

WHOLE GRAIN



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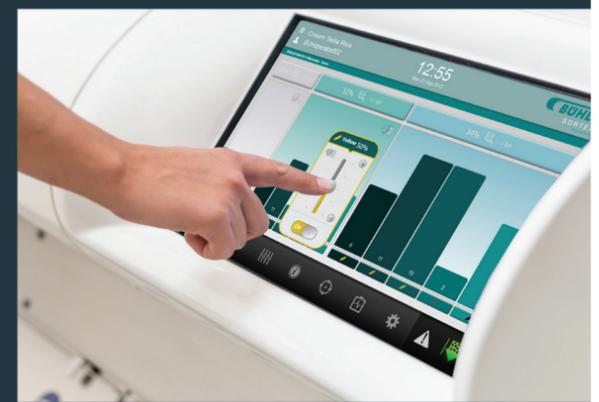
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We're In This Together

BY BRIAN KING

AFTER SPENDING 23 YEARS IN THE RICE INDUSTRY in one role or another, this summer I took on an entirely new role: Chairman of USA Rice. It's something I've watched others do with grace, humility, and decisiveness. And despite the varied approaches of the chairmen — a miller from Louisiana, a farmer from California, a merchant from Texas, or most recently, a farmer from Arkansas — one thing bound them all together — a love of the U.S. rice industry and a dedication to making it even greater. I'm honored to follow in their impressive footsteps and make my mark on the organization and industry over the next two years.

The challenges ahead of us are no small affair. There are massive trade deals the outcome of which for rice aren't looking great; we have a large crop coming at a time when prices are weak at home, but high enough that they threaten our competitiveness overseas; we have a new Farm Bill looming; and the usual menu of regulatory confrontations ahead.

Of course it isn't all bad. We have exciting new markets on the horizon in China, Cuba, and what looks like a return to (relative) normalcy in Iraq; we have great scientific breakthroughs with rising yields and improving quality; and we have greater influence in Washington, DC than we have had in years.

However, one of the more pressing challenges that I see, and one that is actually completely within our control, is industry unity.

For far too long now we have been divided because of misunderstandings, misrepresentations, and flat out falsehoods.

The world is too dangerous — too hostile to agriculture for us to also be fighting amongst ourselves. It's time we ended the intra-industry squabbling. It is a waste of time, money, and human resources.

There are real opponents to agriculture here at home, and there are competitors overseas who refuse to play by the rules. To spend time battling each other rather than these true enemies of U.S. rice is counterproductive.

I look forward to the day soon when we can, like most agriculture commodities, put petty differences behind us and unite as one industry with one respected and effective voice here and around the world. That is the day we will all be stronger and better off for our collaboration.

And collaboration is what is needed.

If ensuring the U.S. rice industry is profitable is our goal — and I believe it is — then all segments from all states and all pockets of the industry must come together. The researchers need the farmers, who need the mills, who need the merchants, who need the mills, who need the farmers, who need the researchers.

We're in this together. Together we sink or we swim. It would be helpful if we took the anchor off from around our neck and came together for the prosperity of us all. 



Brian King (left) poses the questions on stage with 2015 USA Rice Outlook Conference headliners Mary Matalin and James Carville.

"If ensuring the U.S. rice industry is profitable is our goal — and I believe it is — then all segments from all states and all pockets of the industry must come together."

— Brian King, USA Rice Chairman

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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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IF NATURE ABHORS A VACUUM, WASHINGTON ABHORS UNCERTAINTY

BY BETSY WARD

"... right now, in Washington, in 2016, we have more uncertainty than you have rice this season. And that's saying something."



I'M WORKING ON THIS COLUMN IN MID-SUMMER and it's an interesting time. Harvest is underway in Texas and Louisiana and about to get started elsewhere; a new fiscal year at USA Rice has begun with some minor course corrections in place to accommodate the shifting landscape of ag advocacy in 2016; and perhaps most notable - and certainly most distracting - the political conventions are over and the presidential campaign is in full swing.

Washington, DC is a company town in every sense of the word, and "the Company" is government. And like all businesses and company towns all over the world, the one thing we like less than anything else is uncertainty. And right now, in Washington, in 2016, we have more uncertainty than you have rice this season. And that's saying something.

People are constantly asking me what I think is going to happen in the election. Like most, I have no idea.

One way or another, history will be made. Either America will elect as President a woman for the first time, or a person who has never held any elective office.

Here at USA Rice we commit some brain power to thinking through the various outcomes. What would the priorities be in a Clinton EPA? Who would be a likely Secretary of Agriculture for a President Trump?

While these questions are fun (or frightening depending on your leanings), we can only spend so much time on them, because the reality is, we will work, and work well, with whoever the people choose. We must. It's our job. To ensure you are well represented here in Washington. And you will be.

However, two of the more interesting questions, and frankly you could make the case, the more important questions, are: who will control the House of Representatives, and who will control the U.S. Senate?

Majorities are slim, and what had been unthinkable just 18 months ago - that party control of the chambers and all the committees might flip - becomes a greater possibility every day.

The true magnitude of the implications for us are easily summed up in just two words: Farm Bill.

Yes, the current Farm Bill, where rice is "the best house in the worst neighborhood," won't expire until 2018 - another Congressional election away - but the preparatory work for the next Farm Bill is underway right now. Hearings are being scheduled, priorities are being outlined, and battle lines are being drawn.

Where it turns out we will need to fight, and with whom, and about what remains to be seen. But one thing is certain: all this uncertainty certainly isn't helping. 

LIFE OF A DC INTERN

BY ETHAN CARTWRIGHT

Senator Roger Wicker (left)
and Ethan Cartwright.

ARLINGTON, VA — As a rising senior in Mississippi State University's Department of Agricultural Economics with a strong interest in government policy, my summer internship at USA Rice provided me great opportunities to see issue advocacy at work.

Some of my favorite activities this summer included going to Capitol Hill to meet with legislators to discuss rice issues. Often the meetings took on a sense of urgency when we had relevant legislation about to move on the floor, but that only helped us develop a more concise, powerful message to take to legislators.

Attending meetings at USDA allowed me to gain greater insights into how federal agencies develop, implement, and evaluate programs and how these programs impact producers across the rice states.

I am excited to take all I have learned with me back to Mississippi State as I finish my education. Learning more about the federal process and how groups like USA Rice work to impact that process has given me new appreciation for the work that legislators, administrators, and advocates accomplish on behalf of the rice industry every day.

Ethan Cartwright is the son of John and Dixie Cartwright of Starkville, MS. He is a student at Mississippi State University majoring in Environmental Economics and Management.



MRS. TOSHIKO SATAKE RECEIVES RMA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO — This year's Rice Millers' Association (RMA) convention kicked off with the presentation of the RMA Distinguished Service Award - only the eleventh ever given - to Mrs. Toshiko Satake, current president and CEO of the Satake Corporation. The award recognizes outstanding lifetime contributions to the U.S. rice milling industry.

In June, RMA Chairman Robert Trahan and Convention Committee Chair Ken LaGrande traveled to Hiroshima, Japan, to deliver the award to Mrs. Satake who was unable to attend this year's convention. At that ceremony, Mrs. Satake said, "I am honored that our efforts and contribution to the improvement of the world food culture through the rice industry are highly appreciated. My husband, Bob Satake, was honored to be the very first recipient of the RMA Distinguished Service Award. I am humbled and infinitely grateful to receive the same award with the warmest and continuous support from the U.S. rice millers."

A short video of the award presentation in Japan was shown at the RMA convention and Trahan said, "Anyone who knows Mrs. Satake knows that she has a passion for rice milling - for making it better, more efficient, more cost effective, and to help all of us produce rice of the highest quality." 



From left: Robert Trahan,
Mrs. Satake, and Ken LaGrande

"I am honored that our efforts and contribution to the improvement of the world food culture through the rice industry are highly appreciated."

— MRS. TOSHIKO SATAKE, President & CEO, Satake Corporation

MEET THE FARMER: CALIFORNIA'S SEAN DOHERTY

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

Sean Doherty: I was born and raised in rice farming, and have been “at it” for over 20 years. I’m a fifth generation California rice farmer on my paternal grandmother’s side, so I guess you could say I was born to raise rice!

WG: *What are you growing?*

SD: I grow medium grain “Calrose type” rice from the Rice Experiment Station in Biggs. I also raise wheat, safflower, field and taco corn, hybrid sunflower for seed, almonds, alfalfa, and processing tomatoes.

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

SD: My favorite aspect of farming is watching the seasons go by and seeing planted crops mature to harvest.

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

SD: I went to Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California. I majored in Agricultural Engineering Technology which I use very little of today. In retrospect I should’ve been an Ag Business major. I am also a member of the Chi chapter of Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity.

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

SD: I believe some of the biggest challenges our industry faces are making our voices heard in our state capitols, trade agreements or lack thereof, and increasing pressure from our customers to name a few. I’ve really enjoyed my time as the USA Rice PAC Board Chairman, because it has shown me how important the PAC is for our industry needs, and that’s no B.S.!

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

SD: Rice farming benefits our economy directly by generating dollars for our local economies and our environment by providing critical habitat to hundreds of different species of wildlife in and around our fields. Every morning driving around my fields I see all different kinds of wildlife. From blacktail deer to river otters to endangered giant garter snakes. Ducks, pheasants, and shorebirds all nesting in and around our rice fields and even pesky beavers plugging up our drain pipes!

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

SD: I would remind consumers that in addition to the fact that U.S.-grown rice is healthy and affordable, where it’s grown and how it’s grown is so important – stewardship of the land counts. We emphasize sustainability in our farming practices and when you talk about family values, that’s one of ours. I want my kids to have a chance to continue the farming tradition that has been passed from my grandfather, to my father, and now to me. The best chance for that to happen is for me to be a good steward of all that I have.



“We emphasize sustainability in our farming practices and when you talk about family values, that’s one of ours.”

— SEAN DOHERTY



WG: *What is your favorite rice dish?*

SD: I have too many favorite rice dishes to name them all but a few of them are my wife Melissa’s cold rice salad, and also a bowl of Calrose rice with our homemade sausage on top ~ delicious!

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

SD: American farmers need to just tell our story. There are so many generations of people now that are so removed from the farms and farming lifestyle that they have no idea what we do and how we do it. We need to tell our story or it will get told for us and not in a good way.

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

SD: In the off season I love to hunt and take my kids on hunting trips. I enjoy traveling with my family as well.

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

SD: What people should know about me is I’ve only ever worked three days in my life. I was a high school sophomore, it was 108 degrees and my dad had me irrigating alfalfa with a bad ditch and six inch alfalfa siphons. It was awful! Everything else I do is just having fun! 

Family farms and mills have grown and processed rice in California’s Sacramento Valley for more than 100 years.



USA RICE PUTS THE PEDAL TO THE METAL ON U.S.-CUBA RELATIONS

BY PETER BACHMANN

ARLINGTON, VA — Despite hold-ups by Congress, USA Rice and Cuba are already working together to solidify their relationship ahead of the eventual lifting of the embargo and removal of financing barriers for agricultural commodities.

“Removing trade restrictions between the U.S. and Cuba have been long-time goals for USA Rice and the entire U.S. rice industry and we’re now closer than we’ve been in more than half a century to getting across the finish line,” said Terry Harris of Riceland Foods. “After many trips to Cuba, it’s evident to me that the Cuban people are ready for the tides to change and they truly want an American presence on the island.”

USA Rice is taking a proactive approach to building the relationship that once existed between Cuba and the U.S. rice industry by setting up a series of regular technical exchanges between both countries.

A panel of USA Rice representatives and rice industry experts will travel to Cuba later this fall to tour Cuban rice farming and milling operations and exchange technical information about rice farming practices. Likewise, a group of Cuban rice industry experts and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture are planning a trip to the Mid-South to share their experiences and see U.S. rice growing, milling, and shipping sectors firsthand.

“I think the leg work we’re doing now is going to pay off tenfold when the embargo is lifted and we are able to very quickly regain market share through our relationships built in advance and the open lines of communications between our industry and Cuba,” said USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward.

“Additionally, we’re working closely with the Cuban Embassy in Washington to finalize a memorandum of understanding with Cuba that will outline both parties’ plans for moving forward in an organized and mutually beneficial manner,” Ward said.

While the political landscape surrounding Cuba is slowly improving, USA Rice and other agriculture organizations and companies remain optimistic and are rallying behind established pro-Cuba champions in Congress to make real, permanent changes that will open up the Cuban market for two-way commerce.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced this summer that they were taking the historic step of establishing a Foreign Agricultural Service post at the U.S. Embassy in Havana. The temporary detail assigned by the Secretary of Agriculture will serve as the liaison between the Cuban Ministry of Agriculture and the USDA by providing U.S. agricultural interests with real-time logistics of the Cuban agriculture and food importing industries. USA Rice co-authored a letter earlier this year requesting \$1.5 million from Congressional appropriators to fund such a position.

“We continue to be at the forefront of events in Cuba and look forward to this valuable market helping to lift our entire industry,” said Ward. 

Peter Bachmann can't wait until sanctions with Cuba have lifted and he can eat black beans and U.S.-grown rice in Old Havana.



MIGRATION TOWARD THE LAME DUCK

BY BEN MOSELY

WASHINGTON, DC — As the rice harvest ramps up, the dog days of summer wane along with legislative activity in Washington. While on an extended August recess, the U.S. Congress will be indisposed to action and the attentions of the public, but will be fixed on presidential politics. It looks as though any hopes for major legislative accomplishments will be pushed to the “lame duck” session occurring after the November 8 elections and before the seating of the new Congress on January 3, 2017.

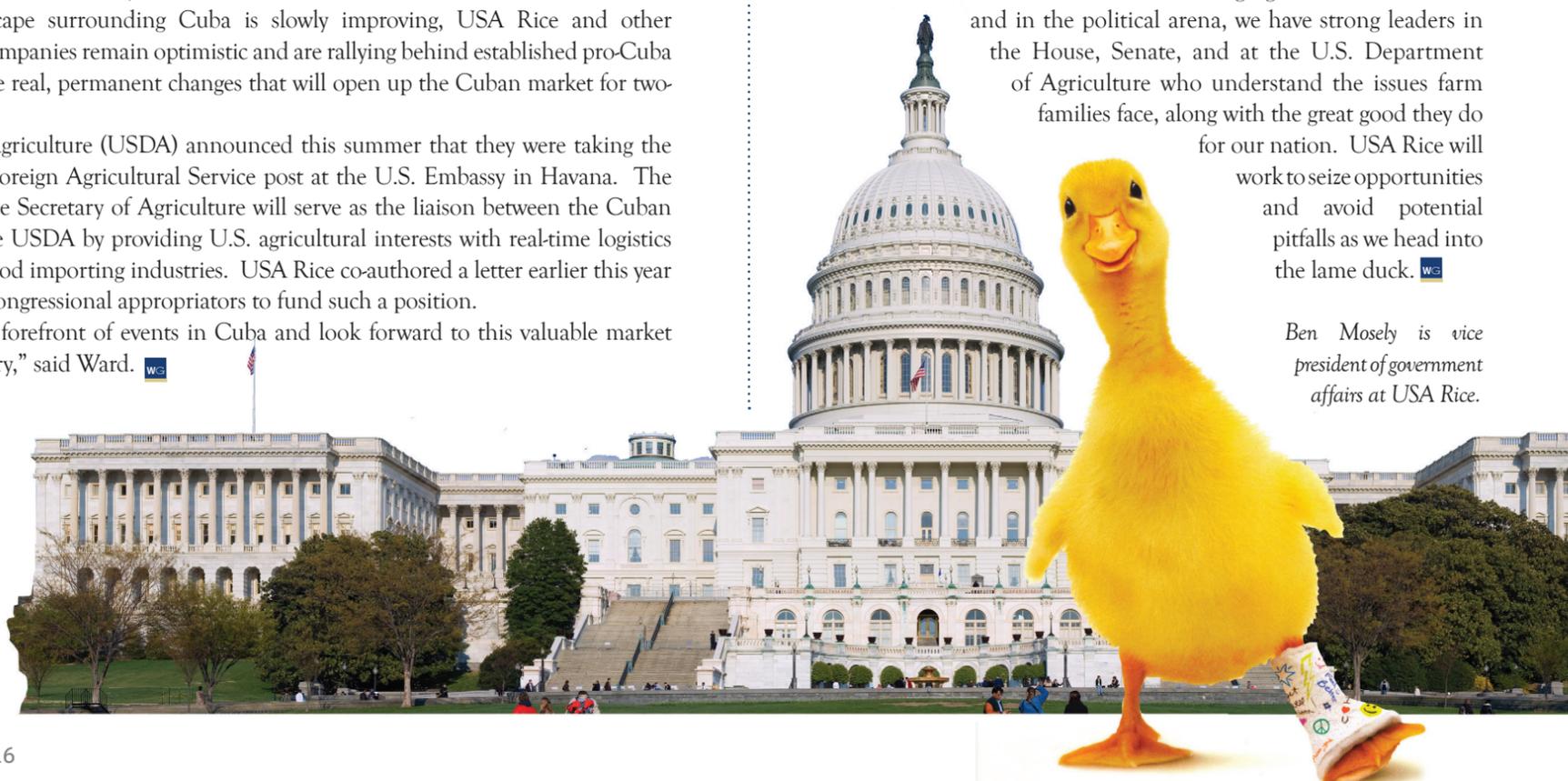
When Congress does come back after Labor Day for a short 4 to 5 week work period, its primary focus will be crafting a continuing resolution, or CR, to keep the employees and operations of the federal government functioning beyond the end of the fiscal year on September 30. This CR will likely provide bridge funding to get past the elections and into the lame duck period, setting the stage for a much larger package of deals toward the end of the year.

Will agriculture policy be implicated in this? Absolutely. Many big ticket items, notably the Agriculture Appropriations bills are either bound up in this process or otherwise destined for the lame duck. Specific items we are watching include the potential to shore up cotton and other perceived weaknesses in the Farm Bill through the agricultural appropriation process, attempts to restrict EPA’s agenda on Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) and similar regulations through the interior appropriations process, the prospect for end-of-year tax riders and extensions, and the possibility of trade measures both through the appropriations process (Cuba amendments) and around the larger wrangling on the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Of course, the backdrop for all considerations for agriculture is the recent three-year, 56 percent decline in net farm income, and virtually all economists now predicting a period of lower global commodity prices.

While these are challenging times on the farm and in the political arena, we have strong leaders in the House, Senate, and at the U.S. Department of Agriculture who understand the issues farm families face, along with the great good they do for our nation. USA Rice will work to seize opportunities and avoid potential pitfalls as we head into the lame duck. 

Ben Mosely is vice president of government affairs at USA Rice.





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CLOSE UP ON THE MIDDLE EAST

BY HARTWIG SCHMIDT

JORDAN & SAUDI ARABIA — The Middle East has been a loyal market for U.S.-grown rice for more than 20 years, with Saudi Arabia being the most important for long grain and Jordan for medium grain varieties.

Rice is an essential part of the daily diet here and rice consumption is high with more than 54 pounds per person annual consumption in Jordan and 116 pounds in Saudi Arabia.

Jordan's population is 8 million and the country has had a high number of immigrants, mostly refugees from Palestine, Iraq, and Syria, entering the country in the past several years, which puts pressure on the Jordanian economy, as well as the food supply.

Jordan is the largest single Arab market for U.S. medium grain rice. U.S. rice sales amounted to just over 8,000 MT in 2001 and reached a high of 103,700 MT in 2012. The United States is currently the largest rice supplier to Jordan. In spite of high prices in 2015, U.S. rice exports increased by 7 percent over 2014 to 95,200 MT with a value of \$88.9 million.

Saudi Arabia has a population close to 28 million (about 47 percent under 25 years of age) and that number is expected to nearly double in the next 20 years. The young and educated population is increasingly health conscious, embracing healthy foods as well as Western brands, a trend favorable for U.S.-grown rice.

Saudi Arabia is the Middle East's second largest importer of long grain rice, after Iran - 1.42 million MT of rice was imported in 2015, roughly the same amount as in 2014. The major supplier is India with basmati and regular long grain varieties.

Rice is imported freely into Saudi Arabia and was the tenth largest export destination for U.S. rice in terms of value in 2015, importing 117,000 MT with a value of \$87.9 million, a 15 percent increase in volume terms as compared to 2014. Saudi Arabia is a mature market with relatively stable demand.

USA Rice has been active in both of these markets for more than 15 years, supporting the sale of local U.S. rice brands through promotional activities which helped establish U.S.-grown rice as a high quality, healthy, everyday food for the local families.

Rice Promotions in Close Cooperation with Local Brands

USA Rice works actively with local U.S. rice importers, as we believe that promotions featuring actual U.S. rice brands that are available in the local super and supermarkets are more efficient than generic promotions. The participating brands have to be clearly identified as U.S. origin, and need to pay a direct cash contribution to the cost of the promotions. This ensures the commitment of the participating companies, and at the same time extends the reach of our promotional budget. Total cash contributions from the local U.S. rice brands in 2015 reached \$58,000 in Jordan (extending the available budget by about 30 percent) and \$206,000 in Saudi Arabia, (extending the promotional budget by about 40 percent), benefitting the local market, but also directly increasing U.S. rice sales.

There are strong social limitations in Saudi Arabia, especially for women, that limit the choice of promotional activities USA Rice can conduct. Women are the main decision makers when it comes to rice shopping, however, it is difficult to contact them, as they are not allowed to drive cars, or be in the company of men or talk to men who do not belong to their family, and a lot of the popular websites are blocked.

Given the limited access to cinemas, theaters, and other leisure activities in Saudi Arabia, shopping is the most sought after entertainment activity, and is often a family affair on the Saudi weekend. Malls and supermarkets offer excellent opportunities to reach housewives and their families, as young families like the indoor gaming zones and amusement centers in malls, while young mothers find them safe and ideal for their children. Consequently, our promotional activities targeting the consumers focus



on magazine advertising and outdoor billboards, as well as advertising and in-store promotions in supermarkets and shopping malls.

USA Rice works closely with Abu Bint (Ebro Foods), the largest U.S. rice brand on the market.

Jordan has a fairly young population as well, with 35 percent of its citizens aged 14 years or younger. The median age of the Jordanian population is 22 years, (it's 37 in the U.S.). The capital city, Amman, and four neighboring cities - Salt, Zarka, Irbid, and Madaba - account for two-thirds of Jordan's population. The country is much more westernized than many others in the region, offering more freedom to women.

In Jordan, USA Rice started to build the high quality image of U.S.-grown rice in the early 2000s, and promotional activities reflect the same tactics used in Saudi Arabia, focusing on concentrated print advertising centered around shopping malls.

Consumers who are exposed to this advertising can choose from many popular U.S. brands, including Sunbird, launched in 2013 by a Jordanian company that imported 2,000 MT of Calrose rice that year.

"With the support and devotion of our U.S. supplier, as well as the promotional

Jordan is the largest single Arab market for U.S. medium grain rice ... Rice is imported freely into Saudi Arabia and was the tenth largest export destination for U.S. rice in 2015.

UNITED KINGDOM SUCCESS STORY FOR U.S. RICE

BY MICHAEL KLEIN



“We believe in the high quality of U.S.-grown rice, and look forward to working with USA Rice to continue building the market.”

— BASIM HAMAD, owner of Rawabi Jordan for Marketing & Distribution

support of USA Rice, we managed to grow our sales to 13,000-14,000 MT in 2014, and plan to achieve 1,500 MT per month in 2016,” said Basim Hamad, the owner of the company in Jordan (Rawabi Jordan for Marketing & Distribution).

“During this time we managed to expand the sales of our brand from Amman to North and South Jordan, and we started packing U.S. Calrose for other local traders as well,” said Hamad. “Without the involvement and promotional support of USA Rice in the retail channels we could not have achieved these numbers in such a short amount of time. We believe in the high quality of U.S.-grown rice, and look forward to working with USA Rice to continue building the market.”

Both Jordan and Saudi Arabia continue to be strong markets for U.S. rice and while Saudi Arabia is a mature market, there is still an opportunity for the U.S. to capture a larger market share. Jordan is a growing market where there is potential for increased rice consumption. Through our close relationships with the brands we will continue to develop the positive views of U.S. rice so that U.S. rice exports and market share can continue to grow in these two vital countries in the Middle East. [w3](#)

Hartwig Schmidt has worked for the U.S. rice industry for 20 years and he’s seen it all.

DALLAS, TX — Attendees to USA Rice’s International Promotion Committee meeting here this July heard an encouraging story about U.S. rice and the United Kingdom (UK) from London-based committee member and Sales Director for S&B Herba Foods Peter Walker.

“Rice consumption here is rising dramatically and is replacing potatoes for health reasons and because rice is seen as more versatile,” Walker explained. “And while the top rice here remains basmati, where India and Pakistan dominate, long grain consumption is also strong, and imports from the U.S. increased 62 percent from 2014 to 2015 and we are on pace to have another encouraging year.”

There is a large ethnic population in the UK – consider that the national dish is neither fish and chips, nor shepherd’s pie as one might suspect, but rather chicken tikka masala – a spicy dish with Bangladeshi origins almost always served over, or alongside, rice, typically basmati.

However, there are also sizeable and growing Afro-Caribbean and Chinese populations, and, according to Walker, these groups favor long grain rice - specifically, from the United States. Consuming approximately 50,000 metric tons per year, the ethnic market in the UK has at times of adversity been a strong supporter of U.S. rice and there is still room for growth.

“There are at least 12 brands of U.S.-grown rice on UK retail shelves that I can name right now,” Walker said. “And where they were generally confined to specialty, Asian markets, now U.S. rice has crossed over to retail. We saw Tolly Boy brand in the mainstream Tesco markets since March 2015, and Aunt Caroline, a U.S. parboiled rice broke into ASDA (Walmart) this past November.”

Just this summer, Walker’s own company’s Peacock brand also jumped from ethnic retailers to ASDA and demand is booming.

“Customer acceptance is quite high already and the retail promotion activities that USA Rice is undertaking in both the ethnic and traditional markets are making a real difference by directly increasing listings and sales,” Walker added.

While Walker and others painted a generally positive picture for U.S. rice, there are three major obstacles looming on the horizon.

“U.S. rice remains the most expensive on the market, though the gap is narrowing. There are some sectors, such as retail private label and food service, that will make all their decisions largely based on price,” Walker explained. “Also grain quality is always a concern and the market prefers lower chalk and more grain uniformity that is sometimes difficult to achieve with U.S. rice.”

The final challenge Walker spoke about could turn out to be a positive. It’s the decision this summer of the UK to leave the European Union (EU).

“The full impact of Brexit is unknown at this time,” Walker said in July. “It could help remove or reduce tariffs or even impose tariffs on EU rice. While this is a time of great uncertainty, the Pound has certainly fallen sharply against the U.S. Dollar, making all imports much more expensive.”

Despite this uncertainty, the overall outlook for U.S.-grown rice in the United Kingdom is good.

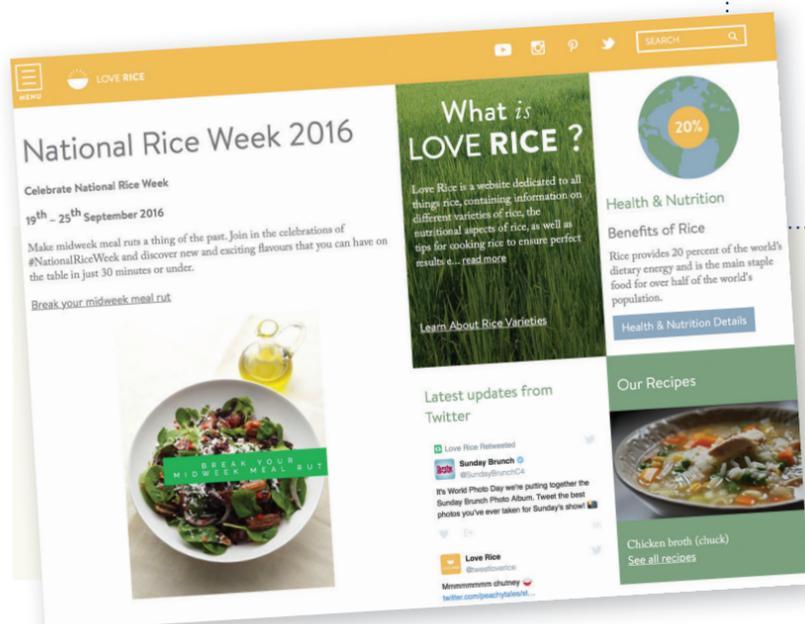
“It’s worth remembering that the one country in Europe that has consistently imported rice from the U.S. is the UK,” said Keith Glover, president of Producers Rice Mill based in Stuttgart, Arkansas. “They’ve stuck with us through the GM incident in 2006 and that’s been appreciated and could be the basis for expanding our relationship.” [w3](#)

Michael Klein loves a good success story and shepherd’s pie.

LOVE RICE?

September 19-26, 2016 marks the first National Rice Week in the UK

Retail promotions are being developed and consumers are being urged to “break the midweek meal rut” with exciting new recipes. A consumer-facing website, www.loverice.org has been launched with the hashtag #NationalRiceWeek.



AMIDST TRADE SHENANIGANS, U.S. MEDIUM GRAIN SET TO RETURN TO TURKEY

BY **MICHAEL KLEIN**

ISTANBUL, TURKEY — Turkey is an important commercial market for U.S. medium grain rice from both the Southern U.S. and California, and U.S. rice exports to Turkey averaged 175,000 MT per year in the period 2011-2015. Trade has been slow in 2016 for a variety of reasons, including high prices of U.S. rice, a robust Turkish domestic crop, and what USA Rice considers non-tariff barriers to trade. However, based on conversations between USA Rice and local importers beginning in July, U.S. medium grain may soon be flowing to Turkey.

“Inventories are low and consumers are being put off by low quality, improperly blended rice from differing origins, so U.S. paddy rice may soon reappear here,” said Hartwig Schmidt, USA Rice regional director for international market development. “Turkish millers prefer to buy paddy, as they can store it for a longer period of time than brown or milled rice, enabling them to follow actual demand needs, but we remain at odds with the government of Turkey on two very significant issues.”

Schmidt said Turkish officials have rejected shipments of rough rice from the U.S. South, as well as from Bulgaria, Greece, and Russia because of the alleged presence of white-tip nematodes that officials maintain present a threat to Turkish rice production even though it is well-established that the nematode exists in Turkey.

“Turkey already has white-tip nematodes, so this is, of course, preposterous,” said Schmidt. “It’s a clear violation of WTO commitments and a non-tariff barrier to trade.”

While here, Schmidt met with representatives of the U.S. government on this issue and was told that their Turkish counterparts are in no rush to resolve the issue.

Another obstacle to U.S. rice originating in the South is GMO cross-contamination – not in the rice itself – all U.S.-grown rice is GMO free – but rather cross contamination in the barges that may have previously transported GM corn or soybeans.

Schmidt said there is an effort to make use of the USDA’s Cochran Fellowship Program to bring key Turkish government officials to the U.S. sometime this year to educate them at least on the nematode issue. 



“Inventories are low and consumers are being put off by low quality, improperly blended rice from differing origins, so U.S. paddy rice may soon reappear here ... ”

— HARTWIG SCHMIDT,
USA Rice Regional Director for International Market Development



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FORTIFIED RICE IS A GAME CHANGER FOR FOOD AID

BY REBECCA BRATTER

WASHINGTON, DC — Throughout the last year, the global food supply chain has faced unprecedented pressure from challenging weather conditions due to El Niño, the continued outpouring of refugees from Syria and the Middle East, and a steep decline in oil and commodity prices. The demand for not just food, but proper nutrition, continues to grow exponentially. The U.S. is responding to that demand with its agricultural bounty combined with new investment in nutritional science to combat global micronutrient deficiencies, a condition called hidden hunger.

The U.S. rice industry in particular has always played a lead role in feeding the world, providing hundreds of thousands of metric tons of rice to vulnerable populations. Through a long term partnership with both the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. rice has fed millions around the world through school feeding, agricultural value chain development, and emergency relief programs. The new addition of a fortified rice product to U.S. government feeding programs will feed more people around the world, but more importantly, will also help eradicate some of the most persistent micronutrient deficiencies that hold millions back from proper development and growth.

Fortified rice is either a coated or extruded kernel that contains eight critical micronutrients, including Vitamin B, Vitamin A, and Iron. The kernel is then blended back in with regular long grain rice in a way that provides optimal levels of nutrition. Preliminary reports from U.S. Government field tests acknowledge the effectiveness of fortified rice: it is accepted by those consuming it because it tastes and looks like regular rice, and it is absorbed in sufficient quantities to improve health and conquer hidden hunger.

“Work still remains to be done on the procurement and logistical side for this new product to gain traction in the food assistance supply chain,” says Jamie Warshaw, USA Rice Food Aid Subcommittee chairman. “We believe that fortified rice will increase the demand for U.S.-grown rice and will be a game changer - for rice growers and processors, for global feeding programs, and most importantly for the beneficiaries of the improved nutritional qualities of rice. USA Rice is committed to this effort and is working closely with U.S. Government entities to ensure that fortified rice has the maximum impact on those in need.”

Rebecca Bratter is a food security consultant to the U.S. rice industry with 20 years of experience in global ag markets. She is currently working to ensure maximum rice tonnage in USDA, USAID, and WFP programming.



“... fortified rice will increase the demand for U.S.-grown rice and will be a game changer.”

— JAMIE WARSHAW,
USA Rice Food Aid
Subcommittee chairman

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LSU AGCENTER RICE RESEARCH: 100+ YEARS AND COUNTING

BY BRUCE SCHULTZ

CROWLEY, LA. — Technology has become a vital part of the work being done at the Louisiana State University (LSU) AgCenter H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station to maintain the facility's reputation as one of the top facilities of its kind worldwide.

The station was founded in 1909 with 60 acres and a construction budget of \$3,500. The facility has grown to 1,050 acres, becoming the focal point for rice farmers seeking ways to overcome their challenges. Rice breeding was the first mission of the station. When rice farming began in Louisiana in the late 1800s, varieties were brought from the coastal areas of the Carolinas.

Louisiana farmers' yields have increased considerably, and much of that can be attributed to the station's research. In 2015, yields averaged more than 7,500 pounds of rice per acre compared to the 1983 average of 3,800 pounds.

One of the station's biggest achievements was the development of Clearfield rice, which has been a breakthrough for farmers battling red rice. Two new Clearfield varieties, CL153 and CL272, were released last year for seed production. In the past 25 years, 32 varieties have been released from the station.

To compete with Thai Jasmine rice imports, an aromatic variety, Jazzmen, was created and work is underway on a Clearfield version of Jazzmen. A new piece of lab equipment, a gas chromatograph, is being used to analyze lines for aroma.

When BASF wanted to refine a complementary alternative to Clearfield with the Provisia herbicide-resistant technology, the corporation chose the Rice Research Station at Crowley to do the work. Dr. Steve Linscombe, rice breeder and station director, has taken the line and adapted it for U.S. growing conditions in just four years. He expects Provisia to be released in 2018.

"People always look up to the research station in Crowley. They can't say enough about the good work coming out of the station and the cooperative work they do with other stations."

— FRED ZAUNBRECHER, rice farmer and Louisiana Rice Research Board member

Herbicide, fungicide, and insecticide companies seeking unbiased and critical analyses of their products have sought out the expertise of station personnel, including Drs. Eric Webster, weed scientist; Don Groth, pathologist; and Mike Stout, entomologist. They all contribute to the breeding work done at the station by testing new lines for pest resistance and susceptibility.

Dr. Adam Famoso, rice breeder, is working with a state-of-the-art DNA marker technology that has the capacity to analyze thousands of DNA samples to find traits related to many different traits of importance in variety and hybrid development.

Dr. Ida Wenefrida, rice researcher, and Herry Utomo, molecular biologist, are working on development of a high-protein rice that could benefit third-world countries facing widespread malnutrition. Wenefrida also runs the cereal chemistry lab at the station to determine if new rice lines have desired cooking characteristics, and Utomo uses DNA marker technology to assist in the breeding project.

Dr. Steve Linscombe, director of the LSU AgCenter and one of the top rice experts in the world, points to the future of rice research during a recent field day.



Above: Field work is time consuming and labor intensive.

Below: A bird's eye view of the LSU Rice Research Center.

Second-crop yields have been boosted with research by Dr. Dustin Harrell, LSU AgCenter agronomist and extension specialist.

Testing of material to prevent birds from feeding on headed rice was conducted last year at the station in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Rice breeder Jim Oard is close to completing his work on the first high-quality rice hybrid. Without obtaining a male sterile rice line from China, that project would still be in its early stages.

The agreement between the LSU AgCenter and Chinese agricultural officials to obtain the male sterile line for the hybrid project shows the level of international cooperation that is fostered by the relationships with scientists from other rice-growing countries. Breeders exchange germplasm used in variety development.

Linscombe said a major part of the station's project funding originates from the rice check-off program. For every 100 pounds of rice sold in Louisiana, farmers voluntarily pay 5 cents earmarked for research. Which research projects are funded is decided by the 15-member Louisiana Rice Research Board made up of 14 farmers and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry secretary.

Linscombe said much of the check-off funding is used to pay research associates who do most of the hands-on work. "Our field work is very time-consuming and labor intensive, and without these hard-working employees, many of our programs would not exist."

Off-station research is conducted on land provided by farmers for variety testing, agronomy projects, and work related to crop pest control. Linscombe said some farmers have provided land and pumped water onto the fields for several decades. The locations are used for field days for researchers to explain the results of their work.

The breeding project uses the winter nursery in Puerto Rico to grow selected lines of rice during the off-season, accelerating the variety development process. A 5-acre seed increase was grown in Puerto Rico during the winter of 2015-16, then planted at the station this past spring.

Fred Zaunbrecher, a farmer and member of the Louisiana Rice Research Board, said the station faculty is eager to help farmers, and farmer input helps guide research.

"People always look up to the research station in Crowley," he said. "They can't say enough about the good work coming out of the station and the cooperative work they do with other stations."

Zaunbrecher said the widespread use of varieties originating from the station is evidence of the facility's impact on the southern U.S. rice industry. "That's keeping us on the competitive edge, and keeping us in business." 

Bruce Schultz is a communications specialist at the LSU AgCenter and plays a mean fiddle with the Back Door Band.



WHAT DO AN ASTRONAUT, A KELLOGG'S EXECUTIVE, AND A U.S. AMBASSADOR HAVE IN COMMON?

ALL WILL BE SPEAKING AT THE 2016 OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

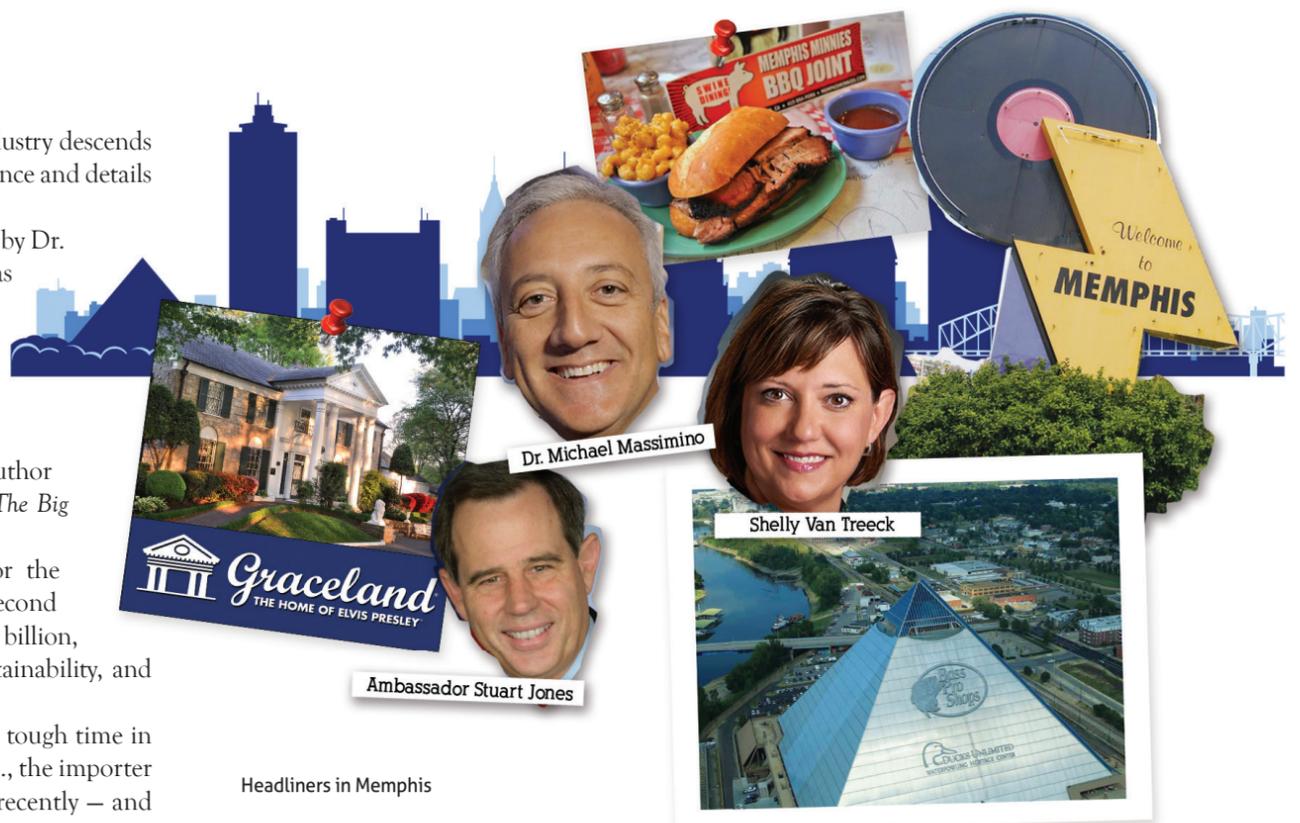
MEMPHIS, TN — It's just about three months until the rice industry descends on Memphis, Tennessee for the 2016 USA Rice Outlook Conference and details about the programming are beginning to emerge.

The keynote address on Thursday, December 8 will be given by Dr. Michael Massimino, Ph.D, a former NASA Astronaut who has the distinction of being the first person to Tweet from space!

Massimino had a distinguished career as an astronaut; he and his shuttle crews traveled faster and higher than any other astronauts in the 21st century, and he performed the most dangerous and complex repair job in history, when he and his crew repaired the Hubble Space Telescope in 2009. He is an author and serves as a science consultant for the popular TV sitcom, *The Big Bang Theory*, on which he sometimes plays himself.

Shelly Van Treeck, Global Chief Procurement Officer for the Kellogg Company, the world's leading cereal company and second largest user of rice in the United States with sales last year of \$13.5 billion, will address conference attendees on her company's vision, sustainability, and the great partnership between the rice industry and Kellogg's.

Followers of the rice industry know that the U.S. has had a tough time in Iraq for the last several years. A once thriving market for the U.S., the importer of some 1.5 million metric tons of rice descended into chaos recently — and



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the rice tendering process went with it. But the rice picture there has turned around of late, with a Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. and the Government of Iraq, that is leading to a more transparent tender process. USA Rice has led the way here on this side of the Atlantic with help from Members of Congress and the Obama Administration. On the other side of the Atlantic U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Stuart Jones has been a tireless advocate for U.S. rice and frankly, a pit bull for the industry.

A career statesman, Jones is finishing his two-year assignment in Iraq and will be returning to the State Department in Washington. Ambassador Jones will address the crowd at Outlook this year to share his thoughts on the region — what came to pass in Iraq, and what lies ahead.

USA Rice is also planning an interactive Conservation Mini Conference that will feature growers, crop consultants, and government conservation officials sharing their experiences and insights to help rice growers get the most out of conservation programs in their states — including the multi-million dollar USA Rice-Ducks Unlimited Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

It wouldn't be a USA Rice Outlook Conference without crowd favorites Jim Weismeyer and Nathan Childs — and both will be in Memphis. Attendees will also hear rice state reports, meet the new Rice Leadership Development Class, the winner of the National Rice Month Scholarship, and the recipients of *Rice Farming Magazine's* Rice Farmer of the Year, Rice Industry, and Rice Lifetime Achievement Awards.

The conference will feature an Exhibit Hall with new dedicated hours and 37,450 square feet of space and the brand new USA Rice Innovation Stage where attendees can learn about the latest and greatest in the world of rice.

Last year's USA Rice Outlook Conference in New Orleans was the biggest and best on record, with almost 950 attendees packing the sessions and events. Organizers know topping that will not be easy, but they are confident this year's programming and speaker line-up has something for everyone and will leave attendees informed, fulfilled, and glad they made the trip.

The 2016 USA Rice Outlook Conference will be held in Memphis, Tennessee from December 7-9, 2016. Companies interested in Outlook sponsorships, exhibiting, or reserving space on the Innovation Stage should contact Jeanette Davis at USA Rice at (703) 236-1447 or jdavis@usarice.com.

DEVELOPING A STRONG BASE OF YOUNG LEADERS FOR THE U.S. RICE INDUSTRY

BY CHUCK WILSON

DEWITT, AR — It could be argued that the most important resource the rice industry has is not a natural environment conducive to rice production or valuable knowledge gained through scientific research, rather it is people. So it makes sense to identify young, make-a-difference people who are committed to growth, and develop their leadership skills to ultimately offer value to the whole industry.

The mission of identifying and developing rice industry leaders is conducted through The Rice Foundation's Rice Leadership Development Program, which is graciously funded by grants from John Deere Company, American Commodity Company, and RiceTec, Inc. The program is developed and managed by USA Rice on behalf of The Rice Foundation.

Program participants are selected by a special committee of rice industry and agribusiness leaders that evaluates applications and letters of recommendation, as well as conducts personal interviews with finalists to determine the five rice producers and two individuals from rice-industry-related professions who will make up the Rice Leadership Development Class.

To be eligible, applicants must demonstrate leadership potential, derive their primary livelihood as rice producers or from a rice-industry-related profession and be 25 to 45 years old at time of application. Additionally they must obtain employer approval prior to applying; if self-employed, agree to devote time away from their operations as required, agree to attend all scheduled sessions with exception of illness of participant or immediate family, and agree to complete all reports and evaluations as required.

The program is designed to give future leaders a comprehensive understanding of the rice industry, with an emphasis on personal development and communication skills. The class attends four one-week sessions over a two-year period that encompass studies of all aspects of the rice industry through firsthand observations. They also receive training to improve communication skills, business etiquette, and public speaking, as well as working with the media.

Session one is typically conducted in late March or early April in the Gulf Coast rice growing regions of Louisiana and Texas. Session two, typically in late June, is in Arkansas and Mississippi with a trip to the Chicago Board of Trade and to John Deere's World Headquarters and Harvester Factory in Moline, Illinois. During September of the second year of the class participants travel to California. The final session is held in our nation's capitol in conjunction with the annual USA Rice Government Affairs Conference.



After two years of intensive training, thousands of miles traveled, and thousands of dollars invested in development of the future leaders, the seven rice industry graduates are expected to put their freshly honed leadership skills to work to ensure that they help develop, deliver, and sustain the rice message.

The Rice Foundation Leadership Development program has been wildly successful at equipping servant leaders who utilize the skills they have acquired to serve the rice industry. All four major USA Rice organizations (USA Rice Council, USA Rice Farmers, USA Rice Merchants' Association, and USA Rice Millers' Association) and The Rice Foundation have been chaired by alumni, as well as numerous boards and committees that are part of the USA Rice governance structure.

I strongly encourage anyone eligible with an interest in contributing to the overall long-term success of this valuable industry to apply for the Rice Foundation Leadership Development program. For more information you can contact The Rice Foundation at (870) 673-7541. Applications are available on the USA Rice website at www.usarice.com. 

Chuck Wilson is director of The Rice Foundation and Arkansas field services for USA Rice.

"The Rice Leadership Program has taught me that by assembling different backgrounds, philosophies, ideals, and goals, we can find answers to challenges much faster."

— CHARLEY MATHEWS, JR.
Marysville, California rice producer and
current chairman of The Rice Foundation

CALLING ALL #THINKRICE IMAGES

BY COLLEEN KLEMCZEWSKI

ARLINGTON, VA — With harvest well underway in some rice states and quickly approaching in others, USA Rice is asking members to snap a picture of what’s happening on their farms and post it on their social media channels with the hashtag #ThinkRice. These images will be entered into a September National Rice Month contest hosted by USA Rice that will run until October 1.

These next couple of months are busy ones for the U.S. rice industry, but most consumers are unaware of what’s happening around the country to prepare the food they will eat later. The purpose of this photo contest is to bridge the gap between farmers and consumers, and help the public to think of rice before they see it on supermarket shelves - so the next time they think rice, they also think of the men and women who work hard year-round to produce rice right here in the United States.

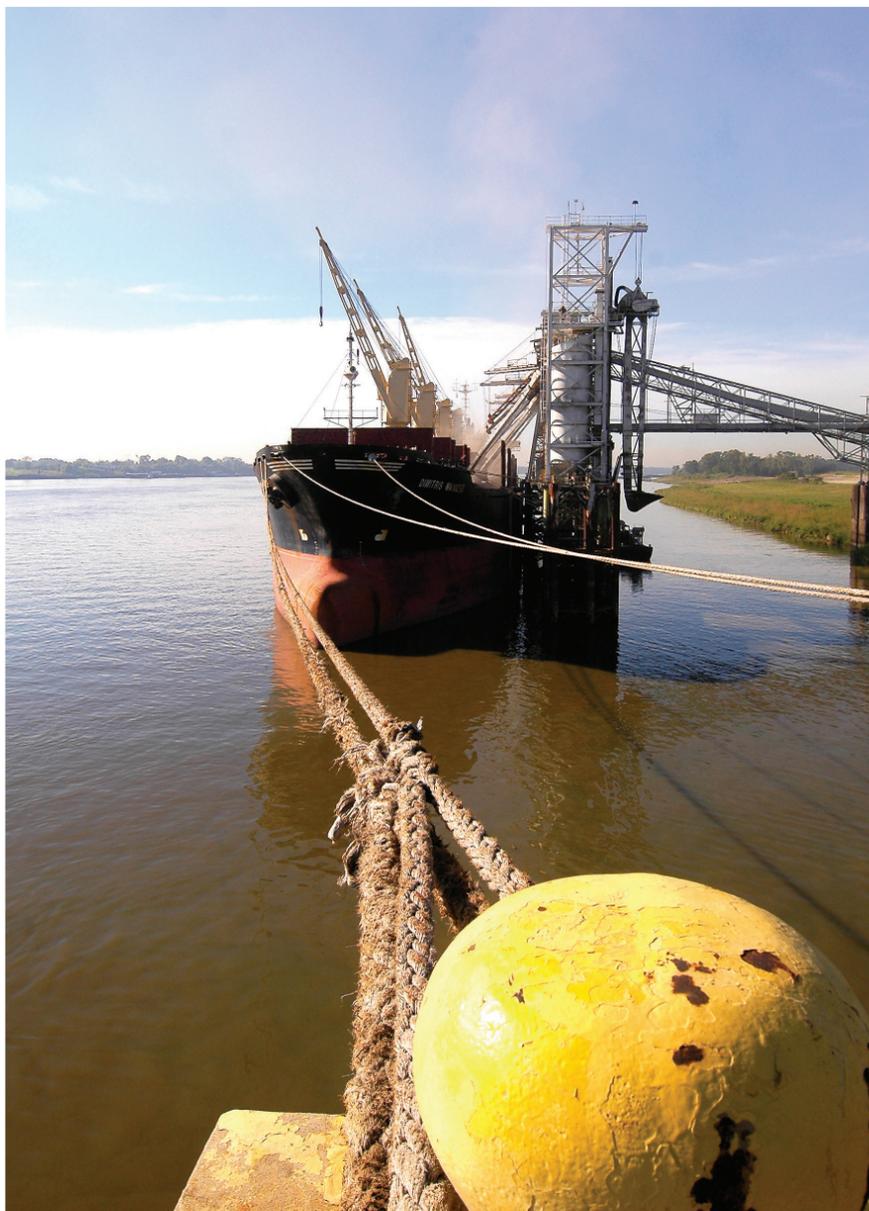
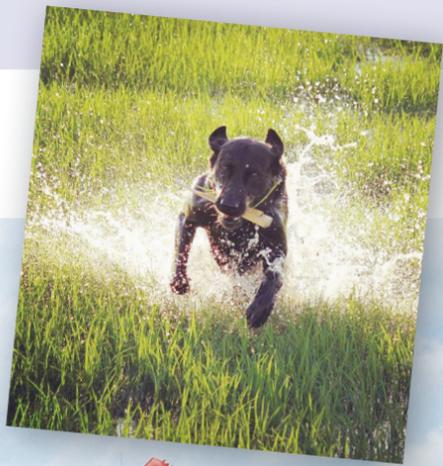
Even though harvest is on everyone’s minds at the moment, members can also post images taken earlier this year during any stage of the production process: wildlife on the rice farm, family farming photos, milling operations, etc. Multiple entries are accepted as long as they all contain the hashtag #ThinkRice.

USA Rice will compile these pictures and post them on the official USA Rice Facebook page and ask the public to “like” their favorite rice photo. The person who submits the image with the most “likes” at the end of the contest will win a free registration to the 2016 USA Rice Outlook Conference in Memphis, December 7-9, 2016. Rice “swag bag” prizes will also be awarded for other outstanding entries.

Members can post their photos with the hashtag #ThinkRice on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram. Not active on social media? You can still enter to win. Email a favorite photo you’ve taken to cklem@usarice.com. 

Colleen Klemczewski runs USA Rice’s social media accounts and is a firm believer in the power of the right Instagram filter especially when it comes to selfies.





THINKRICE.COM THINKS REFRESH

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

ARLINGTON, VA – USA Rice recently revamped thinkrice.com, its consumer-facing website, with design, content, and functionality improvements. The sleek new look enhances the user experience and enriches the way USA Rice communicates the U.S. rice message with all public audiences.

“One of our priorities is to inspire people to *Think Rice* and recognize that U.S. rice is an on-trend ingredient that meets their culinary, nutritional, and locally-grown preferences,” said Katie Maher, USA Rice director of domestic promotion. “And a huge part of that is having a fresh and modern online presence that resonates with visitors.”

The updated website uses colorful graphics and photos to grab viewers’ attention. On the home page, a slider moves across the screen showcasing popular content areas like sustainability and nutrition, and will be updated throughout the year to help boost website traffic.

Beneath that, visitors can easily navigate to recipes for foodservice, consumer, or K-12 and to our “Meet U.S. Rice Farmers” section to hear their stories from the field.

“One of my favorite new functions of the site is the interactive nature that draws viewers in to highlight important messages,” said Maher. “On the home page we have a graphic that uses animation to display topline stats of rice’s sustainability story as you scroll over it. It’s an impactful way to get the main message out there without overwhelming the reader, and we’ll be doing more of this in the future to showcase food and rice.”

Maher explained that USA Rice worked to refresh thinkrice.com because this program year, domestic promotion activities will focus on driving more traffic to the site through social media as well as foodservice advertising and e-newsletters.

“Foodservice operators and health professionals look to commodity boards and trade associations, like USA Rice, as experts and a reliable source of information and resources,” said Maher. “We wanted our website to reflect those expectations and be viewed as a valuable resource because that is key to having new and returning visitors.”

“One of our priorities is to inspire people to *Think Rice* ... And a huge part of that is having a fresh and modern online presence that resonates with visitors.”

— KATIE MAHER, director of domestic promotion programs



P.F. CHANG'S PROUDLY PROMOTES SERVING U.S.-GROWN RICE

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

ENGLAND & NEWPORT, AR — Flying high over Dow Brantley's farm, a camera drone takes in the bird's-eye view before swooping down at a high speed to hover over the bright green tillers like a dragonfly on steroids. Brantley stands in a nearby paddy, surrounded by camera equipment and lighting reflectors, patiently explaining for the third - or maybe the thirteenth time - the life cycle of a rice plant.

Twenty-four hours later, on her family's farm in Newport, Jennifer James is participating in an on-camera interview on the patio of her duck camp talking about rice production on her farm. In the distance, GoPros mounted on a set of dirt pans record the distribution of soil based on a computerized plan that maximizes irrigation efficiency on a new field being readied for planting. Today the camera drone sails over grain bins and levees, and zooms along a reservoir, creating a long line of ripples in the clear, blue water glistening in the afternoon sun.

These "Hollywood comes to Arkansas" scenes are not the makings of a new reality TV show but part of a unique video project showcasing U.S. rice farming. Restaurant industry leader P.F. Chang's is creating a collection of documentary-style videos to highlight the story behind the U.S.-grown grain that is integral to so many of the dishes featured on their menu.

"Farm to Wok™ has been our food philosophy since the day we opened. It's been our story - and now we are telling it," said Dwayne Chambers, P.F. Chang's chief marketing officer. "Many guests don't know that every one of our restaurants has a scratch kitchen. This means our chefs are preparing food fresh every day - chopping vegetables, hand rolling sushi, and crafting handmade cocktails from fresh squeezed fruits. We want to share the stories of the people who make this possible."

The U.S. rice video is one of many in a series of P.F. Chang's videos highlighting different ingredients and their natural source, including green onions, honey, and ginger. P.F. Chang's is investing in paid social and digital marketing to promote these videos and plans to debut their video about local rice farms this September in celebration and support of National Rice Month.

"I enjoy promoting U.S.-grown rice any way I can and if this video helps spread the word, I'm in," said James. "The fact that P.F. Chang's, a household name with a great reputation, sources all of their rice locally from U.S. farmers is so important and I appreciate them



wanting to share our story with their customers. It's proof that their commitment to the integrity of their ingredients and the food they share with guests is real."

The new farm videos magnifying the source of their ingredients is just one way P.F. Chang's is telling the Farm to Wok™ story to their guests. This summer, the company also introduced a new menu that includes a cover image deconstructing dishes down to their simple ingredients and a special call-out box informing guests that all of the rice they serve is grown in the USA.

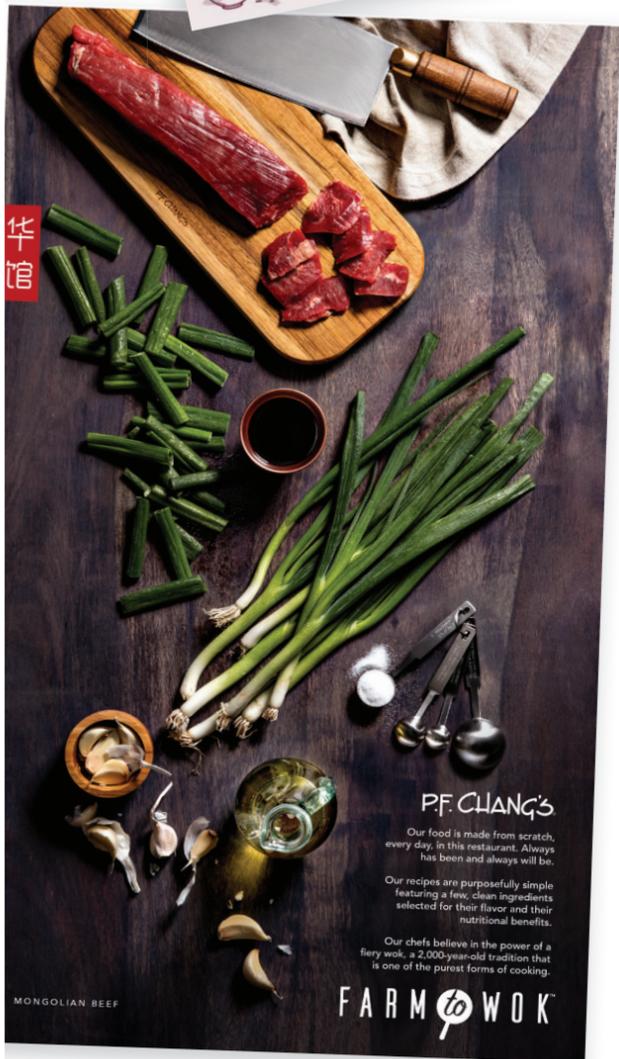
"This is a huge win for U.S. rice," explains Katie Maher, USA Rice director of domestic promotion. "Having a well-known and far-reaching partner like P.F. Chang's tout U.S.-grown rice on their menu and tell the story of U.S. rice in their video series is invaluable."

Sprinkled throughout the new menu, are several interesting facts about Asian cuisine and ingredients in the dishes. Beneath the 'Noodles & Rice' section, P.F. Chang's highlights the nutritional benefits of rice and where it's grown, stating: "Our U.S. sourced rice is a nutrient-rich grain that provides more than 15 vitamins and minerals, beneficial antioxidants and is also GMO free."

"We decided to feature messages about our rice that we're proud of and thought would resonate with our guests," said Chambers. "The fact that the rice we serve is grown right here by U.S. farmers and also provides beneficial nutrients is something we wanted to highlight."

USA Rice initially partnered with P.F. Chang's last September, in honor of National Rice Month, to present the first RiceGiving, a charitable program that donated a serving

Our U.S. sourced rice is a nutrient-rich grain that provides more than 15 vitamins and minerals, beneficial antioxidants, and is also GMO free.



“Already committed to great food and the highest quality rice, P.F. Chang’s is also demonstrating its commitment to America’s family rice farmers.”

— BETSY WARD, USA Rice President & CEO

of U.S.-grown rice to the hungry for every rice entrée ordered by P.F. Chang’s guests. The U.S. rice industry donated 100,000 pounds of rice to food banks – that’s one million servings of rice going to those in need.

P.F. Chang’s promoted the program to their guests through social media, in restaurants with a promotional card provided to each table, and with a dedicated web page on their website which featured a two minute promotional video provided by USA Rice.

“P.F. Chang’s was so pleased with the results of program and the positive feedback they received that they decided to sign-on to the RiceGiving campaign again this year,” said Maher.

This September, when P.F. Chang’s guests order a portion of sushi, a serving of U.S.-grown rice will be donated to Feeding America, a nationwide hunger relief organization. This year’s goal is to donate 200,000 pounds of rice which will provide 2 million servings of rice to people in need.

P.F. Chang’s will promote the RiceGiving program in their 210 restaurants with signage and special promotional pens filled with U.S.-grown rice, which will be distributed with the check. They will also use a dedicated webpage to explain RiceGiving and will

promote the program, along with the new Farm to Wok™ rice video, to their nearly one million social media followers and newsletter subscribers.

“We’re excited to continue and expand our partnership with P.F. Chang’s,” said USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward. “Already committed to great food and the highest quality rice, P.F. Chang’s is also demonstrating its commitment to America’s family rice farmers. We hope that our excellent partnership and promotions with P.F. Chang’s will serve as a case study to show other national chains that not only should you be serving U.S.-grown rice, but you should be talking about it as well.”

Deborah Willenborg appreciates a scratch kitchen, especially one where she doesn't have to do the dishes.

THANK YOU! FOR RICE DONATIONS

Thank you to the USA Rice members that made the first RiceGiving possible. They donated 100,000 pounds of U.S.-grown rice to Feeding America food banks to help feed those in need – that’s 1 million servings of rice!



NATIONAL RICE MONTH SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST GETS MAJOR MAKEOVER

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

ARLINGTON, VA — Let's face it. We live in the age of a "camera in everyone's pocket" and with more than 2.5 billion camera phones in use and the rise in image centric social media, there is real value in using images to promote messages.

That's why the new, improved National Rice Month (NRM) Scholarship contest will now be image-driven.

The contest has the same parameters and focus as before — to create awareness for U.S.-grown rice — but now there's a new delivery platform to showcase results. The accessibility of camera phones and the fact that young people are comfortable using image creation and content to communicate is the driver behind this update.

Contest entries can be crafted using video, PowerPoint, Prezi, or any visual presentation tool, and must be less than or equal to 3 minutes.

High school graduating students from rice-growing states — Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Texas — are eligible for the three scholarship prizes, sponsored by Dow AgroSciences, totaling \$8,500.

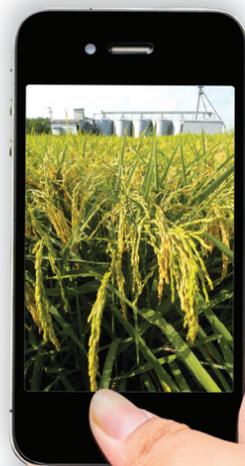
The grand-prize winner will receive a \$4,000 scholarship and a trip with a chaperone this December to the awards ceremony at the 2016 USA Rice Outlook Conference in Memphis, Tennessee. The second-place winner will receive a \$3,000 scholarship, and third-place \$1,500.

Contest entries will be judged on creativity, quality, popularity, and effectiveness in promoting U.S.-grown rice, NRM, and the importance of rice in the student's state. Sample topics include: rice production, nutrition, sustainability, and marketing/promotion.

"We are thrilled Dow AgroSciences is again sponsoring this scholarship program," says USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward. "National Rice Month is a time for America to salute its rice farmers and everyone involved in the U.S. rice industry, and we can't wait to see how creative students get with their entries for the revamped scholarship contest." 

Entries are due October 31.

For more information and to submit an entry, go to the NRM scholarship page on thinkrice.com.



HEALTH & CONVENIENCE DRIVE SHOPPERS TO U.S. RICE

BY KATIE MAHER

ARLINGTON, VA — As more shoppers are seeking healthier lifestyles, grocery stores are responding with health and wellness programs to meet their needs. In fact, ninety-five percent of stores employ dietitians at the corporate, regional, and store levels, and these dietitians are taking the lead in developing nutrition programs to help shoppers make healthy food choices, while at the same time supporting retail grocery sales.

That's why this September, in support of National Rice Month (NRM), USA Rice is working with retail dietitians to remind shoppers to Think Rice while at the grocery store.

"Rice has many nutritional benefits and can be used in a variety of dishes, so it's important we work with these influential retail dietitians to remind shoppers of rice's health attributes and secure rice's place on a healthy plate," said Paul Galvani, chairman of the USA Rice Retail Subcommittee.

"Last September, our retail dietitian program was extremely successful," said Galvani. "Our rice promotions generated more than 13 million impressions, our retail partners saw an average increase of 19 percent in rice unit sales, and the overall rice category saw an increase of 1.8 percent in rice pound sales."

This year, USA Rice is hoping to continue the promotional successes through customized partnerships with retail dietitians at Jewel-Osco, Kroger, Raley's, Rouses, ShopRite, and United. Throughout the month, USA Rice's dietitian partners will promote NRM and U.S.-grown rice through various supermarket communication channels, such as: in-store radio ads, recipe demonstrations, newsletters, social media, blogs, store magazines, circulars, store tours, nutrition classes, and more.

"Retailers see great value in health and wellness programs, so they're always looking for new ways to expand the programs in their stores and communities," said Galvani. "For example, USA Rice is participating in some unique promotions like local TV segments about healthy eating with H-E-B and Raley's dietitians, as well as a tasting and learning station at Kroger's Wellness Festival which takes place in four cities including Denver, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Nashville."

USA Rice's retail dietitian partners received two recipes cards to use in-stores with shoppers when conducting recipe demonstrations or cooking classes focused on simple family meals, or health issues like diabetes and weight management. USA Rice also distributed its retail dietitian toolkit to a network of dietitians at 34 retailers nationwide.

"Because we shared our toolkit with the retail dietitian network last year, dietitians at eight other grocery stores promoted NRM at no additional cost to USA Rice," said Galvani. "Bonus placements from those dietitians demonstrate the benefit of working with these influential and credible partners to stretch our promotion dollars and maximize the value of our programs."

In addition to health and wellness, another huge driver in food purchases is convenience. Nearly 37 percent of consumers report purchasing prepared ready-to-eat or ready-to-heat foods once or more weekly. With the popularity of prepared foods, it's no wonder USA Rice is teaming up with Advanced Fresh Concepts, the largest supermarket sushi distributor in the United States, to conduct an NRM promotion in grocery stores and military commissaries. This September, more than 2,000 stores across the country will feature sushi display case signage, 'Rice Grown in the USA' stickers on sushi containers, and in-store sampling at select chains. Last year, sushi sales increased 12 percent during the promotion.

"Having our 'Rice Grown in the USA' logo on the front of sushi packages is a major success and puts our message directly in front of consumers, which is precisely the goal of these promotions," said Galvani.

Strongly supported by American rice farmers and millers, National Rice Month has become a well-known national program used to educate consumers about the benefits of rice grown in the USA. 

Katie Maher is director of domestic promotion at USA Rice.

