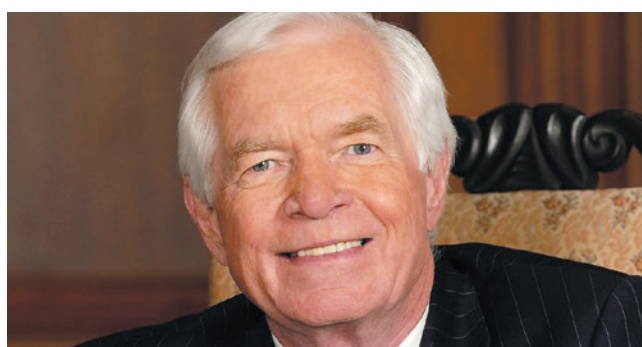


# WHOLE GRAIN



## DOMESTIC PROMOTION: GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT



LEGENDARY LAWMAKER RETIRES PAGE 12



EPA FIELD TOUR NEXT STOP: CA PAGE 14

### also in this issue:

**INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION:**  
How USA Rice Moves the Needle in Rough Rice Markets  
PAGE 8

**MEMBER SERVICES:**  
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PAGE 30



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# What Do They Want?

BY BRIAN KING

**THERE IS A BUSINESS ADAGE THAT SAYS,** “Find out what they want, so you can give them what they need.” I don’t know who said it first, but it certainly applies to what we’re trying to do in the rice industry and it is the foundation of this issue of *Whole Grain* – I call it the “What Do They Want?” edition.


For some time we’ve been gathering data, from firsthand interviews, watching trends, and thinking about our own habits when it comes to cooking and eating, and what we know is that we need to do more on the aromatic front. They are popular, particularly with the new generation that has spending power and is coming into their own right now – millennials.

As you will see in these pages, our industry is rising to the challenge presented by increased aromatic imports by developing U.S.-grown alternatives that can succeed in the marketplace.

And we’re also challenging rice pretenders – people seem to want these products for some reason (at least for now) – and they impact rice’s place on grocery store shelves.

You’ll also read about what makes ancient grains ancient, and why rice is usually excluded from this group. The answers may surprise you.

We’ve collected other news from around rice world that you will find interesting, from our recent Outlook and Government Affairs conferences to what is going on in Iraq, Japan, and some of the key rough rice markets where USA Rice is active on our behalf.

I don’t know if when you woke up this morning you realized you needed this issue of *Whole Grain*, but I know you want to be informed about your industry, so here you go. 



“Find out what they want, so you can give them what they need.”

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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.

USA Rice is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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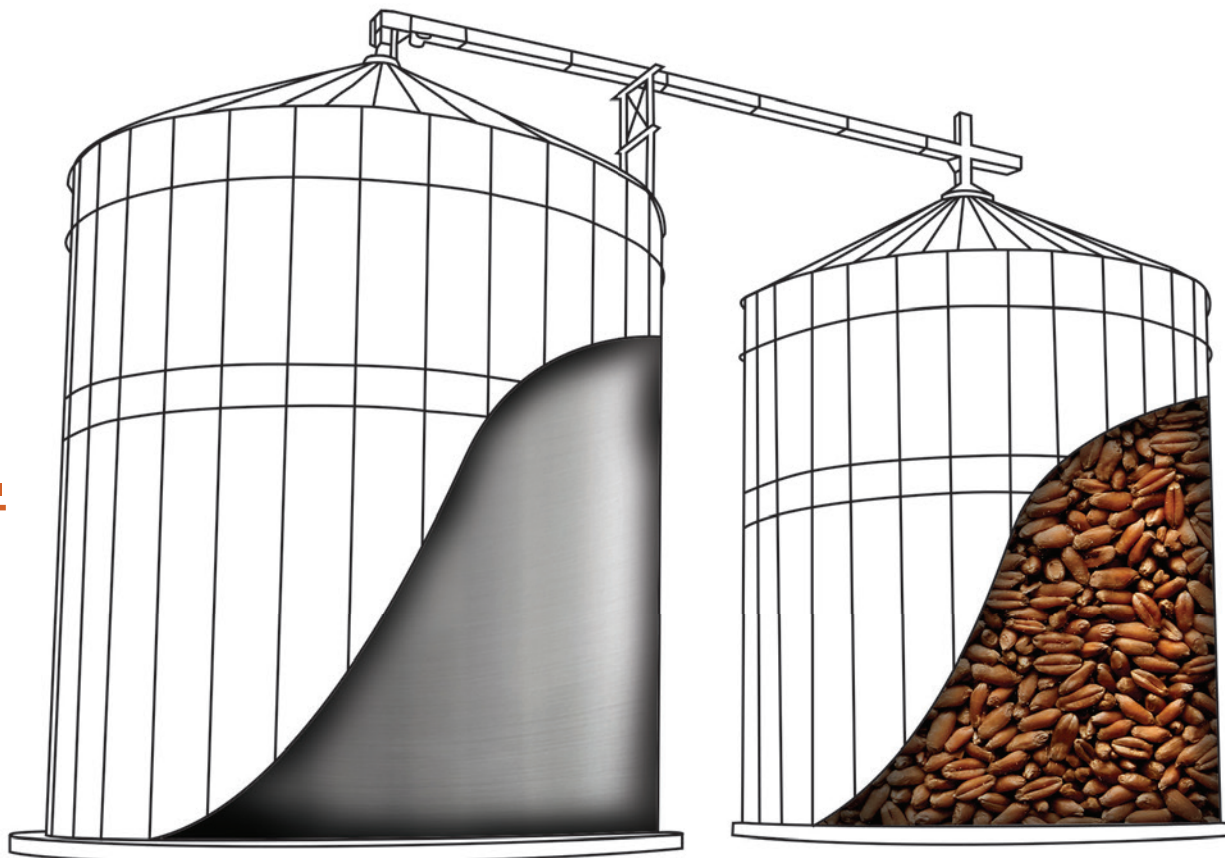
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# DON'T LET THEM TELL YOU CAULIFLOWER IS RICE, AND DON'T LET THEM TELL YOU WE DON'T WORK FOR EVERYONE

BY BETSY WARD

LAST YEAR MARKED MY 10TH as the President and CEO of USA Rice and I have been grateful for every day. In particular, one of the most rewarding elements of my job is that I get to represent every part of the U.S. rice industry. Unlike most trade associations in Washington, DC, USA Rice is vertically integrated. I say we represent U.S. rice interests from the soil to the stomach. We work for farmers, millers, merchants, exporters, and even end users. It makes USA Rice unique and the work challenging and rewarding.

But a refrain I hear from time to time about USA Rice is that we are a milled rice organization.

It's simply not true.

You can read in this issue (page 8) about some of the major rough rice markets where USA Rice is at work – I think you'll be impressed.

Keep in mind also that in many international markets, even the marketplace promotions we undertake do plenty to support rough rice exports. Those promotions show local producers that the U.S. industry stands behind the commodity and will spend our resources to promote their use.


So a rice mill in Country X learns quickly that by sourcing U.S. rice, they're going to get a U.S. label they can use and see marketplace support from the national rice trade association, USA Rice.

And finally, consider that when a rice seed goes in the ground it doesn't know where its grains are going to end up. Could be a spicy tuna roll in Chicago,

USA Rice: Everywhere  
rice is from the soil to the  
stomach.



a poké bowl in New York City, a biryani in Amman, a salmon bowl in Tokyo, or a soup in Mexico City. It doesn't matter where it ends up or how it got there – USA Rice has been working on government initiatives, environmental regulations, and trade policies to make sure wherever U.S. rice is headed and in whatever form, the U.S. industry is getting the best end of the deal.

So just as we say in response to riced cauliflower that rice is a grain, not a shape, USA Rice is the advocate for the entire U.S. industry, not just a part of it. 

---

USA Rice is the advocate for the entire U.S. industry,  
not just a part of it.

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USA Rice's Betsy Ward and Larry Vanderbrook with Russell Marine Group observe rough rice being loaded for export onto barges on the Mississippi River.

An advertisement for Valent herbicides. The background is a field of golden rice under a blue sky with clouds. The text "STAND TALL AGAINST WEEDS" is written in large, bold, white letters. The Valent logo is in the top left. Below the main text, three herbicide logos are shown: LEAGUE HERBICIDE, BOLERO Rice Herbicide, and Regiment HERBICIDE. At the bottom, there is a red banner with the Valent logo and the text "Products That Work, From People Who Care® | valent.com | 800-6-VALENT (682-5368)". Below the banner, there is a small disclaimer: "League and Products That Work, From People Who Care are registered trademarks of Valent U.S.A. LLC. Bolero and Regiment are registered trademarks of Kumiai Chemical Industry Co., Ltd. © 2017 Valent U.S.A. LLC. All rights reserved. AM58421".



## AMERICAN-MADE SUSHI GETS GREAT REVIEWS IN JAPAN

BY JIM GUINN


**TOKYO, JAPAN** — At FOODEX Japan 2018, Asia's number one food and beverage trade show held here in March, USA Rice hosted a taste-testing demonstration featuring a new style of sushi called Inari where the rice is wrapped in fried bean curd. The Inari sushi was made with U.S. medium grain rice, flavored and colored with purple yam, vinegar, and beets.

More than 370 people visited the USA Agricultural Trade Office booth for a taste test and when asked for feedback on the new style sushi, more than 75 percent of respondents said the Inari was good and presented many potential use opportunities for U.S. medium grain.

Building on these positive results, USA Rice worked with recipe consultants and sushi chefs to develop additional sushi menu ideas and promote them all at FABEX, another major foodservice trade exhibition here that took place in April.

"We had been promoting U.S. medium grain in salads, soups, risotto, and other non-traditional uses of rice," said Sarah Moran, USA Rice vice president international. "However, due to a recent Japanese government policy incentivizing the production of rice for feed use, there is a shortage of reasonably priced local rice available to the foodservice industry. The fact that U.S. medium grain is well received among Japanese consumers, coupled with research by the Japan Cooked Rice Association saying U.S. medium grain rice is perfectly acceptable in the production of sushi, gives us the green light to promote U.S. rice in that cuisine."

Last year was the first time in several years the entire 100,000 MT of Simultaneous-Buy-Sell (SBS) quota of rice was purchased. Due to the strong demand for high quality imported rice, the U.S. sold 58,782 MT for a 59 percent market share, and a record level of exports under SBS.

Moran concluded, "We expect robust demand to continue into this year, notwithstanding aggressive competition from Australia following the conclusion of the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)." 

*Jim Guinn is USA Rice Director for International Promotion in our Asian markets, helping to maintain Japan as the U.S.'s largest market for medium grain rice.*



Popular new style sushi, made with U.S. rice, creates a traffic jam at the taste testing booth.

## IRAQ WAIVES WITHHOLDING PAYMENT, SHOULD CLEAR WAY FOR FUTURE U.S. TENDERS

BY SARAH MORAN



Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi


**WASHINGTON, DC** — Recently, Iraq instituted a new tendering rule that would have forced U.S. rice to completely withdraw from the Iraq market because it was seen to conflict with standard anti-bribery policies, however, it appears a solution has been found.

The new rule required 10 percent of the payment to any U.S. exporter be held by the Iraqi tax authorities until the goods are delivered and certification that the exporter does not owe taxes in Iraq. The proposed rule conflicts with standard U.S. anti-bribery policies.

USA Rice supporters in Congress, Representatives Rick Crawford (R-AR) and Ralph Abraham (R-LA), asked U.S. Ambassador Douglas Silliman in Baghdad for help. The strong relationships between U.S. embassy personnel in Baghdad and officials at the Ministry of Trade and Ministry of Finance that were forged during the 2016 development and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the parties helped resolve this issue in an efficient and practical manner, with a waiver of this withholding for the Iraqi Grain Board. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has signed the waiver, clearing the way for U.S. participation in tenders.

The most recent tender from April, which called for 30,000 MT of U.S. rice, included a suitable change in language so that

U.S. exporters can continue to participate in the tenders; however, there are still a few challenges with the tender invitation documents which may take a bit longer to resolve.

"The U.S. rice industry eagerly awaits a fair and transparent MOU tender that we can participate in," said Brian King, USA Rice chairman. "This incident clearly demonstrates the need for USA Rice to remain vigilant in the market, along with key industry allies in Congress and the State Department, as they have done. Our growers are looking for stable, dependable markets, and we all believe Iraq can be a great success story for us." 

*Sarah Moran is USA Rice Vice President for International, working hard to ensure there are markets for the nearly 50 percent of U.S. rice production that is exported.*

**"... we all believe Iraq can be a great success story for us."**

— BRIAN KING, USA RICE CHAIRMAN





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## PROMOTION, POLICY, AND PARTNERSHIP: HOW USA RICE MOVES THE NEEDLE IN ROUGH RICE MARKETS

BY ASIHA GRIGSBY

**ARLINGTON, VA** — The United States is one of the few countries in the world that exports all types and forms of rice: paddy, brown, milled, parboiled, long grain, medium grain, etc. Our exporters provide the type of rice requested by their customers. Reflecting this flexibility, USA Rice is an organization that labors in all aspects of the rice trade, from seed to export.

Nearly half of the rice exported from the U.S. is in the form of paddy and our largest markets are right here in the Western Hemisphere. The top five export markets for U.S. rough rice include: Mexico (736,704 MT), Venezuela (238,886 MT), Costa Rica (156,276 MT), Honduras (123,707 MT) and Guatemala (107,065 MT). Additionally, Colombia has seen a significant increase in demand for paddy rice in the past few years, which is a result of the U.S. – Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement and USA Rice’s work to solve phytosanitary barriers that had hampered rough rice exports after the trade agreement was signed. All of these countries have steadily increased their demand for U.S. rough rice and the trend is projected to remain strong. USA Rice supports these trends with trade servicing activities, trade policy work, and promotional events that lay a strong foundation that leads to greater utilization of U.S. rice in all its forms.

**Mexico** is an expansive country of nearly 125,000,000 people and is a critical component of the U.S. rice trade. Although rice is not a typical side in traditional Mexican cuisine, the country remains the largest export market for U.S. rice in both volume and value. Statistics show that Mexico imports more than 20 percent of all U.S. rice. U.S. paddy exports to the country experienced a surge in 2017 which was partly driven by exports of Mexican milled rice to Venezuela; however there is also an increase in the consumption of U.S. rice in Mexico. Over the past 15 years, rice consumption has grown 43 percent while the population has only grown 22 percent.

The Mexican population is relatively young, which gives USA Rice a unique opportunity to reach a large population of influential buyers. USA Rice sponsors more than 300 dynamic promotional activities throughout the year in order to strategically engage these consumers and educate them on the versatility and nutritional benefits of U.S. rice. The activities range from trade shows to consumer seminars that teach rice recipes and cooking techniques. USA Rice recently teamed-up with renowned Executive Chef José Antonio Salinas Hernández, of Balcón del Zócalo, to promote two U.S. rice-based dishes that are among the most popular offerings on his menu.

As we often tell policymakers in Washington, Mexico is our largest market because of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), not in spite of it. Current discussions about the modernization of NAFTA have led to uncertainty between our two countries and have accelerated Mexico’s diversification of origin of imports. Mexico effectively eliminated tariffs on rice for countries that don’t already have a FTA with Mexico when they instituted a 150,000 tariff rate quota (TRQ), which effectively eliminated a 20 percent tariff on milled rice imports. Last year was the first year they began importing rough rice from Guyana, bringing in more than 100,000 MT. The United States could lose a substantial part of our dominant 83 percent paddy rice



Rough rice loaded for transport.

market share and the 71 percent total rice market share. To protect against this, USA Rice works to positively influence U.S. rice brand loyalty in Mexico through our various promotional activities that highlight brands that source U.S. origin rice and our “Authentic USA” logo.

**Northern Triangle:** Central America is the U.S. rice industry’s third largest export market valued at \$163.9 million and more than 92 percent of U.S. exports to this region are paddy rice. The Northern Triangle of Central America includes Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras and has a combined population of more than 30 million people. Rice consumption here is still comparatively low at less than 26 pounds per capita in 2017. USA Rice is working to grow that number.

The region consumed 339,863 MT of U.S. rice in 2017. USA Rice conducted comprehensive marketing programs by targeting consumers as well as the rapidly expanding foodservice industry. A market research study among rice consumers in Honduras last year revealed a potential for growth in long grain white, parboiled, and white rice. Social media campaigns on Facebook and Instagram in El Salvador were developed targeting women to raise awareness of the benefits of rice for younger populations.

In early 2018, Ted McKinney, USDA Undersecretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs, led a trade mission to meet with importers and potential customers in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. USA Rice participated in this mission that underscored the crucial





need for bilateral trade with Central America. This region is essential to the U.S. rice trade and we made sure Secretary McKinney understood that.

**Colombia:** Rice is a staple in Colombia whose 50 million people have a high domestic consumption level of more than 1.6 million tons per year. Traditional dishes such as *Bandeja Paisa* (white rice, red beans, ground beef, plantain, sausage, fried pork skin, corn patty, avocado, and a fried egg) can be found on the table year-round.

The 2012 Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) between Colombia and the United States established a tariff rate quota (TRQ) for rice. Tariffs on U.S. rice (currently 73 percent) will phase out over the next 14 years, and since the signing of the TPA, Colombia has risen from the 51st largest rice export market for us to the tenth. More than 61,000 MT of U.S. paddy rice was imported in 2017, valued at more than \$16 million dollars, and 50,000 MT rough rice, valued at \$35 million. USA Rice has had a promotional presence in the country for the last three years, working with the foodservice sector and recently conducting promotions at retail stores where U.S. rice is sold. The marketing activities are aimed at developing a preference for U.S. rice to capture a larger market share in a market that is going to continue to grow as the tariffs are phased out.



Local celebrity chef helps home cooks mix it up at promotional activity in Colombia.

#### THE BIG PICTURE

USA Rice conducts more than 2,700 promotional activities in almost 25 countries each year to facilitate the sales of U.S. rice abroad which in 2017 topped \$1.8 million. Overseas importers who partner with the United States support relationships and activities that increase sales. USA Rice is the global advocate for all segments of the U.S. rice industry by advocating on behalf of farmers, millers, merchants, and allied businesses. This multi-faceted approach ensures the health and vitality of the rice industry. The multitude of promotional activities, insider influence on policies that effect rice, as well as, strong partnerships around the globe ensure that U.S. origin rice will continue to thrive and support the domestic rice industry. [W-3](#)

*Asiha Grigsby is a recent addition at USA Rice as the Manager of International Promotions. She studied International Development in various Latin American countries and is fluent in Spanish.*

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## USA RICE TEAM EFFORT HAS IMPACT ON CAPITOL HILL

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

**WASHINGTON, DC** — Last February, more than 100 members of USA Rice, representing all six rice-producing states, gathered for several days in the nation’s capital to meet with legislators and administration officials for the annual Government Affairs Conference (GAC). USA Rice members met with Congressional leaders to discuss the Farm Bill and other industry priorities, breaking with tradition by including visits to Members of Congress outside of rice-producing areas.

In pursuing this year’s ambitious goal of meeting with every Member of Congress who sits on the House and Senate Agriculture Committees and leaders of committees addressing key trade issues, USA Rice members visited close to 100 different offices to educate legislators and their staff about farm policy and trade issues directly affecting the industry.

“This was a unique opportunity for us to meet with Members of Congress who otherwise might not have much exposure to the rice industry,” said Joe Mencer, chair of the USA Rice Government Affairs Committee. “It’s important for them as Members of the House and Senate Ag Committees to hear our concerns and understand our priorities, but also to find common ground in their priorities like nutrition policy.”

Another first this year, USA Rice teams were combined across state lines, giving members from different areas a chance to work together and speak to congressional leaders about their common priorities and unique challenges.

USA Rice also conducted an information session on pesticide regulations with more than 100 staff members at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in attendance, and met with USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to review conservation priorities and the success of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Delegations met with staff from the U.S. Agency on International Development (USAID) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to talk about USA Rice’s ongoing involvement in fortified rice for food aid and with the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) where discussions centered around USA Rice’s international promotion programs that conduct more than 2,700 activities around the world annually. Additionally, a USA Rice Trade Team met with staff from the U.S. Trade Representative and USDA for an overview of market challenges, and the 2016 Rice Leadership Development class visited with Colombian Ambassador Camilo Reyes to learn about the historically vital trade between our two countries.

“The new approach we took to scheduling at this year’s GAC opened many doors and laid a foundation for strengthening relationships with key policy makers on Capitol Hill,” said USA Rice Vice President of Government Affairs Ben Mosely. “With a Farm Bill on the horizon and NAFTA on the block for renegotiations, these conversations came at a critical point. Members definitely left a strong impression and created new advocates in Congress.” [w-](#)

*Deborah Willenborg enjoys GAC and seeing all the farmers dressed in their Sunday best to pitch the importance of industry issues with legislators and decision makers.*







- 1: California growers touch base with Rep. John Garamendi (third from left).
- 2: Rep. Bruce Westerman flanked by Arkansas farmers Eric Vaught (left) and Jerry Brown.
- 3: Outreach to every member of the House and Senate Ag Committees included a session with Florida Rep. Neal Dunn (far left).
- 4: House Ag Committee Ranking Member Collin Peterson (D-MN) takes questions on the Farm Bill.
- 5: Graduation day for the newest Rice Leadership Development class.
- 6 : USDA's Steve Censky (far right) talks trade at the GAC opening session.
- 7: Jackie Loewer (left) and Byron Holmes getting straight with Think Rice.
- 8: Grower Paul Johnson (right) presents Rep. Clay Higgins (R-LA) with a bag of LA's finest homegrown.
- 9: Grower Buddy Allen (left) thanks retiring Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) for his many years of support for the U.S. rice industry.
- 10: Rep. Rick Crawford (R-AR) proudly represents the #1 rice producing state.





# MISSISSIPPI'S SENIOR SENATOR THAD COCHRAN RETIRES

BY BEN MOSELY

**WASHINGTON, DC** — The rice industry owes a debt of gratitude to U.S. Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), who retired on April 1 after one of the most effective careers as a federal lawmaker and champion for American agriculture. Senator Cochran was a tireless supporter for U.S. rice production and marketing. His advocacy in Washington will be missed, but his contributions to the American farmer will continue to be realized for years to come.

Thad Cochran left Washington after serving Mississippians for almost 46 years, first as a U.S. Representative and then as the first Republican elected U.S. Senator for Mississippi in a century.

Elected to the Senate in 1978, Cochran served on the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee from his first day on the job. Cochran steadily rose through the ranks and established himself as a dealmaker. He served as Ag Committee chairman from 2003-2004. He was the Ranking Member on the committee a decade later and played a critical role in the passage of the bipartisan 2014 Farm Bill, showcasing his ability to provide positive and practical deliverables for American agriculture yet again. Overall, Cochran influenced and helped pass seven Farm Bills during his time in the Senate.

The Senator's practical and effective sway over agricultural, conservation, and other programs important to rural economies was also apparent in the annual appropriations bills signed into law. Cochran served as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations from 2005-2006 and from 2015 until his retirement. Whether acting as chairman or ranking member of this powerful committee, Thad Cochran always sought sensible solutions to advance the agriculture industry and rural America.

Senator Cochran retired as the 10th longest serving senator and the second most powerful senator in the chamber. He created a legacy that has proved time and time again that he was a man of the people and always worked to serve his constituents and his nation with diligence and honor.

Senator Cochran was a champion for the rice industry, and his efforts and achievements to advance the industry will always be appreciated. Mississippi State University's Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station named a new rice variety "Thad" in his honor in 2015 as a small token of their gratitude. History will remember Thad Cochran as a dedicated public servant whose common sense and wisdom were respected by those who knew him.

We owe Senator Cochran much gratitude, and he definitely will be missed. We wish him well in his much deserved retirement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [WG](#)

*Ben Mosely is USA Rice vice president of government affairs and worked for Senator Cochran on the Senate Ag Committee during the crafting of the 2014 Farm Bill.*



“  
Thad Cochran  
always sought  
sensible solutions  
to advance the  
agriculture industry  
and rural America.  
”



**ABOVE:** Taking the pledge.

**BELOW LEFT:** The Mississippi contingent presents Senator Cochran with a "Friend of the Rice Industry" award.

**BELOW RIGHT:** Mississippi rice farmer Gibb Steele introduces the Senator who takes questions from an eager USA Rice audience.





# RICE STEWARDSHIP GROWS WORKING LANDS CONSERVATION IN LOUISIANA AND TEXAS

BY ANDI COOPER



LEFT: Waterfowl flock to Louisiana rice fields to fuel up for their annual migration.

BELOW: Pump test — one of the surest ways to conserve is to guarantee all the on-farm equipment is operating properly.

**WASHINGTON, DC** — Two new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) proposals submitted by the Rice Stewardship Partnership have been approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) awarding nearly \$6 million for conservation of water and habitat in ricelands in Texas and Louisiana.

“We are thrilled with the good news and excited about growing our working lands conservation portfolio in Louisiana and Texas,” said Josh Hankins, USA Rice Stewardship Partnership coordinator. “These two states provide critically important habitat for waterfowl in the Gulf Coast and the Mississippi Alluvial Valley.”

The Cultivating Water Conservation on Working Lands project will restore cypress-tupelo brakes in seven parishes in Louisiana. By restoring brakes on working agricultural lands to capture surface water and storm runoff, farmers can improve water quality and improve habitat for wildlife while reducing pumping costs and groundwater use. This project will be supported with \$450,000 in RCPP funding.


The Gulf Coast Water and Wildlife Conservation project will help rice producers in Louisiana and Texas conserve natural resources while having long-term positive impacts on their bottom line. Project partners will assist NRCS and Texas River Authorities in Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts and address water quantity and habitat concerns in the Gulf Coast. It will be supported with \$5.43 million in RCPP funding.

“These are funds that would be going to another part of the country had our Rice Stewardship Partnership not successfully advocated for them,” said Hankins. “If you grow rice in these parishes or counties, it is worth your time to learn more about these program offerings, because they are designed for your needs.”

Sign-up periods for participation in the two RCPP projects have not been announced. For more information, contact Josh Hankins at [jhankins@usarice.com](mailto:jhankins@usarice.com) or your local NRCS office.

Established in the 2014 Farm Bill, the RCPP competitively awards funds to conservation projects designed and delivered by innovative partnerships like the Rice Stewardship Partnership, a collaboration between USA Rice, Ducks Unlimited (DU), and other organizations, willing to invest money, labor, and materials on initiatives to expand voluntary, private lands conservation.



“RCPP enables us to work side by side with rice producers, NRCS field offices, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, River Authorities, and supply-chain partners to accelerate conservation efforts and achieve measurable progress,” said DU Director of Conservation Innovation Dr. Scott Manley. “NRCS has demonstrated admirable vision and tangible results through this program, and we look forward to continued positive outcomes for valuable natural resources such as water, soil, and wildlife.” 

*Andi Cooper is a communications specialist for the Southern Region of Ducks Unlimited.*



## USA RICE EDUCATES EPA STAFF IN THE FIELD AND IN THE CLASSROOM

BY LYDIA HOLMES

ARLINGTON, VA — We often focus our attention on the cabinet secretaries, administrators, and political appointees in government agencies, but nowhere is it more true than at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), that the work of career staff makes a huge impact on a farmer's day-to-day operations. These highly educated men and women are chemists, economists, risk assessors, biologists, ecologists, and seasoned policy analysts, but most of them have never seen a rice farm and may not be aware of all the complexities of growing rice.

In 2006, USA Rice arranged a tour of the Mid-South rice growing region and while it clearly educated staff at the EPA, it also served as a bridge building exercise between the regulatory agency and the rice industry. With changes in personnel at EPA, the USA Rice Regulatory Affairs and Food Safety Committee felt it was a good time to reach a new audience and expand the number of EPA staff that know how rice is grown and what makes our crop unique.

Last summer, USA Rice and the Louisiana Rice Growers Association (LARGA) hosted six staff members from across EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs to see rice production firsthand. The tour was meant to give EPA staff a perspective of rice from farm to plate with a specific focus on pesticide use.

Stops on the tour included a production rice farm to learn about common pests and diseases, a crawfish operation to see the relationship between crawfish and rice production, a rice mill to hear about issues with stored grain pests, and a flying service that covers Louisiana rice country to discuss aerial application.

"For all of us from EPA who attended the tour, rice touches our portfolio in some way," said one EPA staffer. "Whether it's having a rice pesticide in our portfolio or doing economic analysis on pesticide use, each of us was able to learn something about rice that will help the agency better assess rice pesticides."

Since we can't take the entire EPA Office of Pesticide Programs out to the field, we decided to bring the field to them. During this year's Government Affairs Conference in Washington, DC, experts from across the rice growing regions led an education session to give EPA staff an understanding of rice production 101. The session focused on what happens during a typical rice growing season, when pesticides are put on and for what key pests, and different techniques for watering



rice and how that affects pesticide application and timing. The session was well attended, drawing a crowd of more than 100 in the room and on the phone.

As we find new ways to educate agency staff on topics that are important to our industry we've found that nothing is more impactful than getting staff out to the field. This summer USA Rice will host a new group of EPA staff in the Sacramento River Valley of California in partnership with the California Rice Commission to continue building relationships between EPA career staff and the rice industry. [w3](#)

*Former Arkansas rice queen and resident farm girl, Lydia Holmes is no stranger to flooded fields and muddy boots.*

**ABOVE: Rice 101 at the Zaunbrecher farm in Duson, Louisiana.  
BELOW: We told them being a rice farmer was a real balancing act.**







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# HIGH PROTEIN RICE YIELDS HIGH INTEREST AMONGST HEALTH CONSCIOUS

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

CAPE GIRARDEAU, MO — Blake Gerard has been raising rice for 18 years, and while he always finds it rewarding, for a long time he wanted to do something different. More and more, local restauranteurs, when they learned he was a rice farmer, expressed interest in purchasing his rice for their restaurants to fulfill a “locally grown” philosophy. But Blake is a farmer and a seed grower, not a miller, so he couldn’t always help them with their “Farm to Table” concepts.

But then Gerard heard about a special variety of long grain rice that was supposedly higher in protein than traditional long grain and his interest was piqued. The long grain variety was developed by Drs. Ida Wenefrida, Herry Utomo, and Steve Linscombe at the LSU AgCenter initially to address malnutrition.

“There are hundreds of millions of people around the world who depend on rice and eat it three times per day, but their access to protein is limited by availability or cost,” explained Wenefrida, an assistant professor and biotechnologist at LSU. “I thought that if we could increase the protein content of rice, it would address a serious malnutrition issue.”

Utomo, an associate professor and the genomics expert in the group, sees the rice, patented as “Frontiere” by LSU, as a strong candidate to get into food aid programs, where U.S.-grown rice already features prominently.

Back at home, Wenefrida saw potential for the high protein rice in baby food, and she was not alone. Some business partners of Gerard’s were also interested and asked him to raise this special rice with an eye towards turning it into baby food for China.

Where a typical serving of long grain rice will have three grams of protein and 34 grams of carbohydrates, this new rice could have five grams of protein in its white form and six in brown. Carbs remained basically unchanged and this resulted in the rice having a lower glycemic index (GI).

In other words, the carbs from the rice turn to sugar slower than they do for traditional rice. A common concern amongst diabetics is that high carb foods can make blood sugar spike, and this feeds the myth

“There are hundreds of millions of people around the world who depend on rice ... but their access to protein is limited by availability or cost ...”

— DR. IDA WENEFRIDA, LSU AGCENTER



ABOVE: Grown in southern Illinois and named after the Cahokia Tribe of Native American Indians. LEFT: Dr. Herry Utomo checking a test plot. (photographer: Bruce Schultz, LSU). BELOW: Grower Blake Gerard tells the rice story to the next generation. RIGHT: Dr. Ida Wenefrida in the lab. (photographer: Bruce Schultz, LSU)







amongst diabetics that they best avoid rice. Although this isn't accurate - managing diabetes is really about being aware of the carbs you are consuming and how your body will react - the lower GI rice makes blood sugar spikes less common.


Blake was excited to give the rice a shot but only had two or three crops in when one of the China project partners passed away and the baby food concept disappeared.

"But there's a fitness crowd that I knew would be interested in this rice, so we kept going," Gerard said. "We are now on our fifth crop of Frontiere that we brand as Cahokia and with good yields and consistent protein levels, we are very excited."

The developers say the variety that is an offshoot of LSU's popular Cypress rice, has consistent grain and cooking qualities, though they are slightly different because of the higher protein content.

"We rate Frontiere as having an intermediate cook time, which means it needs less heat and time, and probably less water," explained Utomo.

Gerard said the protein make-up also impacts the rice when it is turned into flour for gluten free baking.

"We've asked LSU to study exactly how Cahokia rice flour (Frontiere) bakes differently than other rice flour and traditional flour, and as the interest in gluten free baked products continues to grow, that will present another opportunity for us to give consumers something they are looking for," Gerard said. 

*Michael Klein could use a double dose of the hi-protein rice to kick it up a notch and get his assignments in on time.*



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# AN ANCIENT TALE, NEW TOLD

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — Ancient grains are the newest fad in health food, claiming higher levels of nutrients, fiber, and protein, as well as antioxidant properties. They can even serve as an alternative to gluten. But what exactly makes a grain ancient?

The Whole Grains Council defines ancient grains as those that are largely unchanged over the last several hundred years. Some of the grains included under this definition by both the Council and the internet at large are: einkorn, farro, spelt, amaranth, quinoa, and freekeh.

Conspicuously missing from this list is rice, which despite having been domesticated over ten thousand years ago somehow fails to meet the vague, inconsistent, yet widely accepted criteria of an “ancient grain.”

While certain heirloom varieties of rice are considered ancient - including red rice, purple rice, and African rice (*Oryza glaberrima*) - modern commercial rice (*Oryza sativa*) is not, despite being largely genetically similar to the rice eaten by the ancient Chinese who originally domesticated it from wild rice as far back as 14,000 years ago. According to Jarrod Hardke, rice agronomist at the University of Arkansas Rice Research and Extension Center, “*Oryza sativa* originated thousands of years ago and has not appreciably changed in that time.”

If a lack of breeding or cultivation is a qualifier of ancient grains, specialty red and purple rice don’t always meet this requirement, either.

Red rice is actually comprised of eight different varieties, not all of which can be considered ancient by any metric. Camargue red rice, for example, is a relatively new variety from France that was the result of cross-breeding wild rice traits with commercial rice in the 1980s. Bhutan is world famous for its heirloom red rice, but since the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)

developed four new varieties that combine the local landrace (the primitive cultivated variety of a plant), with the higher yield and disease resistance of modern rice, not all Bhutanese red rice can be considered “ancient” anymore, either. And when red rice crops up in their fields, most U.S. farmers consider it a weedy nuisance, not a sought-after exotic grain with ancient origins.

“There are probably pretty good reasons why some of these ancient grains were not the focus of improvement,” says Kent McKenzie, director and plant breeder at the California Cooperative Rice Research Foundation’s Rice Experiment Station. “Grain quality characteristics are absolutely important. However, if you are trying to feed more than your own family with a food staple like rice, a variety that responds to inputs and management, and also tolerates diseases and pests - thus producing higher and more reliable yields - becomes an important priority for selection, in the past as well as today. These ancient grains may not have offered promise of easy and significant yield improvement. Combining yield and adaptation in some specialty varieties remains a significant breeding obstacle today.”

It seems that rice is being punished by the “ancient grains” fad simply for being, in essence, the perfect grain.

Purple or black rice, sometimes known as “forbidden rice,” also has an aura of ancientness that isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. According to the commercial packaging for purple rice, it’s known as “forbidden” because it was once grown exclusively for the emperor of China. But much like red rice, not all purple rice is the same. Cultivars of this dark-hulled rice are scattered far and wide throughout Asia, meaning that they have been selectively bred by growers for different traits for thousands of years. Originally a Japonica strain, black or purple rice now encompasses many varieties of Indica as well, its attractive dark traits having been selected to modify new types of Jasmine and Basmati. One variety of purple rice grown in Louisiana, Blanca Isabel, was derived as recently as 1998.

Varieties of specialty red and black rice are delicious and nutritious, and provide aesthetic variety to any rice meal. Much of it is also U.S.-grown, by the very same farmers who provide mainstream commercial rice varieties that contain almost identical nutritional benefits.

The Whole Grain Council contends that while “ancient” grains are healthier than processed grains, the main reason for this is that they are *whole* grains, and that whole grains such as brown rice deliver just as many health benefits for a much more reasonable price.

Red, black, and brown rice all have a common ancestor, and the only major difference between them is one genetic mutation that causes a heightened level of anthocyanins, the trait that makes certain foods like blueberries or eggplants a rich, dark color.

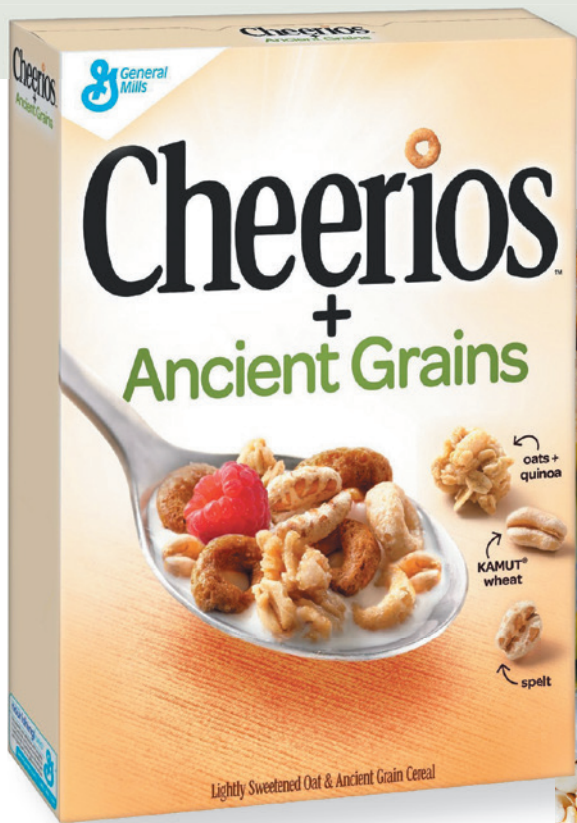
When you go beneath the skin, so-called ancient grains and commercial grains are much the same.

Freekeh is another inconsistency in the ancient grain world; it is not an ancient grain at all, but simply young wheat prepared differently. Yet it is



“  
...just because modern consumers are unfamiliar with the history or lineage of an exotic grain, does not necessarily mean that the grain hasn’t been cultivated selectively and perfected for thousands of years...  
”





That's some shelf life!



often erroneously categorized as an ancient grain by health enthusiasts and food bloggers alike. This just goes to show that the label “ancient grain” is inconsistent, misleading, and largely a matter of marketing and personal opinion.

Indeed, much of what defines an “ancient” grain seems to be simply that it is not western. Uninformed exoticism cannot account for the authenticity of an ancient grain; just because modern consumers are unfamiliar with the history or lineage of an exotic grain, like quinoa, does not necessarily mean that the grain hasn’t been cultivated selectively and perfected for thousands of years by indigenous or local farmers, just like rice.

Carolina Gold, for example, is an heirloom variety of African rice (*Oryza glaberrima*) that was brought to South Carolina by slaves. It was actively cultivated by slaves for subsistence, and later by plantation owners for commercial use as late as 1900, which certainly does not fall under the generally accepted timeframe of an “ancient” grain. To assume that all grains previously unknown to western or modern consumers are somehow uncultivated and therefore purer than commercial grains is to assume those cultures and communities never applied basic agricultural practices to their crops, which seems unlikely as well as unfair. Both plantation owners and slaves had hundreds of years in which to refine Carolina Gold into the unique variety being reintroduced to specialty markets today.

Let it not be forgotten that all U.S.-grown rice is GMO-free, meaning that while it may be selectively bred for beneficial traits (like virtually all other agricultural products we eat), it is no “Frankenfood” the ancient grains acolytes would have you believe.

“Ultimately, the term ‘ancient’ grain has very little to do with history or science and much to do with marketing and misinformation,” said Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of marketing and domestic promotion. “All whole grains, including brown rice, have similar benefits to so-called ancient

grains, and brown rice is more widely available and more affordable. I think we have the right to use the term in many cases or at least make the comparison for consumers that our products offer all the benefits of ancient grains for a lower price.”

Rice is one of the oldest crops in existence, still bearing a remarkable similarity to its ancestral varieties, and it’s a staple of virtually every culture on Earth. And if that doesn’t count as ancient, we don’t know what does. [WE](#)

*Lesley Dixon is a writer and editor from Texas who joined USA rice in January 2017. Since then she’s seen rice fields, rice mills, and learned more about rice than she ever knew there was to know.*

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## NEW U.S. AROMATIC VARIETIES TAKE ON IMPORTS

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — Consumer research and experience suggests that when millennials cook a dish from another culture — say a Thai fried rice with shrimp — they may feel some pressure to make it as authentic as possible. To ensure this meal will be Instagram-worthy and impress their worldier-than-thou friends, Chef Millennial trawls through food blogs for entire *minutes*, looking for the perfect five-star rated recipe. He settles on a promising lead with a professional-looking portrait and reads some reviews to make sure it has the perfect balance of spices. Maybe some of the reviewers are actually from Thailand, or have been to Thailand, or have Thai family — all this bodes well for the millennial’s cooking plans.

Ingredients are acquired and laid out: fresh, local chiles from the farmer’s market; big, Gulf-caught shrimp; basil picked fresh from his own garden; eggs from a farm a couple of hours upstate. Chef Millennial revels in how “green” the regional items on his cutting board are, and how genuine his dish will be as a result.

Everything is going according to plan! But of course the most important ingredient of fried rice is the rice itself.

And so — in the name of authenticity — Chef Millennial pulls out a big bag of imported Thai jasmine rice, shipped halfway across the planet with a carbon footprint the size of Texas and grown under who knows what conditions, subject to who knows what export regulations.

But he doesn’t have to. The same “shop local” philosophy that drove many of his ingredient choices is possible for rice, too — even for aromatics!

The aromatics market has proven historically stubborn for U.S. rice to break into. In recent years, the industry has faced increasing competition from jasmine and basmati imports from Southeast Asia. The amount of U.S.-grown rice consumed domestically has slipped from 85 percent to 83 percent within the last five years, and this is largely due to the increased import of aromatics: jasmine from Thailand and basmati from India and Pakistan.

Asian immigrants and their families typically prefer imported aromatics, likely out of habit. Meanwhile, young families and millennials tend to use imports when cooking exotic dishes like curry or biryani, because they’re under the mistaken impression that rice has to be from the dish’s country of origin to be authentic.

Of course, we in the rice industry know this concept of authenticity is a myth. It’s not even consistent; if these same consumers seek out aromatic rice dishes at a restaurant, they neither question the pedigree of the rice nor can they likely tell the difference.

Louisiana’s Fred Zaunbrecher monitoring 2018 jasmine progress.



U.S.-grown aromatics are in stores now and more are on the way.



“Imports are not something I see consumers actively requesting,” said Chef Matt Luaders, director of culinary research and development at CSSI, a Chicago-based foodservice agency that helps restaurants with their menus. “I’ve never seen it explicitly called out on a menu. I don’t feel that utilizing a domestically grown rice in a dish detracts from the authenticity of a menu item that would otherwise call for a rice that is imported. Most consumers are not going to be able to tell the difference, and for that matter, neither are most chefs. As long as the rice delivers on light, fluffy texture and a perfume-like aroma, I’ll use a domestic aromatic variety and it will pair beautifully with whatever I’m making.”

Many consumers are unaware that jasmine and basmati varieties are produced in the U.S. at all, but would purchase U.S.-grown aromatics over imports if they knew the aroma, grain length, texture, and flavor to be comparable. U.S. farmers are increasingly rising to meet this demand, growing more acres and more varieties than ever before. In side-by-side comparisons, new aromatic varieties have a real opportunity to turn back Asian imports.

Take *CLJ01*, the new jasmine-type variety released this season by the Louisiana State University (LSU) AgCenter. The distinctive, appetizing aroma of *CLJ01* compares favorably with imported Thai jasmine in both laboratory and taste tests. At the LSU AgCenter, researchers are able to scientifically measure the aromatics of *CLJ01* as it cooks with an instrument called a gas chromatograph and compare it to other varieties of jasmine-type rice. They also evaluated the aroma by providing samples of cooked rice to a panel of taste-testers.

In other words, a meticulously calibrated scientific instrument has deemed this rice to smell as objectively delicious as Thai imports. Not only that, but it’s also been given the thumbs-up by real human beings.

“We have done a lot of work comparing this new variety to other jasmine-type rice varieties,” said Dr. Steve Linscombe, former director of the LSU AgCenter Southwest Region, who oversaw the development of the variety. “Both qualitatively and quantitatively, *CLJ01* competes very well with imported Thai jasmine.”

Additionally, as part of the Clearfield system, *CLJ01* is resistant to



“As long as the rice delivers on light, fluffy texture and a perfume-like aroma, I’ll use a domestic aromatic variety and it will pair beautifully with whatever I’m making.”

— CHEF MATT LUADERS, CSSI DIRECTOR OF CULINARY R&D

the imidazolinone herbicides and is a good candidate for fields susceptible to red or weedy rice. This diversity, along with high yield potential and lower herbicide use, makes *CLJ01* an extremely viable option for farmers.

For Louisiana producer Fred Zaunbrecher, the Clearfield aspect of *CLJ01* is a big benefit, but he’s most excited about the taste. “We’re hoping the improved aroma, grain clarity, and grain length will change consumers’ buying habits.”

*CLJ01*’s grain length is perhaps its most compelling quality; Asian aromatics have a longer grain that is difficult to obtain through breeding, which gives imports their particular cooking characteristics and mouthfeel.

“*CLJ01* has an exceptional appearance in the package, which is important for buyers of jasmine rice,” says Tim Walker, general manager of Horizon Ag, which is handling seed production of the new variety. “It is a long, translucent grain, and that’s important in order to compete with Thai jasmine imports. Consumers will now be able to eat U.S.-grown jasmine rice with the same aroma and flavor of imported jasmine, with the added satisfaction that it’s grown by our farmers.”

Louisiana isn’t the only state that has been expanding aromatic options for farmers.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture recently released *ARoma 17*, a jasmine-type variety particularly adapted to the Arkansas climate. One of the most difficult aspects of growing aromatics in the U.S. is developing a variety that flourishes in geography, weather, and sunlight conditions drastically different from those of Southeast Asia. *ARoma 17* thrives in the environment of the southern U.S. rice-growing region, much like its parent variety, *Jazzman*.

“*ARoma 17* has consistently higher yields than other U.S. jasmine-type lines,” says Debra Ahrent-Wisdom, program associate at the University of Arkansas Rice Research and Extension Center. “Thai imports do not grow well in the U.S. because they are photo-period sensitive.”

Since Thai varieties are grown near the equator with a more consistent amount of light year round, the plants have difficulty in the more temperate climates of the United States. And even if Thai jasmine could be viably grown in the U.S., the most popular Thai variety is actually illegal to grow outside of Thailand.

Aromatics typically offer lower yields than regular long grain varieties, making them more expensive up and down the supply chain. But researchers believe yield improvements are arriving soon.

*15Y84*, or *Calaroma-201*, is another new jasmine-type variety that can brave Northern California’s temperate climate and shows high yield potential in statewide testing. It was released in early 2018 by the California Cooperative Rice Research Foundation (CCRRF).

According to Kent McKenzie, director of the CCRRF’s Rice Experiment Station, high yield isn’t the only positive characteristic *Calaroma-201* exhibits. “It has low amylose content, so it cooks softer than regular U.S. long grain rice, very comparable to the way imported jasmine cooks.”

“I am a proponent of U.S. aromatics, and we need comparable varieties with competitive pricing,” said John Hasbrook, vice president of SunWest Foods in California. “I think these goals are within our grasp, but it will take some focused marketing efforts to get the word out.”

Once consumers realize they can buy U.S.-grown rice with the same taste, aroma, and even grain length as Asian imports, their concept of “authenticity” when it comes to rice will evolve. Authentic rice should be synonymous with bolstering the U.S. economy, environmental sustainability, transparent safety standards, and supporting American farmers — because nothing goes better with those Gulf shrimp and those veggies from the farmer’s market than rice grown right here in the United States.

## NEW CONSUMER RICE RECIPES DON’T BREAK THE BANK

BY CAMERON JACOBS

ARLINGTON, VA — USA Rice chefs have created five new rice recipes, designed to be affordable to all, that cover multiple meals and incorporate various varieties of U.S.-grown rice. The new recipes are designed to work for breakfast, appetizers, side dishes, and main dishes.

“Consumers want the best value for their money, and while most are aware how affordable U.S.-grown rice is, the next step to encouraging shoppers to use rice is to provide easy-to-prepare recipes,” says Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of marketing and domestic promotion. “I am excited to have USA Rice offer these recipes that are light on the wallet and heavy on taste and nutrition!”

The new rice recipes include: breakfast rice burritos, fast-fix meatloaf & roasted carrots, Cajun sausage and rice, Mediterranean rice salad, and an Italian pepperoni rice bake. The cost of each recipe ranges from \$6-\$10 and yields four generous servings.

“While these recipes can be enjoyed by all, they’re especially suited for folks on a tight budget, namely students, millennials, and working families,” said Klein.

The five new rice dishes are being promoted on social media and can be found online at the ThinkRice consumer recipe database ([www.thinkrice.com](http://www.thinkrice.com)).

Cameron Jacobs is USA Rice Domestic Promotion Manager and author of “The Rice and Fall of Cauliflower” and “Sacrifice, a True Story of Perseverance and Determination.”





## ARKANSAS APPROVES RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH IDENTITY FOR RICE, PROTECT CONSUMERS

BY LESLEY DIXON

**LITTLE ROCK, AR** — Last month, Governor Asa Hutchinson signed a resolution to establish a standard of identity for rice using the common understanding of the term “rice.” The resolution outlines measures the state legislature will take to establish a definition of rice that aligns with international standards, and will lay the groundwork for establishing a national standard of identity.

CODEX, the international food safety standard of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization, defines rice as “whole or broken kernels from the *Oryza sativa* L. plant,” but unlike most commercial grains, rice has no standard of identity in the United States.



Why wouldn't you?

This has emboldened purveyors of what the rice industry calls “rice pretenders;” food that has gone through the process of being “riced” but that contains no rice at all, such as so-called “cauliflower rice.”


“This resolution is important because we are seeing a definite clash in the marketplace from the confluence of consumers wanting to know exactly what they are eating, and advances in food science that allows developers to chase any kind of trend and spit out a product,” said Michael Klein, vice president of domestic promotion at USA Rice. “Rice is a grain, not a shape.”

The state resolution is being sent to each member of Arkansas’ Congressional delegation, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, and Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Scott Gottlieb.

Although the language of the resolution also includes four species of grasses from the genus *Zizania* known as wild rice, it does not currently mention African rice (*Oryza glaberrima*), a separate but related heirloom species grown in small quantities in the U.S.

According to Lauren Waldrip Ward, executive director of the Arkansas Rice Federation, the resolution is not intended to exclude such varieties. “It’s a first step for the Arkansas legislature to establish a statewide, and someday a nationwide, standard of identity that eliminates any lack of clarity in the marketplace about what rice truly is. The purpose is not to exclude other rice types, but to hold rice imposters accountable.”

Klein said that in addition to government officials, USA Rice is also taking the issue to the marketplace.

“We’ve raised this several times with both the FDA and USDA at the highest levels, and we are also now letting retailers and receipt developers know we expect them to do the right thing. Food called ‘rice’ that has no rice in it is misleading and creates consumer confusion,” he said. “We’re pointing out the instances where we believe they are doing harm to the rice industry and asking them to stop. There’s room enough on Americans’ plates for all the food they want, but we need to identify ourselves by what we are, not by something we are not.” 

## USA RICE EXPLORES CULINARY TRENDS AND FUTURE OF FOOD AT RESEARCH CHEF CONFERENCE

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG


**SAVANNAH, GEORGIA** — USA Rice staff were among more than 1,000 culinologists, food scientists, Research & Development chefs, and corporate decision makers at the Research Chef Association (RCA) Conference here this spring. The conference included breakout sessions, networking events, and a trade show floor that featured more than 110 exhibitors showcasing new technology and the future of food.

During the conference, USA Rice visited with many exhibitors, including InHarvest and Nate’s Fine Foods, both of which utilize U.S.-grown rice, to discuss consumer trends and ways USA Rice could help them promote their U.S. rice products. Additionally, staff spoke with major rice users and potential users about consumer demands and trends, and the range of rice varieties grown in the U.S. to help satisfy those consumers. Staff also attended learning sessions on topics including the current food labeling landscape, the plant-based protein movement, the relationship between culinary innovation and regulatory compliance, and how to become a better trend spotter.

Some of the culinary highlights of the show were soft-serve Horchata using U.S. long grain rice, an untraditional take of risotto using Carolina Gold rice, a spicy chocolate

rice krispy-style treat made with U.S. brown rice, and a black rice smoothie.

“As we look to make connections with corporate chefs and get a pulse on what the culinology world wants from rice, the show is quite the resource,” said Cameron Jacobs, manager of domestic promotion for USA Rice who attended the conference. “We were able to gauge how our messaging resonated with these culinologists and get a behind-the-scenes look into the future of food.”

Jacobs said the show also offered a unique opportunity for USA Rice to interact with chefs on the leading edge of culinary trends and explore possible collaborations to promote U.S.-grown rice to a larger audience and expects to attend the 2019 conference set for Louisville, Kentucky next March. 

Soft-serve Horchata ice cream  
made with U.S. long grain





# SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY — DRIVING MODERN BRANDS

BY NICOLE HASTINGS



**CHICAGO, IL** — Citing changing consumer preferences, many leading food brands have recently sought to differentiate themselves, based on the perception corporate responsibility, throughout the supply chain. Gone are the days when leading differentiators were flavor, portion control, ease of preparation, or even nutrition. Certainly, those factors are still in play. The focus, however, has largely shifted to sustainability and transparency — focusing on actions that take place closer to the farm, rather than during manufacturing.

Some brands achieve this transparency through labeling, offering non-GMO products and gluten-free versions of many foods. Brands moving away from GMOs in the candy and cereal segments upended the sugar beet farming community, although passion for that cause appears to have died down since mandatory labeling passed in 2016. On the animal ag side of things, a broad range of foodservice companies and retailers have committed to cage-free eggs and antibiotic-free chicken. Interestingly, the data is inconclusive regarding whether demand for these products will bear the higher price tag.

To take advantage of the cache that “small-batch” manufacturing may provide, a trend has appeared in which larger brands have bought smaller brands with a reputation for transparency through organic or non-GMO channels. For example, General Mills, Inc. controls Cascadian Farm, Annie’s Homegrown, Inc. and Lärabar; The Coca-Cola Company owns Odwalla Inc. and Honest Tea, and WhiteWave Foods owns Horizon, Silk, and Earthbound Farms.

Consider McDonald’s Corporation. As part of their campaign to use their “Scale for Good,” McDonald’s has committed to sustainable beef, packaging and recycling goals, and — in March 2018 — added greenhouse gas emissions targets and created a Chicken Sustainability Advisory Council. McDonald’s President and CEO Steve Easterbrook stated, “To create a better future for our planet, we must all get involved. McDonald’s is doing its part by setting this ambitious goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to address the challenge of global climate change. To meet this goal, we will source our food responsibly, promote renewable energy and use it efficiently, and reduce waste and increase recycling.”

As another example, California-based Vietnamese fast casual chain Asian Box, added sustainable Jasmine White Rice and Calhikari Brown Rice to its offerings. Rice is the foundational element of Asian Box’s menu, and culinary director Chad Newton chose to source their rice locally in California from Rue & Forsman Ranch, which uses environmentally sustainable farming practices, including using its off-season rice fields as wetlands for migrating birds. Transparency “from farm to box” and sustainability in food, packaging, and stores are central tenets of Asian Box’s philosophy, and rice sourcing has become part of that story.

Clearly, there appear to be a range of items that fall into the category of sustainability. Non-GMO. Cage-free. Organic. Sustainable beef or chicken. Clean foods. Sustainable packaging and recycling. Greenhouse gas emissions. And surely there are more.

To some, sustainability and transparency is linked to affordability, to others it is linked to health and the environment. To some, it means sourcing locally, to others it means sourcing responsibly.

There is no single, clear definition, which permits marketers to choose the angle that can set their brand apart. And, importantly, the federal government is slow to regulate many of these claims. In spite of varied and shifting definitions, sustainability and transparency are undiminished in their power to drive brands and many consumers. [w3](#)

*Nicole Hastings is a content specialist with Bader Rutter, a communications agency that studies trends in the U.S. food production system.*

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# U.S. RICE COMMON THREAD IN TRADITIONAL SOUTHERN CUISINE

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — Two new cookbooks are exploring the relationship between rice and the traditional cuisine of regions in the South. *Secrets of the Southern Table: A Food Lover's Tour of the Global South* by Virginia Willis takes readers on a vivid sensory journey through Louisiana rice country, while *The Austin Cookbook* by Paula Forbes is a love letter to the land of barbecue, breakfast tacos, and Tex-Mex.

Both books are testaments to how a region's culture is largely defined by its food. The recipes collected and created by Willis and Forbes are the product of hundreds of years of history, unique geography and climate, and population migration. The Cajun dishes of Willis's childhood in Louisiana are a result of the historical Creole melting pot of the area, and the modern flavors of Central Texas are influenced by Northern Mexican and Tejano traditions, including the "Chili Queens" of San Antonio.

Willis warns readers against lumping the South into one big category, and these two cookbooks couldn't be more different. But one of the threads that connects them is U.S.-grown rice. From Texas to Louisiana to South Carolina, rice holds all these Southern delicacies together.

"Southerners are rice people," said Willis, explaining that while she grew up eating Cajun food in Louisiana, her grandmother in South Carolina also raised her on rice with very different flavor profiles.

"Rice is essential to Texas cuisine!" added Forbes. "People have been growing rice in Texas for almost 200 years. It's not just a part of Tex-Mex but also Texas Gulf Coast dishes like jambalaya, barbecue sides, and more."

One of the many staples the *The Austin Cookbook* features is a classic recipe for restaurant-style rice and refried beans, because "You cannot have Tex-Mex without rice and beans," Forbes asserts.

“**From Texas to Louisiana to South Carolina, rice holds all these Southern delicacies together.**”



Ingredients don't get fresher for farmer Christian Richard and Chef Virginia Willis.

Willis is of the same conviction; rice is an absolute must. "We ate red beans and rice every week," she said of her mother's cooking. After moving to Louisiana from Georgia when she was just three years old, "it became part of my mama's culinary repertoire." This was her mother's way of getting to know her new home: exploring the unfamiliar and exotic spices and ingredients of Cajun and Creole food.

Willis carries that lesson with her today. "Everywhere I go, whether it's for vacation, work, or something more permanent, I want to find out about the local foodways. The best way to get to know a culture is by what's on the end of a fork."

Along with family history, vivid sensory memories, and lush descriptions of white egrets rising from golden rice fields, Willis also takes readers on a visit to Richard Rice Farms in south Louisiana, owned by Christian and Julie Richard. We get an idea of what it's like to be treated to some Southern hospitality, eating jambalaya by silos and riding on the combine.

"I take a lot of people out on the farm and we entertain a lot, just show people what we do and try to educate them," said Christian Richard about Willis's visit. "Bridging the gap between the farm and the table is a very important part of it, and Virginia's cookbook does a great job of that."

Richard's favorite rice dish? It's hard to choose, but jambalaya is a top contender. "Our local fire department has a fundraiser that makes some of the best jambalaya you'll ever have."

Everyone's got their own favorites. Willis reminisces fondly about gumbo, while Forbes says she's a big fan of Texmati when she's cooking curries, but she also loves the wonderful texture of Calrose.

One thing everyone can agree on is that it's essential to use U.S. rice in all these recipes. Willis thinks it's important to buy local and regional whenever possible. "In terms of culinary heritage, it makes the most sense. Of course you could make étouffée with Asian basmati, but why would you?"

*Secrets of the Southern Table: A Food Lover's Tour of the Global South* will be released May 1 through most major booksellers, and is currently available for pre-order through Amazon. *The Austin Cookbook* was released last month and is also available anywhere books are sold. [we](#)



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## U.S. RICE CARVES OUT A NEW NICHE WITH CRAFT BEER

BY JENNIFER L. BLANCK

**ARLINGTON, VA** — According to the Brewers Association, last year craft beer represented 23.4 percent market share of the overall beer market in dollars and 12.7 percent in volume. The craft beer industry also experienced a 5 percent production increase. The use of U.S. rice in craft beer is experiencing growth as well.

In the beer world, rice is considered an “adjunct” - any item incorporated into beer beyond the core blend of malt, hops, water, and yeast. The basic brewing process starts with milled grains soaked in hot water to release their sugars. The sweet liquid, now called “wort,” is separated from the grain solids and boiled to kill any micro-organisms. Hops are added. The wort is quickly cooled, and yeast is added to start fermentation. The yeast converts sugars into carbon dioxide and alcohol. Once fermentation is complete, the beer is carbonated and can be served or packaged. Adjuncts can be added to the boil as non-malt sources of fermentable sugar or incorporated post-fermentation for flavor.

Andy Sparhawk, a Certified Cicerone® (the industry designation for a beer sommelier), and Brewers Association craft beer program web manager, noted that while rice in craft beer may have been taboo in the past for some consumers, the industry has long recognized it as a valuable ingredient to boost a beer’s alcohol but keep it light on the palate. “Rice has traditionally been a source of fermentable sugar. In recent years, [rice has] been employed as part of a flavor focus,” said Sparhawk.

Today, it’s become more than that. Some craft brewers are using it to add body and others are celebrating it as an ingredient. “That’s the biggest trend for rice,” said Sparhawk. “Most are using rice and want people to know there’s rice in there.” He cites Michigan-based Kuhnenn Brewing Company’s DRIPA (Double Rice India Pale Ale) as a game changer for rice-flavored


beers. DRIPA won top honors in the 2012 World Beer Cup’s American-Style India Pale Ale category, beating out 149 other entries, the most for any style that year.

After a trip to Belgium, Bret Kuhnenn of Kuhnenn Brewing also started using rice in his Belgian-style beers. “We were shocked...to see rice used by many breweries. Our research in Belgian beer pretty much told us they used a Sucrose crystallized sugar,” said Kuhnenn. He now uses brewers’ rice from Arkansas in five of his beers, with as much as 30 percent of rice in his Classic American Pilsner because “we read it was the traditional amount. We liked the result.” Kuhnenn noted that many craft brewers don’t have the equipment to process raw rice. Instead, others may use rice syrup or puffed or flaked rice.

Briess Malt & Ingredients Company’s rice syrup and BSG CraftBrewing’s flaked rice - both made with U.S. rice - were noted by many craft brewers as key sources when incorporating rice into their beers. Utah’s Epic Brewing started using rice syrup in 2011 when customers requested a gluten-free beer. The rice syrup replaces malt entirely as the sugar source.

Colorado’s Great Divide uses rice flakes in its Samurai Rice Ale. Tour guides describe Samurai as an all-day drinking beer or “a great starter beer for newbies.” Today, Great Divide’s portfolio, including Samurai, is sold in more than 25 states and even exported to China.

“Craft brewers are always interested in a unique, new style that represents a way to push boundaries...and represent local,” said Sparhawk. And U.S. rice is helping them do it.

When it comes to using rice in beer production, however, there is definitely a “king of beers,” namely, Anheuser-Busch, the largest single buyer of rice in the United States. 

*Jennifer L. Blanck is a freelance writer with a love for rice in just about everything.*



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biggest trend  
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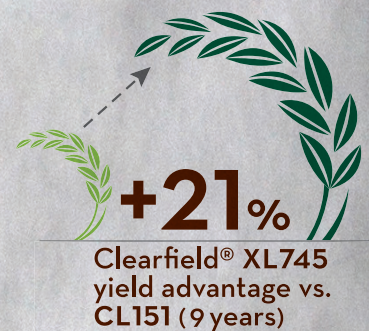


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## MEETINGS & MEMBER SERVICES

# 2017 USA RICE OUTLOOK CONFERENCE EDUCATES AND ENTERTAINS

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

**SAN ANTONIO, TX** — The USA Rice Outlook Conference, held here last December, wrapped up with a renewed emphasis on education that was popular and appreciated by the more than 750 attendees who packed the many sessions.

“We know asking people to leave their operation is significant – whether it is a family farm, a mill, or another type of business – so we wanted to be sure we offered attendees useful information to take home with them,” said USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward. “From the very serious topic of grain bin entrapment to the practical session on getting and staying organized in your home or office, we think we succeeded.”

Other educational breakout sessions focused on food safety regulations under the overhauled FSMA Rule; crop insurance options for specialty, organic, and non-organic rice farmers; and understanding and utilizing the futures market in your marketing plans.

Trade and farm policy were also hot topics of course, with sessions on the latest with the U.S. – China phytosanitary agreement, the future of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the new Farm Bill.

Research universities in all six major rice producing states provided their state outlook and research reports, and an innovative group of California growers and their representatives held a fun and informative session on best communications practices.

One of the liveliest sessions was “Conservation Tales” where growers Leo LaGrande (CA), Mark Isbell (AR), Tim Gertson (TX), Christian Richard (LA), and Gibb Steele (MS) very frankly shared some of the funnier mishaps they’ve weathered as they sought to improve their conservation practices with mixed results.

“At the annual Awards Luncheon, we recognized several leaders in the industry and also celebrated the students who participated in the National Rice Month Scholarship video contest whose creativity was inspiring,” said USA Rice Chairman Brian King. “We also screened exciting videos highlighting some of the great work our members and our organization are undertaking on behalf of the entire industry.”

Attendees left San Antonio energized and well-informed and are already looking forward to the 2018 USA Rice Outlook Conference that is scheduled for San Diego, California, from December 5-7.



From keynote speakers like Mark McKinnon, to breakout session participants like California’s Rice Storytellers and Farm Bill panelists, to vital exhibitors and sponsors, Outlook 2017 had everyone jumping for joy (and for U.S. rice!).

“We know asking people to leave their operation is significant – whether it is a family farm, a mill, or another type of business – so we wanted to be sure we offered attendees useful information to take home with them ...”

— USA RICE PRESIDENT & CEO BETSY WARD





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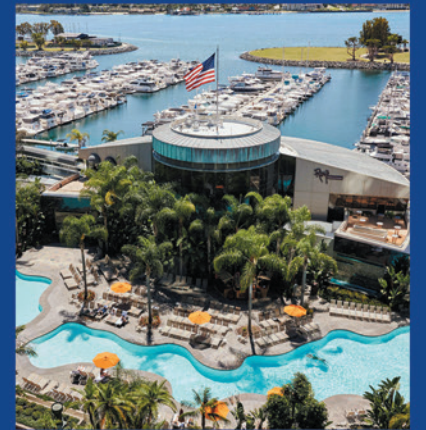


# USA RICE OUTLOOK CONFERENCE



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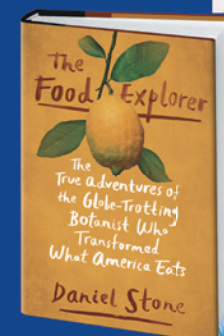


## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

**Dr. Morgaine Gaye** is a Food Futurologist who looks at food and eating from a social, cultural, economic, trend, branding, and geo-political perspective.



Author **Daniel Stone** writes about food and the environment for *National Geographic* and is a former White House correspondent for *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast*.



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## ON THE ROAD AGAIN WITH USA RICE

BY KANE WEBB

**KINDER, LA** — Everyone has a favorite “road trip” song, and the staff at USA Rice is no different. Willie Nelson’s classic “On The Road Again” is the song of choice each year when the USA Rice team hits that road to meet with growers and other industry partners to take part in state meetings and events, from the West Coast to the Gulf Coast. We look forward to these annual events as an important opportunity for rice farmers and staff to gather and discuss timely issues and ways to work together as an industry and plan for the year ahead.

This past winter, USA Rice staff, including President & CEO Betsy Ward, participated in ten different state meetings, including a three-day, four-stop stretch that began in Jonesboro, Arkansas and ended in Bunkie and Jennings, Louisiana by way of Cleveland, Mississippi.

This year’s tour kicked off in January in Colusa and Yuba City, California, where Ward joined California Rice Commission grower meetings to address key industry issues and priorities.

While meetings were underway on the West Coast, Rayville, Louisiana rice producer and Vice President of the NELA Rice Growers Association Scott Franklin emceed the Northeast Louisiana Rice Forum. Michael Klein, USA Rice’s vice president of communications and domestic promotion, shared an update on issues of particular interest to Louisiana farmers including trade, conservation efforts, and domestic promotion initiatives.

In February, the Road Warrior team of Ward and Klein were joined by USA Rice Vice President of Government Affairs Ben Mosely to attend the Arkansas Rice Council and Arkansas Rice Farmers annual meetings, the Mississippi Rice Council annual meeting, the Mississippi Rice Research and Promotion Board meeting, and meetings of the Central Louisiana Rice Growers Association, and the Louisiana Rice Council and the Louisiana Rice Growers Association annual joint meeting.

At each stop, Ward thanked attendees for their support for USA Rice and reminded them who from their state was serving as volunteer representatives in the member-driven USA Rice. She also provided industry updates on international trade, including NAFTA renegotiations, reports on key export markets, and USA Rice efforts to combat unfair competition in global markets.


Klein and Mosely discussed domestic promotion efforts, crop insurance, tax and trade legislation, and the then-status of the ongoing Farm Bill debate.

Ward also talked about the continued success of the USA Rice-Ducks Unlimited Rice Stewardship Partnership and how that effort has generated financial assistance of more than \$75 million specifically for rice farmers to support implementation of conservation practices.

USA Rice staff then joined growers at the 60th Annual Farm and Gin Show in Memphis, Tennessee, and the Commodity Classic in Anaheim, California, providing attendees to both events with information about the U.S. rice industry and activities conducted by USA Rice.

Extreme weather in Texas forced a schedule change that prevented USA Rice from attending this year’s Western Rice Belt Conference in El Campo, though USA Rice-Ducks Unlimited Rice Stewardship Partnership information was shared with the crowd by a DU representative.

That’s the when, where, and how of the annual road trip schedule, but Ward explains the why: “Getting out and meeting with growers to hear their issues and ensure that we are communicating effectively with our members is of the utmost importance. We are a member-driven organization and it is vital we stay in close contact with what is happening in rice country – these tours are an important part of that.”

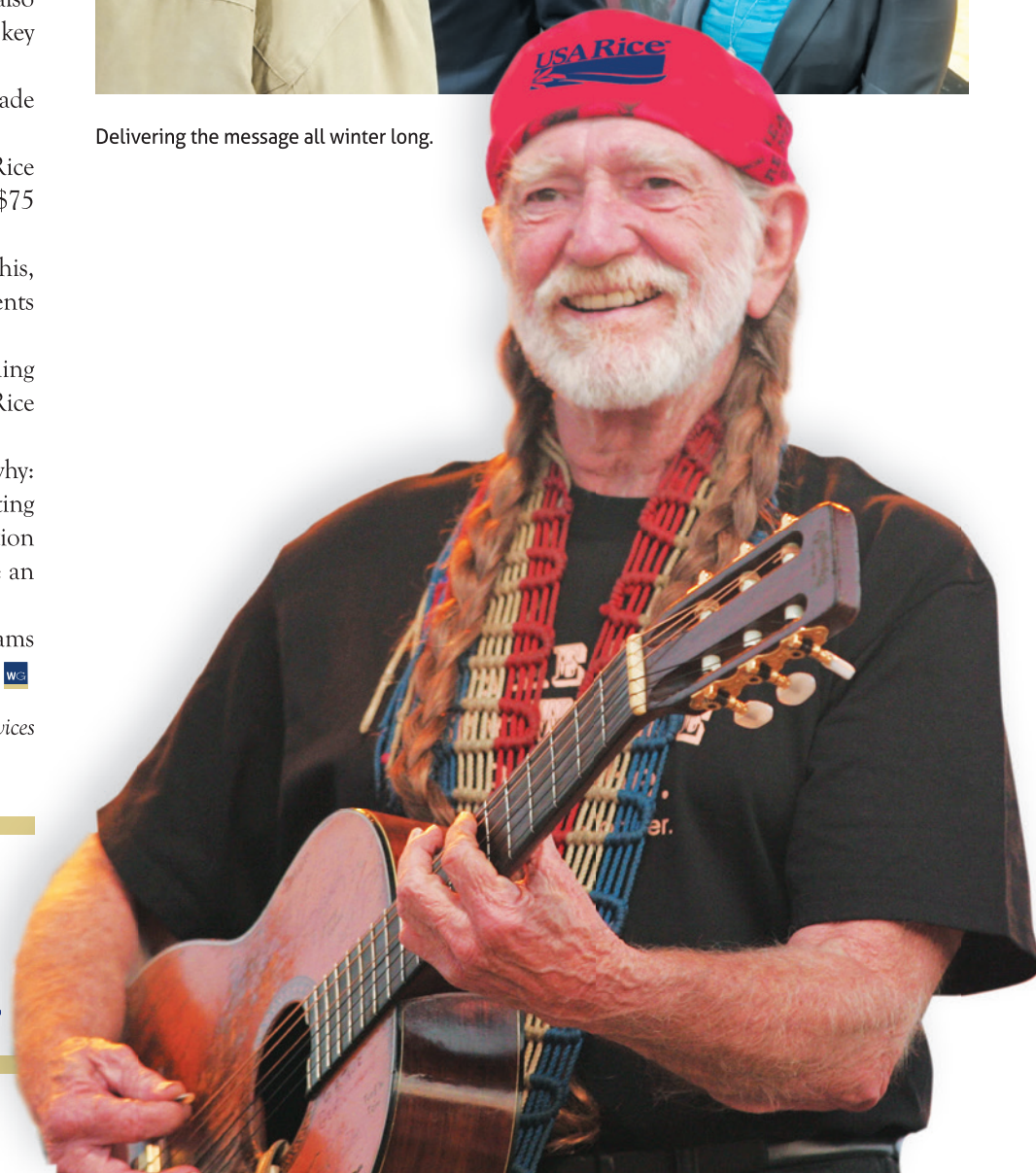
We close this year’s memorable tour by saying, “Thank you, Rice Country! Look for our teams this summer at the annual Field Days and next winter when we will be...‘On the Road Again!’” 

*Kane Webb grew up around rice farming in South Louisiana, where he is now the Director of Louisiana Field Services for USA Rice, or the New Randy Jemison, whichever title you prefer!*

“On The Road Again” is the song of choice each year when the USA Rice team hits that road to meet with growers and other industry partners ...



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