

WHOLE GRAIN



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First Sale of U.S. Rice to China

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What a Long, Strange Trip It's Been

BY CHARLEY MATHEWS, JR.

MARYSVILLE, CA — I have often said what an honor it is to be serving as the chair of the USA Rice Federation, and it's even more special to realize my term falls during this important milestone in our organization.

USA Rice is 25 years old this year, and that's really something special. You can read all about how we got here in the excellent cover story by Lesley Dixon, and while you do, I encourage you to think back over your last 25 years. What's changed? For me, the answer is, plenty. As you can see from the "new" photo of yours truly.

One of the most impactful things to have happened to me over the last 25 years was going through the Rice Leadership Development Program. As a young rice farmer from Marysville, California, early in my career, it was an experience like no other to see other parts of the rice industry and the country.

Those experiences helped shape me into the person I am today, and those relationships I formed during the program have guided me as I've become even more involved in both the state and national organizations, and as a businessman and leader – in my industry and my community.

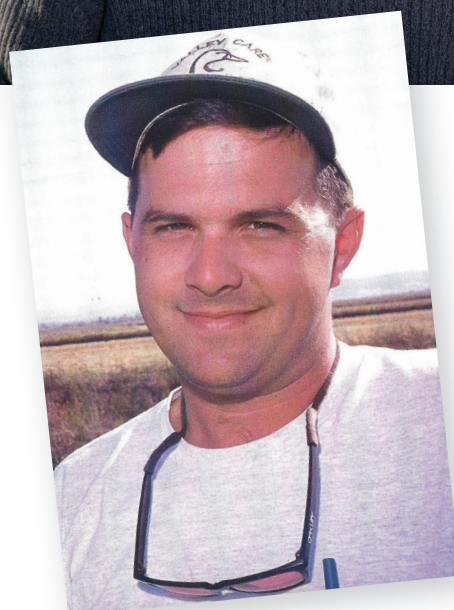
I'm grateful for those opportunities, and I'm especially grateful for the visionaries in our industry, from all six rice-producing states and from all industry sectors, who saw that we would be stronger together than we were apart.

They hammered together a delicate coalition, and while what is USA Rice today is not everything they envisioned 25 years ago, it is still a strong and proud organization that represents us well from the farm to the plate, and is respected in the halls of government, overseas, and in rice communities all across the country.

It's been a bumpy ride to get to this anniversary – but we made it! And trips worth taking are worth the bumps. Join me in congratulating all the volunteer leaders who made this milestone possible and who continue to make USA Rice a strong and vibrant advocate for our industry.

Happy anniversary! 

I'm especially grateful for the visionaries in our industry, from all six rice-producing states and from all industry sectors, who saw that we would be stronger together than we were apart.



Charley Mathews, Jr., then and now.

USARices

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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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2019 — ALREADY ONE FOR THE BOOKS, AND THERE'S STILL FOUR MONTHS TO GO

BY BETSY WARD

AS THIS ISSUE OF the *Whole Grain* goes to press we are celebrating three things. First, is our 25th year as an organization, second is the first private sale of U.S. rice to China, and third is harvest for a year I think most of us would like to forget. Uncooperative weather, an uncertain political climate, and markets that just won't play nice have made 2019 a year most of us just want to be done with! But we've done our best to compile an issue filled with news that will make you smile and proud.


It's National Rice Month Scholarship time and we check in with a few past winners who are making the most of the faith we placed in them; we take a look at some new programs we are launching to promote and celebrate U.S.-grown rice with key market segments; and we dig into that U.S.-China deal the Sun Valley Rice Company made happen earlier this summer.

We also take a moment to reflect on significant industry contributions — like that from the tireless U.S. rice advocate we've all had in Louisiana's Jimmy Hoppe, and the impressive results the check-off programs have delivered for the entire industry over the past half century.

... we are celebrating three things. First, is our 25th year as an organization, second is the first private sale of U.S. rice to China, and third is harvest for a year I think most of us would like to forget.

You'll also want to read about the EPA staff who visited rice country this year to learn more about rice, our expanding membership categories, and our new mascot south of the border who is helping Mexican consumers realize "rice is in everything!"

We also talk science — from weather patterns to recyclable rice straws — so be sure to check that out. And of course, note the new programming we're announcing for the USA Rice Outlook Conference this December in Little Rock. Registration is open online now and the room block is filling up.

As always, thank you for reading the *Whole Grain*, and if you want to see more stories like this on a daily basis, be sure to sign up for the *USA Rice Daily* which you can do on our website. 



USA Rice CEO Betsy Ward camping with her family 25 years ago.

WEATHER PATTERNS

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — If you talk to any farmer, you'll find that they're practically living almanacs. They remember the good seasons and the bad seasons, the years the weather smiled down on their crops as well as the bad years. Drought or flood can make or break a growing season, and farmers are uniquely positioned on the frontlines of every meteorological shift.

Yet no one can remember a season like this.

The last twelve months have set the global record for the wettest year in history. The farm economy in the Midwest is still struggling to recover from severe flooding in March that washed away crucial topsoil and caused an estimated \$3 billion in damage. Flash floods have ravaged the country from Texas to Pennsylvania. And even California, which was in the grip of historic drought for nearly a decade, has experienced enough rainfall to interfere with planting season. According to scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the average yearly rainfall for the United States was 37.86 inches as of June—7.9 inches above the historic average.

The question on every American farmer's mind is simple: what is causing all this rain, and when will it stop?

Bob Henson, meteorologist and writer with *Weather Underground*, part of IBM, believes there are several issues at play combining to create a perfect storm.

According to Henson, 2019 being an El Niño year is partly to blame. El Niño is a natural series of climatic changes that occur irregularly every several years when surface waters in the Pacific Ocean heat up, sending warm, wet air across the continental United States. During an El Niño year, higher rainfall can be expected in the Sunbelt states (and southern rice country), while the northern U.S. should be drier than average.

But Henson says that's not the whole picture. "It wasn't a particularly strong El Niño the past year. So it doesn't fully explain why it's been so very wet nationwide."

Another issue driving moisture up is that both drought and rain events can get caught in a vicious cycle. "When you get rain events right on top of each other, the soil becomes saturated. When the sun hits that moist soil and surface water, it's evaporating it and sending it back into the air, which causes more rainfall. It's what we call 'recycling' of precipitation. As I'm sure farmers know, there's a self-perpetuating aspect to both long periods of drought and wetness."

Thirdly, and most importantly, warmer oceans cause wetter air. "Global ocean temperatures have set record highs this year, and July was the warmest month on record for the whole globe," said Henson. "Air flowing from oceans around the U.S. is bringing in a lot of evaporated moisture."

One devastating result of all this warm, wet air is that storm systems, including hurricanes, have been moving more slowly and persisting for



The farm economy in the Midwest is still struggling to recover from severe flooding in March that washed away crucial topsoil and caused an estimated \$3 billion in damage.

much longer, a trend that has been seen worldwide and has resulted in catastrophic damage and loss of lives.

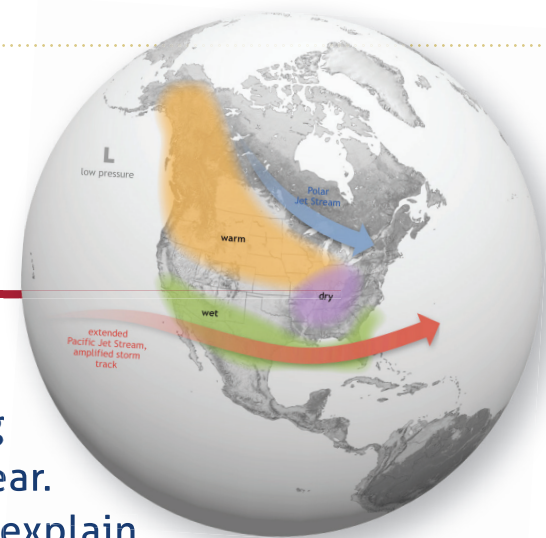
“A warming climate impacts the jet stream, allowing weather patterns to get stuck more easily, especially in summertime,” said Henson. “Rain is becoming concentrated in heavier bursts, and the heaviest rain events are getting more intense.”

Due to the stubborn nature of these warm, wet weather systems, Henson does not foresee any significant relief in the immediate future. But he, like all experienced forecasters, knows that it can't be predicted with absolute accuracy. “If there was a strong El Niño or La Niña, it could rearrange the pieces, but right now there's no sign of the wet weather moving on. But not every year is going to be wet like this. We still expect this climate to produce droughts, even in rice country. But what's more important is that we're seeing 'weather whiplash,' or dramatic swings from year to year.”

While it's uncertain when this wet weather will move along, Henson is clear on its root cause. “There's no explanation for the climate change we're seeing other than greenhouse gasses from fossil fuels. There's no debate on that. What's more complex is exactly how these changes are playing out year to year, decade to decade, as they interact with natural variations.”

Climate change is a global problem that cannot be solved by any one industry alone, but reducing carbon emissions and energy usage are more relevant than ever in light of the extreme weather trends of the last decade. Fortunately, the U.S. rice industry is leading the way in sustainability measures that use less energy and reduce the number of combine passes over the field. And Henson says that large-scale agriculture could be a factor in keeping temperatures lower when it comes to periods of drought, as dense plant growth pumps moisture into the air and keeps the hottest weather from intensifying.

“All of this is not to say other things haven't changed the climate in the past,” Henson wants to remind us. “We know climate has changed over millions of years. Astronomers have mapped out how those past changes were caused by how the earth orbits the sun,




“It wasn't a particularly strong El Niño the past year. So it doesn't fully explain why it's been so very wet nationwide.”

— BOB HENSON, METEOROLOGIST AND WRITER WITH WEATHER UNDERGROUND

the tilt of the earth, and so forth. So there's good explanations for those ancient climate changes. And we have a very good explanation for climate change now, which is increased greenhouse gasses. There's nothing else that would produce the amount of warming that we've seen in the last few decades.”

For those of us hoping to plan accordingly for the near future, Henson recommends these resources that offer seasonal outlooks and long-term trends: NOAA; the Southern Regional Climate Center based at Louisiana State University; and the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes in California.

In the meantime, batten down the hatches and brace for more rain. 

Lesley Dixon is a writer and editor from Texas who is still scared of tornadoes even though she lives in Washington, DC now.

THE LAST STRAW, MADE OF RICE, MAY BE THE MOST ECOLOGICAL

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — More and more businesses, consumers, and governments are looking for ways to decrease their single-use plastic consumption, and disposable plastic straws have become a lightning rod in the worldwide effort to reduce plastic waste. Recently, scientists and manufacturers have turned to a new revolutionary material that could make single-use plastics in the foodservice industry obsolete: rice.

Rice contains cellulose, a primary component of the cell walls of plants. It's also a strong biopolymer with a range of properties that can be manipulated into a variety of textures, from rigid and brittle to soft and stretchy. In 2014, scientists at the Italian Institute of Technology developed a new technique to create durable, plastic-like material from cocoa pod husks, spinach and parsley stems, and rice hulls.

While plastic straws can take up to 200 years to decompose, rice straws are 100 percent natural, biodegradable, compostable, affordable, and even edible; some rice straws can be cooked and consumed like a rice noodle. And best of all, they last for up to 18 hours and don't disintegrate or affect taste like paper straws or other eco-friendly straw options.

Right now, rice straws are only being manufactured in Asia, but Canada-based Rice Straw Technologies hopes to change that.

“Currently, our straws are manufactured in Viet Nam and Thailand, but our ultimate goal is to manufacture them in the U.S. within a couple of years,” said Michelle Kim, president of Rice Straw Technologies. “Using U.S.-grown rice will save us


a lot of transportation and customs costs, and on top of that we can utilize our local farmers.”

Additionally, the hefty carbon footprint of shipping rice straws all the way to North America from Asia somewhat negates the environmental benefit of reducing plastic waste, so it is only a matter of time before the straws are widely produced in the U.S. for American consumers. Contributing to sustainability and conservation is Rice Straw Technology's top priority.

“Plastic straws may not seem like a big deal, but at the end of the day, it adds up to a lot of plastic in the landfill,” said Kim. “Our straws are made with rice, tapioca, and no other additives, so when they go out to the landfill, we're literally feeding the birds.”

The U.S. rice industry is already committed to feeding the birds, so biodegradable plastic alternatives made from U.S. rice that are safe for wildlife to consume would fit right into existing conservation and sustainability efforts.

It doesn't end with straws. Rice Straw Technologies already has prototypes for shopping bags and cutlery made with rice, and is working with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to get approved as an edible food product.

“We're working on changing people's small habits. Because even small changes can affect the environment in a big way,” said Kim. 

... rice straws are 100 percent natural, biodegradable, compostable, affordable, and even edible ... And best of all, they last for up to 18 hours and don't disintegrate or affect taste like paper straws or other eco-friendly straw options.



EPA STAFF EXPLORES MID-SOUTH RICE COUNTRY


BY LYDIA HOLMES

STUTTART, AR — This past August, USA Rice hosted eight staff members from across the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Pesticide Programs to experience rice production in Missouri and Arkansas.

With the need for new crop protection products ever growing, these tours bring key EPA personnel out to the farm to inform them of pesticide issues facing rice growers across the country.

The week-long trip started in St. Louis with a tour of the Anheuser-Busch brewery to see one of the end products made with rice. The group then visited rice growing regions in both Missouri and Arkansas, stopping at Rance Daniels' farm in Hornersville, Missouri, and three operations in Arkansas, in Burdette with Mike Sullivan, in England with Dow Brantley, and in Stuttgart with David and Robert Petter, to learn about how rice is grown and see firsthand pesticide application by ground sprayer and aerial application.

The group toured two different rice mills, Riceland Foods in Stuttgart, Arkansas, and Martin Rice Company in Bernie, Missouri, to learn how rice gets from the farm to grocery store shelves. They also sat in on some of the Arkansas Rice Research & Promotion Board meetings in Stuttgart. The tour ended at the University of Arkansas Rice Field Day in Stuttgart where participants heard about weed resistance issues and current research projects being done for the benefit of rice farmers.

"Bridge building between the regulatory agency and the rice industry serves us all," said David Petter who is also chair of the USA Rice Regulatory Affairs and Food Safety Committee. "Having EPA employees come here to see our operations and talk to farmers about the real issues we face when it comes to pests is invaluable, and we thank everyone who joined us and opened their farms and businesses to the group." 

Lydia is based out of Memphis, Tennessee, where her focus is telling the story of U.S. rice sustainability and traversing the I-55 corridor in search of great BBQ and ways to better serve Mid-South rice farmers, millers, and merchants.



"Having EPA employees come here to see our operations and talk to farmers about the real issues we face when it comes to pests is invaluable, and we thank everyone who joined us and opened their farms and businesses to the group."

— DAVID PETTER, CHAIR OF THE
USA RICE REGULATORY AFFAIRS AND
FOOD SAFETY COMMITTEE



Left: The EPA team gets boots on the ground in Missouri and Arkansas.
 Below: Mike Martin (center) hosts the EPA team at his family's mill in Bernie, Missouri.
 Bottom Left: Nothing like being hip-deep in work on the Petter Farm in Stuttgart, Arkansas.
 Bottom Right: Missouri rice farmer Rance Daniels explaining the difference between a stripper header and a draper header.



WASHINGTON, DC: BIG CITY, SMALL TOWN

BY GRANT LONG


ARLINGTON, VA — If you ask me, there's no better place for a rising senior to spend their last summer in college than Washington, DC. I've wanted to make Washington my home since the first time I visited when I was 13 years old, and with that goal in mind, I spoke with my career advisor at Mississippi State University about how best to plan for my life after graduation.

As soon as I heard about the Demmer Scholars Program, a program that brings students from Mississippi State and Michigan State Universities interested in natural resource policy together here to intern and study for the summer, I applied immediately. All the "once-in-a-lifetime" experiences I've had here were amazing, and I feel extremely blessed to have participated in the Demmer Program.

I met influential lawmakers from both sides of the aisle, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson, and many others. I also got to meet with some of our rice farmers and hear about their issues firsthand. Attending fundraisers and going to meetings and hearings on Capitol Hill were among my favorite activities.

The USA Rice Government Affairs team helped me figure out which areas of policy I'm passionate about and taught me a lot about how to get things accomplished here. I did a great deal of research on how various policies effect the everyday lives of people involved in the rice industry, and was able to see that research in action on conference calls and in meetings on Capitol Hill. Being able to meet with legislators on behalf of the rice industry has given me a practical perspective of lawmaking that years of studying political science just touched on.

At the beginning of the summer, I was told that Washington was a "big city, but a small town." And, at first, I was skeptical. However, as the summer went on I realized how true that statement really is. Within each area of public policy there's a tight-knit community that resembles a small town. No matter what you study or what your interests are, there is a group of dedicated people in Washington working on behalf of that cause every single day. The connections and relationships I made at USA Rice and in the microcosm of ag policy will be invaluable as I (eventually) make my way back to Washington to work on behalf of folks across America.

In the meantime, I look forward to bringing the knowledge I gained and the experiences I had in the "big city" back to my "small town" of Starkville, Mississippi, as I complete my degree. 

Grant Long is originally from Georgia, and currently a student at Mississippi State University (MSU) working towards a B.S. in Political Science and Pre-Law.



Left: Grant Long with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

"Attending fundraisers and going to meetings and hearings on Capitol Hill were among my favorite activities."

ENTERPRISE PARTNER IS NEWEST MEMBER CATEGORY FOR USA RICE

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

ARLINGTON, VA — Following months of analysis, USA Rice has rolled out a new member category, the Enterprise Partner, designed to widen the base of an already vertically-integrated trade association.


“As an organization, USA Rice has always been about representing the entire industry, up and down the supply chain from the farm to the end use, but we realized we were leaving out quite a few interested parties, so we created the Enterprise Partner group,” explained California rice farmer and Chair of USA Rice Charley Mathews, Jr. “There are individuals and businesses who both support our industry, but also depend on a healthy U.S. rice industry for much of their business, too. Those are our Enterprise Partners.”

Entities involved in banking and insurance; farm inputs, equipment, and technology; crop consultant work; research institutions and other non-profits are all eligible for membership. As are allied businesses that want to see a vibrant U.S. rice industry but don't fit into another membership category.

“Of course as with most member organizations, members get access to proprietary resources and discounts on event registration and exhibiting, but we also are offering a seat at the policy table at USA Rice,” Mathews said. “Members also have the opportunity to participate in the vast array of trade missions and consumer campaigns the organization conducts each year which pay immediate dividends to the participants.”

However, it is affiliation with the U.S. rice industry's sector-leading sustainability and conservation programs and initiatives that will likely encourage many to join.

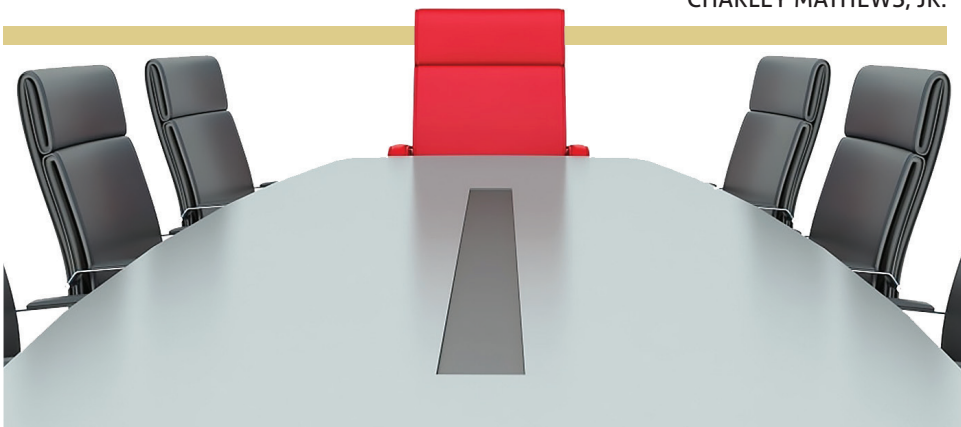
“Sustainability is important to us and our customers, so to be able to demonstrate that we are working side-by-side with some of the most responsible producers on the planet makes a huge impact,” said Matt Lindsey, director of irrigation resources at Delta Plastics. “We support the great work USA Rice and its members are doing and Delta Plastics looks forward to strengthening our relationship through this new opportunity.”

For more information on applying to join USA Rice as an Enterprise Partner, or through one of the other membership organizations, visit usarice.com. 

Michael Klein is USA Rice vice president of communications and domestic promotion, and knows firsthand that membership has its privileges.

“USA Rice has always been about representing the entire industry, up and down the supply chain from the farm to the end use, but we realized we were leaving out quite a few interested parties ...”

— CHARLEY MATHEWS, JR.



LEADERSHIP CHANGES FOR TWO USA RICE GOVERNING BOARDS

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

IRVING, TX — At USA Rice's July Business Meeting, the USA Rice Farmers announced the appointment of Nicole Montna Van Vleck, a California rice farmer, as chair, and Kirk Satterfield, a Mississippi rice farmer, as vice chair.

Chair-elect Van Vleck presented outgoing Farmers Chair Joe Mencer with a plaque to commemorate his tenure.

“We have all benefited from Joe's service and dedication to the organization over the past two years,” said Van Vleck. “Leadership is never easy and the past couple of years have been especially challenging with the new Farm Bill, upheavals in the market, and weather events that have had an impact on our individual operations.”

There also was a change in leadership for the USA Rice Council with Arkansas rice farmer Byron Holmes named the new chair. Holmes recognized his predecessor, Mississippi rice farmer Marvin Cochran for his leadership and commitment to the industry. Cochran thanked the Council, and in particular, leaders in Mississippi who had helped prepare him and other young farmers for leadership roles in the industry.

Each new appointee serves a two-year term that began August 1, 2019. 



Each new appointee serves a two-year term that began August 1.

Changing of the guard: Joe Mencer to Nicole Van Vleck (top), and Marvin Cochran to Byron Holmes (bottom).



FLY THE THINK RICE FLAG

BY KANE WEBB

LAKE CHARLES, LA — Over the years, there have been many ways for those who love all things rice to show their pride in the U.S. rice industry. Looking back, I remember seeing the red “Have a Rice Day” bumper stickers on pickup trucks, tandem bobtails, and even grain carts traveling up and down the gravel roads of southwest Louisiana. Today, those are iconic, a classic message that reminds us all of a time in our younger days – whether it was on the bumper of your grandfather’s truck, the door of the shop, or in a window of a local vendor in town you frequented for parts or supplies.

In time, the colorful “Rice” license plates began to adorn the front of rice farmers’ trucks, even becoming popular with those who didn’t farm rice, but felt the connection to the rice industry all around them.

From bumper stickers and license plates, to hats and embroidered shirts, we’ve shown our pride by displaying our message to everyone that we are part of a great industry. A message that not only identified us, but promoted what we do.

Now, there’s another opportunity to show your rice pride and it’s a message many consider when they see it, because it makes them think, and more specifically, “Think Rice.”



The “Think Rice” flag can be proudly displayed from the top of a bin or elevator, a flag pole in front of a home or shop, anywhere you choose to promote the industry that we all are proud to be a part of, in a way that everyone will notice.

Visit the USA Rice website to purchase your own “Think Rice” flag and to shop online for other rice-related gear. [WR](#)

Kane Webb is the USA Rice director of field services, a lifelong resident of southwest Louisiana, and supporter of all things rice.



THE U.S. RICE INDUSTRY: INTEGRITY, QUALITY, COMMITMENT, AND INNOVATION

BY JASON BOND

After completion of each session during the two-year Rice Leadership Development program, class members file a trip report with program sponsors John Deere, RiceTec, Inc., and American Commodity Company. Following is Jason Bond's report on his experience during Session II with the 2019—21 class.

STONEVILLE, MS — In the time since Session I of our Leadership program in March 2018, most areas have experienced extreme weather challenges that led to delays in planting and crop establishment. When the workload is big and time is short, it is human nature to focus on a concentrated zone around your area of operation. The growers in our group were able to share their experiences and challenges while those of us representing industry offered them encouraging words because we had observed similar difficulties among our different clientele, but over a wider geography. Conversations like these help strengthen the bond among class members.

Session I emphasized rice development, production, and movement along the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Texas, and Session II broadened the focus with a trip to the Midwest for visits to the Chicago Board of Trade, John Deere Harvest Works, and rice farms in Arkansas and Mississippi.

Observing active trading and hearing about the history and operating procedures at the Chicago Board of Trade was intriguing as it is vital for rice trading. However, in my small slice of the industry focused on rice production, I had never learned how trading works.

Everyone involved in production agriculture that tours John Deere Harvest Works should depart impressed. The scale of the operation was nearly overwhelming. It was impressive to see one of these massive machines assembled from its basic components. I also enjoyed discussing the future of Deere and Company's technology in combines and other implements.

Two details from the day in Moline made an impression on me. First was the attitude of the employees with whom we interacted. From managers to tour guides to plant workers, it was obvious that all were excited to be employed by Deere and Company. As we toured the manufacturing plant, nearly every plant worker stopped to smile and wave at our group. The second aspect of Deere and Company I found memorable was how prominently displayed their company values were and the candor with which the tour guide discussed them. According to the guide, John Deere built his company based on integrity, quality, commitment, and innovation. I have made efforts over the years to create a culture in my research/Extension

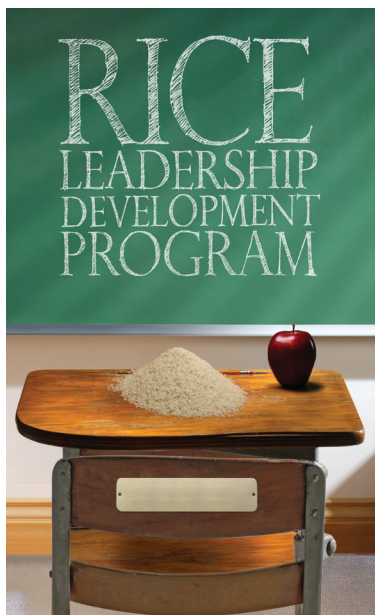


Top: Class members strike a pose at John Deere headquarters in Moline, Illinois. Their future's so bright they gotta wear shades!

Right: A lesson in plant breeding at the LSU AgCenter in Acadia Parish, Louisiana.

Far right, top: Following the rice crop's path all the way to the loading dock.

Far right, bottom: Checking out the solar panels at the Isbell farm near Little Rock, Arkansas.



The Rice Foundation is Accepting Applications for 2019

Rice producers or industry-related professionals between the ages of 25 and 45 are eligible to apply for the program.

THE APPLICATION DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 20.

Additional information on the Rice Leadership Development Program and an application form can be found on the USA Rice website.

program with defined goals and values. Seeing a historical figure such as John Deere had some of the same ideas is inspirational as my career evolves.

When we arrived in Little Rock, we spent a day learning interview and public speaking skills that will be extremely useful in my profession. Thursday morning we visited Chris and Mark Isbell's farm. It's a unique operation with a long history, and I enjoyed hearing about the experimentation that has allowed it to evolve over the years.

A tour of Five Oaks Duck Lodge in Stuttgart, Arkansas, afforded us the chance to see a display of wildlife conservation and how rice production can augment

I have made efforts over the years to create a culture in my research/Extension program with defined goals and values. Seeing a historical figure such as John Deere had some of the same ideas is inspirational ...



conservation efforts. The owner, George Dunklin, shared his lodge with us for the Arkansas alumni dinner. Meeting other graduates of the program reinforced the importance of developing relationships.

Finally, stops at Producers Rice Mill and Riceland Foods, both in Stuttgart, and Farmers Grain Terminal in Greenville, Mississippi, provided more insight into post-harvest movement and preparation of rice for entering the different markets serviced by growers in the Mid-South.

Session II of the Rice Leadership Development Program was a valuable experience for me personally and professionally. I again was amazed at the intricacies of the rice industry and the level of commitment by the individuals who contribute at all the different levels. [W](#)

Jason Bond is a weed scientist at Mississippi State University and a member of the 2019-21 Rice Leadership Class.

FOUNDING FATHERS: A LOOK BACK AT RICE VISIONARIES

BY LESLEY DIXON



ARLINGTON, VA — This year, USA Rice celebrates its 25th birthday. It's a banner year, our silver anniversary, and the perfect opportunity to reflect on our many achievements as an organization over the last quarter century. If the Federation were a person, it would be old enough to rent a car and enjoy reduced car insurance rates. As the largest and most diverse rice trade organization in the country, it has accomplished far more than the average 25-year old.

Hopping in a time machine back to 1994, the world was very different. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) had just come into force, permanently changing the face of trade in the Western Hemisphere. The internet was in its infancy; Amazon was nothing more than a humble online bookseller and Netscape Navigator had just become the leader for browsing the web (yes, we called the internet "the web"). The average movie ticket cost \$4.00, which today doesn't even buy a box of popcorn. And a pound of rice cost 55 cents.

Back then, the six rice-growing states had their own state-wide organizations for producers to gather, debate, promote, and advocate. While the USA Rice Millers' Association (RMA) had already been around for almost a hundred years, and the USA Rice Council had been collaboratively steering rice promotion nation-wide since 1957, at the time there was no overarching structure to bring all the rice industry organizations to the same table to discuss trade, policy, technology, and promotion. The Six States Legislative Group brought rice farmers to meet in Dallas once a year and provided an opportunity for advocacy on Capitol Hill, but it was more of an ad hoc organization that did not have a formal constitution or bylaws.

Rice farmers and millers realized that something had to change, that a great majority of their interests were shared, and that they could accomplish far more through collaboration, cooperation, and communication than they could on their own. A rising tide lifts all boats, as they say, and with this in mind, rice industry leaders from across the country met in Houston, Texas, on January 15, 1994, and again in Washington, DC, on February 22.

And with that, the USA Rice Federation was born, joining the RMA, the USA Rice Council, and the U.S. Rice Producers Group (formerly the Six States Legislative Group) under the same blanket organization, while still maintaining each group's independence.

Louisiana rice farmer Jackie Loewer was in attendance at these groundbreaking meetings.

"Of course, the characteristics of the groups really didn't change. Producers wanted to maximize their revenue, get as much for their crop as possible, and millers

wanted to minimize expense. So we had these growers and millers coming together. How did they get along? It was tricky. It still is. But it worked because of the realization that we have these two different groups of stakeholders with different characteristics, and it was understood that working together was still better than not being united."


Over the next 25 years, the USA Rice Federation experienced many successes, and challenges. The U.S. rice industry had joined forces and taken the fate and fortune of the rice market into their own hands. The coming decades would bring new trade agreements, new technology, and complex geopolitics. But the industry was better equipped to handle and benefit from these changes because they were working together.

In 1995, the USA Rice Federation PAC was formed, working to support elected leaders and candidates friendly to agriculture. In 1998, Texas, Missouri, and Mississippi unfortunately split off from the Federation, taking their check-off funds, as well as many friends and colleagues, with them. In 1999, the U.S. Rice Producers Group changed its name to the USA Rice Farmers, and in 2005, the USA Rice Merchants' Association joined the fold, bringing even more professional diversity to the Federation. And, happily, Mississippi rejoined USA Rice in 2012, making the organization even stronger and more representative.

"The great majority of the things we talk about, we agree on," said Loewer. "It benefits the whole industry. Though we may disagree on some things, it's still beneficial to get in a room, discuss, and understand where we're all coming from. There's nothing in the bylaws that keep the farmers or the millers from doing something if they vote to do it. But at the end of the day, we come together and talk about it."

From simple name changes to major shifts, USA Rice has weathered it all. We've seen four presidential administrations, five Farm Bills, seven secretaries of agriculture and four acting secretaries. Geopolitics remain complex, foreign markets have come and gone, imports have become more of a threat than ever, and NAFTA has made way for the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

But today we are prepared to face every issue thrown at us with the kind of strength and resilience that only a unified front can achieve. Due to the perseverance, cooperation, and selflessness of those rice leaders back in 1994, many of whom are still active in the organization, the U.S. rice industry is stronger than ever. It is an accomplishment worth being proud of, and worth celebrating 25 years later.

"When it comes to the Federation, the way we come together is what sets us apart," said Loewer. 

"... it worked because of the realization that we have these two different groups of stakeholders with different characteristics, and it was understood that working together was still better than not being united. "

— JACKIE LOEWER, LOUISIANA RICE FARMER AND FORMER USA RICE FEDERATION CHAIRMAN

USA RICE CHAIRMEN — 25 YEARS



1994-1996
Rex Morgan



1996-1998
Carl Brothers



1998-2000
John Denison



2000-2002
David Van Oss



2002-2004
Gary Sebree



2004-2006
Lee Adams



2006-2008
Al Montna



2008-2010
Jamie Warshaw



2010-2012
Jackie Loewer



2012-2014
Mark Denman



2014-2016
Dow Brantley



2016-2018
Brian King



2018-2020
Current USA Rice Chairman
Charley Mathews, Jr.



LEFT:

USA Rice Federation
Organizational Meeting
With Mike Espy, Secretary of Agriculture
Office of the Secretary
September 21, 1994

Front Row (left to right): Rex Morgan, Sec. Mike Espy,
Keith Broussard, and Joe Rennicke

Left to Right: Tommy Hillman, Penn Owen, Sonny Martin,
Carl Brothers, Fred Tanner, Jr., Lenny Hensgens,
Gary Mayberry, Des Woods, Tommy Ferrara, David Hillman,
Michael Rue, Jimmy Hoppe, Ernest Girouard, Raymond Franz,
Larry Riley, Nott Wheeler, Jr., John Denison, Al Montna,
Ralph Newman, Jr., Mike McCarthy, Harry Cormier, Bob Davis,
Jack Wendt, James Warshaw, Scott Wheeler, and Bob Watts

MEETINGS & MEMBER SERVICES



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first time
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REGISTRATION NOW OPEN: www.usarice.com/outlook



Keynote Speaker: DR. SHIMI KANG

Neuroscience expert and author will speak about the science of human behavior, stress, and our hectic world.

Here's just a few of the Educational Breakout Sessions Being Offered:



Transact: eCommerce Strategies & Tactics to Drive Sales – Led by ANDY HALKO, CEO of Transaction, an eCommerce agency specializing in helping organizations build powerful online stores that attract not just visitors but shoppers, this session will help you improve, expand, or create an eCommerce presence to gain traction in the market outside your immediate area.



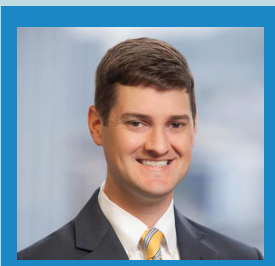
Macroeconomics Outlook for Agriculture – VERONICA NIGH, with the American Farm Bureau, will separate fact from fiction as the U.S. economy and the U.S. ag economy seem to diverge, specifically digging into the drivers of the U.S. economy, farm economy, farm debt and financial indicators, interest rates, cash rents and farmland values, and trade.



Customers Also Viewed This: Unpacking Consumer Retail Behavior – DAVID FIKES, from the Food Marketing Institute, will share exciting results from the organization's new, groundbreaking study of U.S. grocery shopper trends. What do they care about and why? And what do they expect from the people who feed them?



If Your Rice Plants Could Talk – What would they say? Just ask DR. RALPH DEAN, from the North Carolina State University Entomology and Plant Pathology department, who studies how we can understand what plants are "saying" to give them what they need to thrive.



Estate & Succession Planning for Farms – The number one mistake people make when it comes to estate planning is not planning at all. Attorney TRAV BAXTER is going to demystify estate and trust planning and help you chart a course ahead.



A Conversation with the NRCS – NRCS Chief MATTHEW LOHR sits down for a fireside chat to talk conservation, technology, and what conservation success will look like in the future and how we can get there together. *(Lohr is invited)*

Other session topics include:

The Latest Mapping Technology, Precision Ag and Rice, Gene Editing for Rice, Farm & Mill Safety, Co-op 101, Farmer Tales and Fails, Farm Shop Design, and much more!



CHECK-OFF PROGRAMS ARE CRITICAL FOR THE U.S. RICE INDUSTRY

BY STEVE LINSCOMBE



MOUNTAIN HOME, TX — As the U.S. rice industry celebrates the 25th anniversary of the creation of USA Rice, it is important to acknowledge a very important source of funds for the organization's promotional activities – check-off funds.

Rice producers in all major rice-producing states – Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas – donate funds to support both rice promotion and research activities. These funds are checked-off at the first point of sale of all rice lots (volume put up for sale). The vast majority of the promotion funds are provided to the USA Rice Council, a charter member of USA Rice, to support rice promotional activities both within the country and internationally. Research check-off funds are typically used to support rice production research in the individual states.

While these programs came into existence at various dates, some of the programs have been around for almost 50 years. The amount of funds “checked off” varies from state to state, but is typically based on a volume of rice marketed. Using Louisiana and Texas as examples, for each 100 pounds of dried rough rice sold in those states, \$.05 is checked off to support research and \$.03 is checked off to support promotion.

These funds are administered by boards in each state made up primarily of rice producers. These boards have the responsibility of making sure these limited funds are allocated in the most appropriate manner to support research and promotional activities. Some states have one board that administers both promotion and research activities, while other states have separate research and promotion boards.

Some states do have a refund option where rice producers who choose not to support these programs can request to have their money refunded. Even where refunds are available, the percentage that is



Check-off dollars in action: funding development of new varieties, research on production technology, and innovative promotion campaigns.


Over the previous 50 years, rice yields in the U.S. have increased by over 80 percent. Much of that increase has been possible only because of new varieties and other production technologies that have been created by check-off funded research programs in each state.

requested to be refunded is very low, as most producers wholeheartedly support the check-off program.

Each state has rice research activities affiliated with that state's land grant university. California also has a research station that is owned by the rice producers there. Research check-off funds are a very important source of funds for scientists conducting these various rice research efforts. Over the previous 50 years, rice yields in the U.S. have increased by over 80 percent. Much of that increase has been possible only because of new varieties and other production technologies that have been created by check-off funded research programs in each state.

I personally conducted rice variety development research for over 35 years at the Louisiana State University AgCenter H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station, and research check-off funds provided over 75 percent of the funding to support the rice breeding programs activities during that time.

USA Rice promotional activities have been equally successful. Per capita rice consumption in the U.S. has increased dramatically during this same 50 years. U.S.-grown rice is marketed to over 100 countries worldwide. These success stories are largely due to rice promotional activities funded in part by state generated check-off funds. In many cases, the funds are used as a match that allows the procurement of additional federal funds to support rice promotion in international markets.

These check-off programs have been hugely successful in providing a multitude of benefits to the U.S. rice industry, and will continue to do so well into the future. 

Steve Linscombe is the director of The Rice Foundation. In his former life, Steve was the director of the Louisiana State University Rice Research Center.

USA RICE PARTNERS WITH ACCLAIMED CHEF

BY CAMERON JACOBS

REHOBOTH, DE — USA Rice is teaming up with three time James Beard award nominee and 2018 Starr Chef Rising Star winner Hari Cameron for a year-long program across the culinary and foodservice realms. Chef Cameron will assist with recipe production, spokesperson duties, tradeshow, content creation, culinary introductions, and expertise on foodservice operations and sourcing.

"We're thrilled to have Chef Hari joining the USA Rice team," said USA Rice Domestic Promotion Vice President Michael Klein. "His culinary expertise and insight into the foodservice industry coupled with his passion for supporting American farmers and commitment to sourcing local products makes him the perfect person for helping to spread USA Rice messaging and promote U.S.-grown rice."


Cameron is a highly acclaimed chef winning multiple Best Chef Mid-Atlantic awards and Delaware's Best Farm to Table Restaurant in addition to his James Beard nods. He is frequently featured in foodservice media, culinary exhibitions, and mid-Atlantic television.

"Hari's expertise goes beyond cooking," said Klein. "He is a gifted media spokesperson and I have no doubt that in addition to his culinary knowledge, his media skills will truly benefit USA Rice."

As an ardent supporter of local agriculture, Cameron incorporates U.S.-grown rice into many rice dishes featured at his a(MUSE) restaurant here with special call-outs on the menu and the USA Rice restaurant emblem prominently displayed out front.

And Chef Cameron's skill set is not just limited to the kitchen. He's also responsible for the creation of Gentle Giant, a U.S.-grown brown rice green tea beer, brewed with four different types of malted rice and aged on Genmaicha green tea and Koji rice that was part of the BrewAdvocate's Extreme Beer Fest this spring.

"In life, when you put the best in, you achieve the best end results. The same rule applies with the principles of cooking and recipe development," said Chef Cameron. "That's why I use U.S.-grown rice. I love both the quality and variety of rice available to me. The fact that I can trace it back to the state that grows it ensures the best product available. I'm excited and appreciate the opportunity to partner with USA Rice and continue to spread the word about U.S.-grown rice."

The chef partnership kicked off August 1 and will run until the end of July 2020. 

Cameron Jacobs serves as domestic promotion manager and top shelf reacher for USA Rice. Due to his height, his friends call him "Long Grain" even if he secretly prefers a higher amylose content.



"I want food that is delicious no matter what. I search for the best product possible. It just so happens that a lot of the most beautiful things that are the freshest are grown with love by friends and by farmers."

— CHEF CAMERON

CONSUMER CAMPAIGN YIELDS HISTORIC RESULTS FOR USA RICE

BY LESLEY DIXON

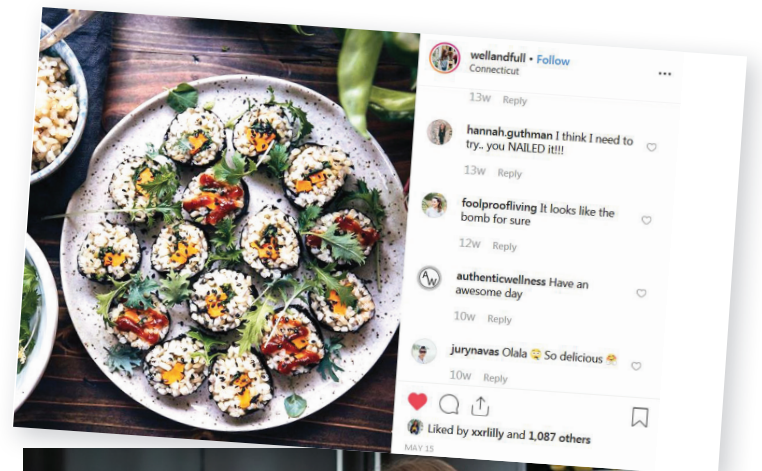
ARLINGTON, VA — Last September, USA Rice partnered with The FeedFeed agency, the largest and most engaged digital cooking community, to conduct a year-long campaign with goals to drive mass awareness and celebrate U.S.-grown rice, develop engaging content, and educate audiences on the benefits of rice consumption. This strategy used visual storytelling via Instagram, blog posts, and recipe videos to raise awareness throughout the year, which then was amplified across FeedFeed’s and USA Rice’s multiple social media accounts.

The FeedFeed selected four influencers with backgrounds that aligned with promoting U.S.-grown rice who were each responsible for creating four original and on-trend, rice-focused recipes accompanied by photography and video, a blog post, and an Instagram post. These were then promoted across The FeedFeed’s and USA Rice’s multiple social media platforms.

To further amplify USA Rice’s messaging and increase exposure, the created recipes were included in The FeedFeed’s weekly meal planners, featured on USA Rice’s recipe feed on thefeedfeed.com, and highlighted on IGTV through The FeedFeed’s digital TV series.

By the time the campaign concluded last month, 16 U.S.-grown rice recipes had been posted and boosted by The FeedFeed and USA Rice. Overall, the recipe posts, regrams, blogs, and videos generated a USA Rice record of more than 31.6 million consumer impressions and 430,000 engagements.

“The results from this campaign are tremendous,” said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice domestic promotion manager. “We were able to finally have U.S.-grown rice be part of the social conversation, expose a brand-



Phoebe Lapine (above) is one of four FeedFeed influencers who create and then promote original recipes using U.S. rice to their online followers.

U.S.-GROWN JASMINE: RICE TO MEET YOU

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

ARLINGTON, VA — USA Rice has launched a new domestic promotion initiative with the goal of having more U.S.-grown jasmine rice added to menus by getting restaurants to switch from imported rice to domestic. The new initiative rolls out this fall as an “aromatic mailer” being sent to more than 100 foodservice operators, chefs, and purchasers, and consists of a branded box containing a five-pound bag of U.S.-grown jasmine customized with the Think Rice logo and a call-out to the state where the rice was produced.

“Jasmine is the fastest-growing rice variety in the United States right now, appearing on 26 percent more restaurant menus and 108 percent more fast food menus over the last four years, so the timing of this foodservice promotion is perfect,” said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice manager of domestic promotion. “Promoting U.S.-grown aromatics is a priority for domestic promotion and what better way to showcase the variety than actually providing a sample of it to the people in the foodservice sector responsible for menuing, purchasing, and promoting.”


The custom bags were created by bag manufacturer HubCo and feature the Think Rice logo with the tagline “Rice to Meet You.” Also in the box is a six-panel brochure

“Jasmine is the fastest-growing rice variety in the United States right now, appearing on 26 percent more restaurant menus and 108 percent more fast food menus over the last four years...”

— CAMERON JACOBS, USA RICE MANAGER OF DOMESTIC PROMOTION

highlighting the growth, versatility, and cooking applications of jasmine rice, and the importance of sourcing U.S.-grown rice.

USA Rice members who produce jasmine rice and volunteered to be part of this program filled “Rice to Meet You” bags with their U.S.-grown jasmine and then customized the front of the bag with a state-specific designation.

“This is a great opportunity to showcase U.S.-grown jasmine to some of the most well-known restaurant chains in the country,” said Jacobs. 

Summer breezes make Deborah Willenborg feel fine, blowing through the jasmine rice in her mind.

new audience to different varieties and uses of U.S.-grown rice, and achieve a Federation first of reaching more than 31 million people within the year.”

The collection of recipes created were: Braised Chicken with Arborio Rice, Black Rice Pudding, Brown Rice Jambalaya, Black Fried Rice, Crispy Sushi Rice Cakes, Congee with Spinach, Carottes Râpées, Veggie Brown Rice Burrito Bowl, Wild Rice Soup, Spicy Rice Bowl, Sweet Potato Brown Rice Sushi, Apple Cider Braised Chicken and Wild Rice, Spicy Chicken Soup with Brown Rice, Brown Rice Burger, and Roasted Vegetable & Rice Salad.

In addition to the immediate impact of the campaign, USA Rice retains the right to use and access all created recipes, videos, and photos.

“While we are pleased with this year’s results, we still have a lot more to do in the domestic market, which, after all, is the largest market for U.S. rice,” continued Jacobs. “We have big things planned for Year Two of our partnership with The Feedfeed, so stay tuned. You won’t want to miss it!” 


Overall, the recipe posts, regrams, blogs, and videos generated a USA Rice record of more than 31.6 million consumer impressions and 430,000 engagements.

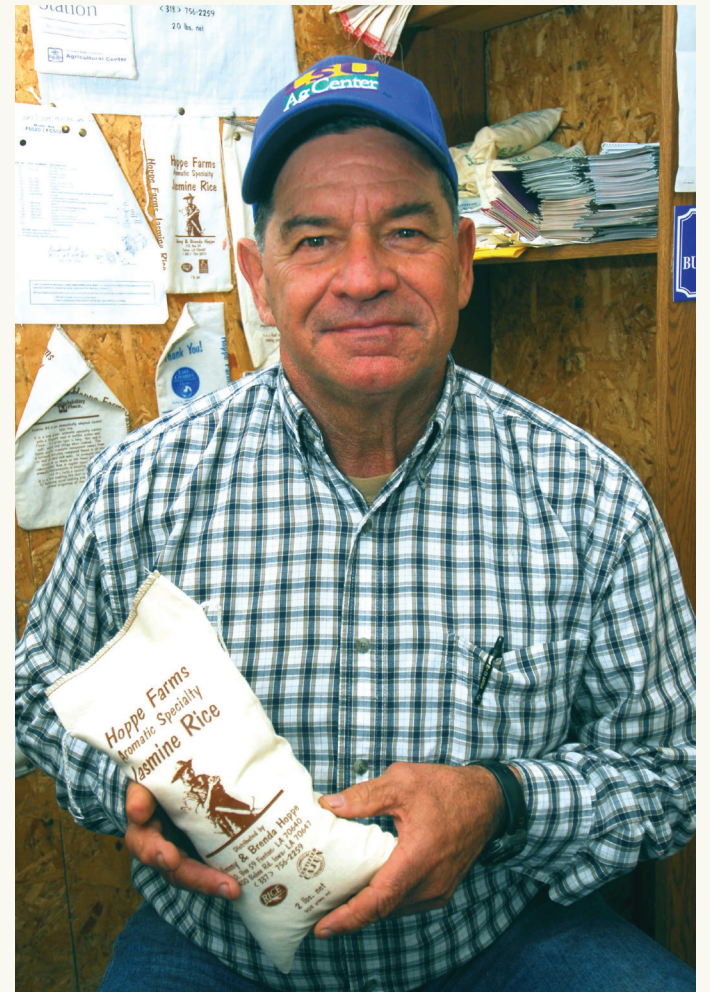


BAGMAN FOR A GOOD CAUSE

IOWA, LA — Louisiana rice farmer Jimmy Hoppe began bagging his own rice, Hoppe Farms Aromatic Specialty Jasmine Rice, in 1991. He was one of the first to do so, a pioneer in the “farm to market” practice of connecting the consumer directly with the grower’s product. Hoppe and his wife, Brenda, spent many hours in the small shed next to his shop, hand-packing jasmine rice in one, two, five, and ten-pound bags for distribution to their growing customer base.

The Louisiana Rice Growers Association (LARGA) began using the popular one-pound bags of Louisiana jasmine rice as a way to promote the homegrown rice at events, including expos, trade fairs, and educational forums throughout the state. Hoppe packaged the LARGA promotional bags for nearly 25 years – between 150,000 to 200,000 bags – over that time.

Hoppe turned over the reins of handling the sample bag requests with his retirement from farming in 2018. The staff at the Louisiana State University Rice Research Station in Crowley have assumed the task, and continue to fill and store the customized bags for pick up by LARGA for distribution at their annual events. 



DOMESTIC PROMOTION

WIN THE 2019 RIDE WITH RICE TRUCK!

This fall, USA Rice will be on the road again visiting with consumers throughout the Mid-Atlantic, telling the story of U.S.-grown rice and giving away Aroma rice cookers and rice samples. The last stop on this year's tour is the Outlook Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, where they will be turning the truck over to one lucky winner! That's right, you can win this tricked out 2019 Ford F-150 4x4 Crew Cab XLT 5.0 L V8. Add tickets to your registration - one for \$75, 3 for \$200, or 5 for \$300. You don't need to be present to win, we will ship the truck to the winner if necessary, and yes, you can take that beautiful wrap off if you like. Full rules are available online at www.thinkrice.com.

There are only 2,000 tickets available – so be sure to get yours today!



Michael Fruge, last year's lucky winner!

CHECKING IN WITH PAST SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

2016 – Heaven McKinley Grand Prairie TX

I am starting my junior year at Colorado School of Mines, majoring in environmental engineering and minoring in leadership in social responsibility. Now that I am exploring more major specific ideas, I am very excited about working in sustainability and helping corporations become more environmentally responsible.



2017 – Jared Fitton Santa Barbara CA

The last year has been filled with crazy adventures and many late night study sessions! As I move into my new position as a junior developer, I will continue to pursue a computer science major while studying at UC Santa Barbara.



2018 – **Caroline Benoit**
Belle Chasse LA

I spent this summer working at a local law firm as well as traveling with my family. I just moved into my dorm at Tulane University in New Orleans and already really enjoying being here! I haven't declared a major yet but I am thinking about pre-law or pre-med.



NATIONAL RICE MONTH SCHOLARSHIP VIDEO CONTEST

Lights, Camera, Action!

Create awareness and promote U.S.-grown rice, National Rice Month, and the importance of rice to your state via video — and earn scholarship money in the process!

Make a video about rice production, healthy eating, sustainability ... the list goes on! You can also conduct promotion activities in your community and showcase your work in a video.

It's Easy to Participate!

- 1 | Create a video about U.S. rice, National Rice Month, and the importance of rice to your state (3 min. or less)
- 2 | Upload your video to Youtube or Vimeo
- 3 | Submit your entry at www.thinkrice.com/scholarship

Three Scholarship prizes awarded!

GRAND PRIZE
\$4,000 Scholarship

SECOND PLACE
\$3,000 Scholarship

THIRD PLACE
\$1,500 Scholarship

ENTRY DEADLINE IS
OCTOBER 31ST



Visit www.thinkrice.com for more information, ideas to get started, and to enter your creative video!

Brought to you by



FIRST SALE OF U.S. RICE TO CHINA

BY SARAH MORAN

GUANGZHOU, CHINA — After decades chasing the world’s largest rice importer and consumer, a sale of U.S. rice to China finally happened this summer.

“This sale marks a turning point for the U.S. rice industry and its relationship with China as the first ever of U.S. rice to a private importer and is truly historic as it sets the stage for continued regular trade with China for U.S. grown rice.” said USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward.

The deal occurred on the margins of a U.S. rice trade seminar in Guangzhou that was conducted in July with some of the \$5.5 million in funds from the new U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Trade Promotion (ATP) program. Five U.S. companies met with 15 of China’s top rice importers who expressed a great deal of interest in U.S. rice. After the trade seminar, USA Rice organized a “speed dating” event, where importers met one-on-one for 15 minutes with each of the represented exporters before attending a closing dinner with nearly 50 Chinese importers.

“It has been a long journey,” said Steve Vargas, senior vice president of global rice trading for Sun Valley Rice, the company that made the sale, and vice chair of the USA Rice International Promotion Committee. “It took a great deal of effort on the part of Sun Valley Rice, as well as the USA Rice Federation, to gain access to the Chinese market.”

USA Rice sought to build upon this success and create opportunities for additional sales of U.S. rice. In early August, USA Rice held trade seminars in Shanghai and Shenzhen to introduce additional importers to U.S. rice varieties. Six U.S. importers met with 40 attendees in Shanghai and more than 70 in Shenzhen. The day before the first seminar, however, President Trump announced new proposed tariffs on Chinese goods exported to the U.S. which led to a downturn in relations between the two countries.

Below: Making connections at the Guangzhou trade seminar.

Top right: Historic first sale of U.S. rice to China thanks to great teamwork: USA Rice, the USDA ATP program, and Sun Valley Rice Company.

Bottom right: The sales team in Guangzhou ready to talk U.S. rice.



“The day after the announced tariffs, we heard credible reports that the Chinese government had contacted agricultural importers and advised them to avoid purchasing U.S. agricultural products,” said Jim Guinn, USA Rice director of Asia promotion programs, who helped coordinate both seminars. “A number of attendees spoke about the trade tensions but it didn’t seem to temper their longer term interest in U.S. rice, especially among private importers. However, given this setback in trade relations, the short term outlook for rice sales is not very positive in the absence of a trade deal.”

USA Rice will continue to create opportunities for USA Rice members and Chinese importers to interact, including exhibiting at the Food Hotel China trade show in November and organizing a reverse trade mission of Chinese importers to the U.S. later this year. 

Sarah Moran is looking forward to the second, third, and fourth sales of U.S. rice to China, and given that she has two small children, it’s a good thing she has mastered the skill of patience.

“It took a great deal of effort on the part of Sun Valley Rice, as well as the USA Rice Federation, to gain access to the Chinese market.”

— STEVE VARGAS, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL RICE TRADING FOR SUN VALLEY RICE

COLOMBIA CHEF COMPETITION: WHERE U.S. RICE MEETS TRADITION AND INNOVATION

BY SARAH MORAN

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA — Last July, the weeklong, fifth annual professional chefs' competition, Maestros del Sabor, Dueños del Sazón (Masters of Flavor, Owners of Spice), took place here, in Cartagena, and in Barranquilla. Co-sponsored by USA Rice, the USA Poultry & Egg Export Council, and the Kansas Soybean Commission, the competition attracts top chefs from all over the country who submit their best dishes to earn a coveted trip to the America's Food and Beverage Expo this September in Miami, Florida.

Each chef has one hour to create a dish using ingredients represented by the event sponsors which includes several varieties of U.S.-grown rice. The competition was judged by a panel of decorated celebrity chefs with more than 75 years of combined culinary experience.

The judges observed the cooking process of each participant and evaluated them on several factors including flavor, plating, technique, use of ingredients, and time management. One chef from each city was awarded a trip to Miami to show off his or her winning dish and rice cooking prowess.

"Colombia is a growing export market with immense economic potential due to its rich culinary history and tradition in gastronomic innovation," said Asiha Grigsby, USA Rice manager of international promotion, who attended the competition. "The professional chefs' competition is an incredible opportunity to collaborate with other U.S. commodities and highlight the versatility of U.S.-grown rice." 



The competition was fierce and the clock was ticking! With only one hour to create a brand new recipe, these professional chefs had their creative juices in overdrive. Asiha Grigsby, USA Rice manager of international promotion, was on-hand to congratulate the talented winners (top right).



INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION

"RICE IS IN EVERYTHING" IN NEW USA RICE MEXICO PROMOTION

BY GABBY CARBAJAL

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO — USA Rice's favorite mascot, Ricky Rice, has a cousin in Mexico! Arrozin, which means "Little Rice" in Spanish, made his debut as the newest USA Rice mascot at the foodservice trade show, "Exporestaurantes 2019," here last June.

"Arrozin helped kick off the new USA Rice promotion called, "El Arroz Esta En Todo" (Rice Is In Everything), and created great buzz as people were lining up to take selfies and post them on social media," said Asiha Grigsby, USA Rice manager of international promotion. "Throughout the three-day long trade show, Arrozin made the rounds with attendees, distributing recipe brochures, assisting our chefs who demonstrated new rice dishes, and even breaking out some dance moves!"

Arrozin has already been on tour, stopping at the American Rice Festival at the University of Metepec, at Sam's Clubs throughout Mexico City, and the occasional TV appearance to educate consumers about the benefits and advantages of US rice.

"Arrozin was created to bring a fun face to the origin story of how U.S. rice came to Mexico," said Grigsby. "Fans can follow Arrozin and the "Rice Is In Everything" campaign on various USA Rice Mexico social media platforms such as Facebook (Vida Sana Con Arroz), YouTube (usaricetv), and Twitter (@usaricemexico)."

Stay tuned to see what Arrozin is up to next! [w3](#)

Gabby Carbajal is with Mexpromos, USA Rice's contractor for Mexico, developing marketing campaigns to promote the consumption of U.S.-grown rice.



"Arrozin was created to bring a fun face to the origin story of how U.S. rice came to Mexico ... Fans can follow Arrozin and the "Rice Is In Everything" campaign on various USA Rice Mexico social media platforms"

— ASIHA GRIGSBY, USA RICE MANAGER OF INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION



Arrozin, AKA Little Rice, is bigger than life and on the scene at promotions all over Mexico reminding everyone that rice is in everything!

