Rice-Ducks Unlimited Stewardship Partnership that created the National Rice RCPP project, Sustaining the Future of Rice, and has made great strides in fulfilling the deliverables to the NRCS.

"The National Rice RCPP project has been a great way to engage lots of NRCS field staff with producers in all six rice-growing states," said Randy Childress, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Easements in Arkansas and National Rice RCPP Project Liaison. "It's really opened a lot of eyes to the conservation successes that the rice industry has already accomplished as well as the potential to address a number of other key resource concerns through a targeted, strategic approach. We encourage rice producers to go into their local NRCS offices to learn more."

The vast majority of people working on the RCPP program are working directly with rice farmers throughout the six rice-growing states. Managing more than 40 partner organizations and businesses, 20 staff across six states, and \$16.8 million in in-kind and cash contributions for a two-year project is no simple task!

State-by-State Progress:

- **Arkansas:** More than 70 of the 300+ EQIP applications were highly ranked and awarded two-year contracts which will begin implementation throughout 2016 and finalized by 2018.
- **California:** The EQIP application period is expected to open soon and submitted applications will be screened and ranked by NRCS staff before contracts are awarded later this spring.
- **Louisiana:** After accepting applications for a second short period in February, more than 30 eligible EQIP applications were awarded two-year contracts to begin implementation later this year.
- **Mississippi:** More than 35 eligible EQIP applications were awarded two-year contracts to begin implementation later this year.
- **Missouri:** More than 40 of the 200+ EQIP applications were highly ranked and awarded two-year contracts which will begin implementation later this year.
- **Texas:** More than 10 eligible EQIP applications were ranked and will soon be awarded two-year contracts to begin implementation later this year.

RCPP Next Steps

In March, NRCS announced that the next round of RCPP applications will be accepted this spring. Project pre-proposals must be received by NRCS by May 10 for consideration to submit a final application later this year. USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited plan to continue to seek funding that would directly support the implementation of conservation practices and enhancements on working ricelands.

Conservation Stewardship Program

Also in March, NRCS published a final and updated version of the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The updated and simplified CSP will be implemented over the next year to ensure that NRCS field staff are knowledgeable about new protocols and enhancements before contracts must comply. USA Rice and partners are working to make sure new enhancements work well for rice farmers before they're finalized later this year as part of the program's revamping process. The Stewardship Partnership's National Rice RCPP project will begin accepting CSP applications for ricelands in all six rice-growing states toward the end of 2016.

Stewardship Partnership Sponsors

The Stewardship Partnership credits its success to not only USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited but a number of partners providing in-kind and financial contributions. Our funders include the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Walmart Foundation, the Mosaic Company Foundation, Chevron U.S.A., Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation, Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation, RiceTec, BASF, American Rice, Inc. — Riviana Foods, Inc., Farmers Rice Milling Company, Turner's Creek & Bombay Hook Farms, and MacDon Industries. 

Peter Bachmann spends much of his day working to get rice farmers credit for their good environmental stewardship.



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