

WHOLE GRAIN



U.S. RICE: CRISIS COMFORT FOOD

PAGE 4



STUDY ABROAD PAGE 6



FILL YOUR PLATE PAGE 9

also in this issue:

GOVT AFFAIRS:
Making Advocacy Personal
PAGE 8

INTERNATIONAL TRADE:
Coronavirus Throws Wrench in
Potential China Trade
PAGE 12

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Crisis Comfort Food

BY CHARLEY MATHEWS, JR.

MARYSVILLE, CA — You don't need me to tell you we are living in surreal times, with public gatherings banned, large scale events and sport seasons cancelled, businesses shuttered, the U.S. economy reeling, unemployment soaring, and farm and mill workers having to prove to law enforcement that they are part of that "essential workforce" helping carry the nation forward, but here we are.

I think back to the USA Rice Outlook Conference in Little Rock, and even though it was just four months ago, it feels like a whole other world.

We're all finding our way in this COVID-19 pandemic, sussing out the new normal. Will we have large scale conferences in 2020? Will we start shaking hands again to greet people or close a business deal? Will the fist bump or elbow tap become the new business greeting? Who knows?

But amidst all this uncertainty, it is worth noting that rice is one of the comfort foods for which Americans reach. Consumers are swarming over grocery stores and the aisles being hit the hardest are toilet paper, cleaning supplies, and rice.

What does that tell you?

It tells me that when people want reassurance, they Think Rice. And why wouldn't they? U.S.-grown rice is nutritious, inexpensive, sustainably grown, helps you feel fuller longer, goes with every cuisine there is, and if stored properly, lasts almost indefinitely. In short, rice is your go-to emergency food.

But again, you don't need me to tell you that. But you might need me to point out that rice is not suddenly a savior. This month's cover story by Lesley Dixon is a fascinating look at how in times of global crisis—World War I and World War II—U.S.



California rice farmer and USA Rice Chair Charley Mathews, Jr., and his son, Adam, practice social distancing on their farm in Marysville, California. They're going to need a lot more disinfectant to wipe down that tractor!

rice came to the rescue then, too. Be sure to check that story out.

I feel grateful to be a part of such an important industry that makes so many people feel safe. And thank you for being a part of it too.

As always, thank you for reading the *Whole Grain*, please support our advertisers, and most importantly, stay safe, stay healthy, and keep providing that security blanket for us all. [WE](#)

USARices

WHOLE GRAIN

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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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THIS ISSUE IS NOT LIKE THOSE THAT CAME BEFORE

BY BETSY WARD

VARIOUS LOCATIONS AROUND THE U.S. – Three times each year our staff put together the *Whole Grain* and it is a sizeable undertaking. The small team responsible for the publication, editors Michael Klein and Deborah Willenborg, head writer Lesley Dixon, and graphic designer Dara Fowler meet in person and via phone about a dozen times, pouring over stories, photos, graphics, layouts, ads, and more. They in turn have more meetings with additional staff and outside contributors to provide the content you receive.

Most of the contributors all work together in our office in Arlington, Virginia. Have a question? Just pop 15 feet down the hall to ask. Want to print out a mock-up of the issue, lay it out on the huge workroom table, and have the team review it? No problem. However, the team only got two face-to-face meetings in before our world was turned upside down by the COVID-19 crisis. Our office was closed, and travel around the area curtailed.

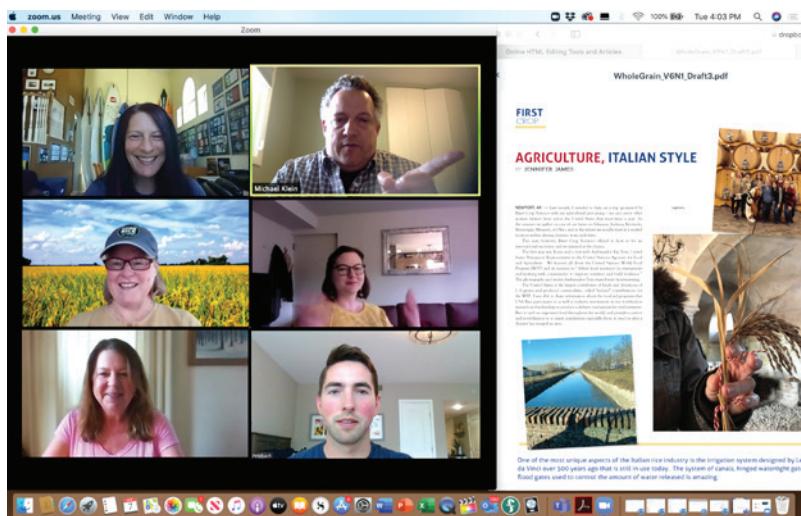
We are all working remotely, relying on video conferencing technology, screen sharing, and personal printers that aren't exactly up to the tasks we're asking them to perform when it comes to this type of publication. This Spring 2020 issue of the *Whole Grain* is being written, laid out, edited, and produced virtually.

I'm happy to say, I don't think you'll notice. We still have fantastic and relevant content—from what COVID-19 means for trade with China to how USA Rice is promoting the industry's sustainability commitments, and much more.

It is particularly interesting to note that one thing the team did decide before the pandemic took hold was that the cover story would be Lesley Dixon's well-researched article about U.S. rice in times of war. It's a fascinating look at how rice comforts us and how the industry can rise to any challenge—whether facing a known enemy in the wars of the 20th century, or the unseen enemy we all fight now. Rice can help get the job done.

As always, I hope you will enjoy this *Whole Grain* and that you will find the information interesting and useful. I ask you to support our advertisers, and join me in tipping your hat to the team that took the whole operation online to get a quality product out on time.

Stay safe. 



The production team puts their best faces forward to finish this issue of the *Whole Grain* (clockwise from upper left): Dara Fowler, Michael Klein, Lesley Dixon, Peter Bachmann, the author, and Deborah Willenborg.

... the industry can rise to any challenge—whether facing a known enemy in the wars of the 20th century, or the unseen enemy we all fight now. Rice can help get the job done.

As we go to print, the U.S. is facing a global crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We've been told to self-quarantine, practice social distancing, shelter in place, and avoid contact with others. Most businesses are shuttered and everyone is staying home and cooking more. Grocery store shelves are empty and items like hand sanitizer, toilet paper, and rice are in short supply. No matter the era, in times of crisis, people look to rice for comfort and sustenance.

RICE TO THE RESCUE

BY LESLEY DIXON

WASHINGTON, DC – They say an army marches on its stomach. Entire wars have been decided by the quantity, quality, and efficiency of military food supply lines. But what about the home front? The major wars of the 20th century shaped the way civilians thought about, prepared, and consumed food. What people ate and how they ate it had a dramatic effect on stateside morale. During the United States' involvement in both World War I and World War II, U.S.-grown rice helped keep the home fires burning for the U.S. and its allies.

When the First World War broke out in Europe in 1914, disruptions in agriculture and trade routes led to a food crisis in Europe. Wheat was scarce. The United States stepped up food exports to the Allied forces even though they had not yet entered the war, and chief among them was wheat. President Woodrow Wilson's Administration encouraged farmers to grow more wheat, and citizens to consume less wheat, in order to export as much of America's crop overseas as possible. These efforts redoubled when the United States entered the First World War itself in 1917. Now not only was America feeding its allies, but also its own doughboys—around 4 million of them—on the Western Front.

President Wilson was wary that forced rationing back home would deplete morale, especially when entering the war was going against official American neutrality and politically unpopular among some American isolationists. In order to keep civilian spirits up and stoke patriotism, the Wilson Administration instead launched a national propaganda campaign, spearheaded by future President Herbert Hoover and the newly-formed U.S. Food Administration, which encouraged Americans to voluntarily limit their diet to foodstuffs not required for the war effort. Rice was at the top of that list of patriotic foods.

Rice was an ideal domestic choice because it was not a practical food for soldiers to prepare in the trenches and so was not needed for export. Via pamphlets, posters, magazine ads, cookbooks, and recipe cards, Hoover's comprehensive public campaign urged consumers to focus on alternatives to wheat flour, including rye, oats, corn, potatoes, and of course, rice. The U.S. Food Administration (1917-1920) implored Americans to use less fat, oil, sugar, and to observe "Meatless Days" and eat more fish. All over the nation, people were eating more rice than they ever had before in order to support the troops.

While rice was already a dietary staple for much of the South, most Americans relied heavily on bread and potatoes, so the transition to rice-based dishes was sometimes awkward. A recipe from *The Progressive Farmer* from 1918 called "Rice and Tomatoes" proves to be just that: rice stewed with tomatoes. Added veggies from private "Liberty Gardens" and home-raised chicken or rabbit meat were optional extras.

State-sponsored recipes for bread made with rice flour warned that it wouldn't have quite the same taste or texture, and the cooking instructions

would be different, but that if made well could be just as delicious as wheat bread. “War bread,” as it came to be known, was usually made with two or three types of alternative flours, and usually included rice flour. Drop biscuits were better than roll biscuits when it came to rice flour, and rice flour pie crust fared better if patted into the pan as opposed to rolling it out.

Despite rice being unfamiliar to some consumers, it was during this period that the American population came to view rice as a simple, nutritious, tasty, and cost-effective way to stretch limited resources and get creative in the kitchen.

During World War II, U.S.-grown rice went international. Great Britain found itself cut off from its main source of imported rice when the Japanese occupied Burma, and rice from their colonial asset of India was going toward feeding soldiers fighting in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. England needed a new source for its favorite dessert—rice pudding—and its relatively novel penchant for Indian-inspired curries. The burgeoning U.S. rice industry stepped up to the plate and became Britain’s top supplier of rice for the duration of the war. In 1944, 58 percent of all UK rice imports came from the United States.

Once again, U.S. rice was a pillar of support. Rice was rationed austere in England along with most major foods. A one-pound bag of rice cost 8 ration points, in a system where one person was allotted 24 points per month. So, while valuable, a pound of U.S.-grown rice was a wise investment of points, as it could last a long time in the larder and provide much needed calories in a time of tightened belts—not to mention the morale boost homemade rice pudding had on a besieged population. Rice was so precious in England during the war that the government forbade its citizens from throwing it at weddings.

The English, like many Americans, seemed uncertain how to best integrate rice as a more regular part of their diet, but they were certainly creative. One recipe from BBC radio for “Mock Fish” called for mashed rice, milk, margarine, and anchovy essence molded into the shape of a fish filet to be breaded, then fried. As unappetizing as that sounds, it was indicative of the creative measures home cooks had to take during the lean years of rationing.

While rice may not have been the easiest food to cook up for troops on the move, it played an integral role in keeping the home front fed, freeing up resources for soldiers, bolstering morale, and strengthening bonds between Allied nations.



KEEP THIS CARD CAREFULLY

RATIONING ORDER, N. 86, 1918.

Food Office of Issue.

Holder's Surname: Thie

Christian Name: JP

Address: 283 High Street

Name and Address of BUTCHER: 241 High Street Glasgow

Name and Address of BUTCHER Retailer: St. Rollox Co-op. Socy. Ltd. 245 High Street

Name and Address of SUGAR Retailer: 245 High Street

Signature and Address of Holder: _____

SPARE. _____

KEEP THIS COUNTERFOIL AND THE TOP PORTION OF THE CARD, AND READ THE ACCOMPANYING LEAFLET OF INSTRUCTIONS.

Above: Rationing for the war effort meant planning meals carefully, being creative with menus, and not wasting food. Right: Ration cards kept track of food purchases. Left: Propaganda posters reminded Americans to do their part for the troops overseas.



Not all English wartime rice recipes were so bizarre. Honey rice, a light dessert made with rice, honey, milk, and currants, was a much more comforting dish characteristic of the trend toward simplicity that English cooking took during the war, and one way individual households could support the war effort.

While rice may not have been the easiest food to cook up for troops on the move, it played an integral role in keeping the home front fed, freeing up resources for soldiers, bolstering morale, and strengthening bonds between Allied nations. Both Americans and Britons began consuming more U.S. rice as a direct result of the wars, shaping the culinary development of the two nations for decades to come.

Lesley Dixon is a history buff and cooking enthusiast who is currently sheltering in place with her husband and cat in Washington, DC.

AGRICULTURE, ITALIAN STYLE

BY JENNIFER JAMES

NEWPORT, AR — Last February, I traveled to Italy on a trip sponsored by Bayer Crop Sciences with my agricultural peer group ~ me and seven other women farmers from across the United States that meet twice a year. In the summer we gather on one of our farms in Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, or Ohio, and in the winter we usually meet at a neutral location within driving distance from each farm.

This year, however, Bayer Crop Sciences offered to host us for an international excursion and we jumped at the chance.

The first stop was Rome and a visit with Ambassador Kip Tom, United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture. We learned all about the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) and its mission to “deliver food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.” The photographs and stories Ambassador Tom shared were heartwarming.

The United States is the largest contributor of funds and donations of U.S.-grown and produced commodities, called “in-kind” contributions, for the WFP. I was able to share information about the food aid programs that USA Rice participates in as well as industry investments in rice fortification research and technology to produce a delivery mechanism for vital nutrients. Rice is such an important food throughout the world, and provides comfort and nourishment to so many populations especially those in need or after a disaster has ravaged an area.

Next, we visited a dairy operation that provides 20 percent of the milk for Rome. The farm, called Maccaresse, has two biodigesters to convert manure and corn silage into methane gas that produces enough electricity to run their farm with excess they can sell back into the grid. They are contributing to the Italian government’s goal to be 50 percent renewable energy by 2050 and without government incentives as cost share in the projects.

We also toured Capurso Winery near Verona that has a partnership with Bayer as one of their Forward Farms. Bayer Forward Farms focus on sharing

Jennifer James’ ag tour through Italy included: a day at Capurso Winery in Verona, a Bayer Forward Farm (right); a tour through Vercelli, the country’s rice capital (below); and a testimony to an ancient irrigation system that has stood the test of time (bottom left).



One of the most unique aspects of the Italian rice industry is the irrigation system designed by Leonardo da Vinci over 500 years ago that is still in use today. The system of canals, hinged watertight gates, and flood gates used to control the amount of water released is amazing.

The United States is the largest contributor of funds and donations of U.S.-grown and produced commodities, called “in-kind” contributions, for the United Nations WFP, based in Rome.

knowledge and implementing innovative agricultural practices that help ensure economic success. The farm is owned and operated by Nunzio Giovanni Capurso and his two daughters, Camilla and Selene. Although our farms are worlds away our group had much in common with the daughters who had returned to the farm. Together, the sisters have added agritourism to their operation and expanded their family’s business.

A visit to Bayer Italy HQ in Milan gave us excellent insight into row crop agriculture in Italy and Europe. We met with Bayer’s crop science team to discuss the variety of crops produced across the country –corn, grapes, wheat, rice, olives, and many fruits and vegetables. The team talked about how Bayer is serving farmers using digital technology, addressing climate change through biotechnology, and utilizing the new European Green Deal and Farm to Fork programs.

The last day of the trip was spent touring Vercelli, the rice capital of Italy! We met Alberto Pistola, a tour guide for the Province of Vercelli and a member of the Vercelli Quality Rice Road, an association of producers, local administrators, restaurants, and cultural institutions that promote all aspects of the territory and especially rice. Alberto explained that the japonica type rice they grow for risotto is special to Italy, and the variety Carnaroli is deemed the best because the starch stays firm in the middle of the kernel and has a firm “bite” to it when cooked to risotto perfection.

Farms in Italy are much smaller than ours in Arkansas. The size of a field originally was based on the amount of land two yoked oxen could work in one day or roughly the equivalent of one acre. An average farmer tills 100 hectares, approximately 250 acres, and, unlike farms in the U.S., most mill and package their own rice.

One of the most unique aspects of the Italian rice industry is the irrigation system designed by Leonardo da Vinci over 500 years ago that is still in use today. The system of canals, hinged watertight gates, and flood gates used to control the amount of water released is amazing. The rice farmers must work together because everyone receives their allotted amount of water through the canal system. They have to coordinate and have their rice crop planted on time so that when the water arrives at their fields, the rice is ready!

Alberto treated us to a traditional Vercelli lunch with two types of risotto as the main entrées. We were pretty adventurous and tried all the appetizers including veal, pig lard, raw ground beef with truffles, and cow tongue. As expected, the risotto was delicious! We had the traditional version called panissa with bolotti beans, tomatoes, and salami, but my personal favorite was risotto cooked with robiola cheese.

Our group traveled over 600 miles in Italy by van and train, and experienced a diverse group of farms and agriculture. Thanks to Bayer Crop Science, we got a glimpse into the cultural differences that drive the food world and farming operations in Italy and in Europe.

And, like always, my peer group laughed, and learned, and strengthened our support system for one another. This group has added tremendous value to my family’s operation and to my personal growth as a leader within agriculture and the rice industry. [we](#)

Jennifer James is a fourth-generation farmer from Newport, Arkansas, recently elected as the first woman to the Riceland Foods, Inc. Board of Directors. She currently serves as chair of the USA Rice Sustainability Committee.

A few days after returning home, two of the provinces in Italy we visited were locked down due to COVID-19. The nightly news showed pictures of the Duomo in Milan completely deserted. We had toured there just days before with a huge crowd of people! We all counted down 14 days from leaving Milan, then 21, then 28, until we were far enough removed that we felt we had not been infected. By then, cases in the U.S. were increasing and minor disruptions were creeping into our daily lives. I am hopeful that by the time you read this article we have returned to some semblance of “normal,” the rice crop is planted, and the price of rice is on the rise.



Top: James (center) learns all about Italian risotto on the Vercelli Quality Rice Road.
Bottom: With Ambassador Kip Tom (seated) at the United Nations Agencies for Food & Agriculture in Rome.

THE RICE MERCHANT



Chuck Pappageorge

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USA RICE MEMBERS MAKE ADVOCACY PERSONAL WITH MEETINGS ON CAPITOL HILL

BY JAMISON CRUCE

WASHINGTON, DC — USA Rice’s Government Affairs Conference last February involved four days of meetings in and around the nation’s capital. More than 100 members from all six rice-producing states took part in more than 70 meetings with Senators, Representatives, their staffs, and members of the Trump Administration.

“Our meetings focused on updating Members of Congress and Trump Administration officials on farm, conservation, and trade issues affecting the rice industry, and we opened every meeting by thanking the Members who voted for the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement,” said Charley Mathews, Jr., a California rice farmer and chair of USA Rice. “It’s important that we continue to build upon relationships with legislators and executive branch officials, and this year especially, we made sure to express our appreciation for a strong farm safety net that has been essential for keeping many farmers financially afloat.”

And with about 50 percent of the annual U.S. rice crop exported each year, there is rarely a USA Rice - government meeting that doesn’t at least touch on the topic of trade.

“With trade on the forefront of everyone’s mind, our message of maintaining and expanding international markets for U.S. rice was well received,” said Bobby Hanks, Louisiana rice miller and chair of the USA Rice International Trade Policy Committee. “Additionally, we advocated for increased funding for USDA programs that promote U.S. ag products overseas on which we and many commodities rely.”

USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward made a point to thank USA Rice members for taking time away from their farms and businesses to come to Washington and advocate on behalf of industry issues they face each and every day. [w](#)

Jamison Cruce is USA Rice director of government affairs handling farm and economic policy issues.



MEETINGS & MEMBER SERVICES

STATE OF THE PLATE IS GREAT WITH ARKANSAS RICE

BY LESLEY DIXON

LITTLE ROCK, AR — The Arkansas Department of Heritage aims to preserve and protect Arkansas’s natural and cultural heritage, and enhance the experience of visitors and locals alike. Within the department, the Arkansas Food Hall of Fame accepts nominations from the public for restaurants, proprietors, and events that embody and celebrate Arkansas cuisine. The good news for Arkansas rice is the HOF named rice the 2020 Food of the Year!

It’s fitting recognition considering Arkansas produces more than 50 percent of all rice grown in the U.S., the most of any state. The rice industry is the backbone of Arkansas’s agricultural economy and a culinary staple in the area’s food culture and history. Many communities in the state’s rice-growing counties revolve around rice farms and the business they generate, and Arkansans have long been proud of their rich rice heritage. This award is a unique opportunity to educate the public on the role of rice in Arkansas’s history, as well as its future.

“We are overwhelmed with how the interest in Arkansas food continues to grow across our state,” said Stacy Hurst, secretary of the Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism. “We are so pleased to be leading this discussion about food as a special part of Arkansas’s heritage and culture.”

For those in Arkansas who work in the rice industry, rice is Food of the Year every year, but it is an honor to have official recognition of the cultural and historical significance of rice.

“To put things in perspective, rice is the food staple of nearly two-thirds of the world’s population,” said Gary Reifeiss, vice president of marketing and sales at Producers Rice Mill, who attended the ceremony in January. “The U.S. is in the top echelon of global suppliers of rice and Arkansas produces more than 50 percent of the nation’s rice crop. This is certainly a testimony to our fine Arkansas rice farmers and the entire rice industry here in Arkansas.”



USA Rice members enjoy special access during GAC, meeting with U.S. Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue (photo 1) and in the conference general session with the U.S. Trade Representative’s Chief Ag Negotiator Gregg Doud (photo 6). The best networking happens in the spaces and places between formal meetings—in the hallways (photos 2 and 4), waiting rooms (photo 3), and luncheons (photo 5). It’s tough to squeeze it all in (photo 7) but everyone makes the most of meaningful discussions with key rice state legislators including California’s Doug LaMalfa (photo 8) and Mississippi’s Cindy Hyde-Smith (photo 9).



“We are so pleased to be leading this discussion about food as a special part of Arkansas’s heritage and culture.”

— STACY HURST, SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE, AND TOURISM

RICE TRUCK ROAD TRIP DATA DRIVEN

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

ARLINGTON, VA — The second Ride With Rice truck tour may have ended but the journey isn't over as USA Rice continues to reap real rewards from the consumer market data garnered with each rice cooker giveaway event. Every person who interacted with the truck team was required to complete a short survey on both rice usage and demographics. In total, nearly 3,000 database cards were collected throughout the 2019 tour which, combined with the batch from the 2018 tour, swells the consumer sample size to more than 6,000.

Consumers were asked for their name, email address, and age group. They were also asked about how often they ate rice and where, either at home or dining out, and what would it take to make them consume more rice.

"The immediacy and accuracy of this data collection method is valuable to USA Rice in understanding the mindset of the average consumer," said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice director of domestic promotion. "This insight pointed up barriers to access as well as consumption figures, and also allowed us to drill down on the data by region, age, and gender, all crucial information to help shape our promotional efforts in the future."

In analyzing the data, Jacobs said, "The input we received was well distributed across age groups and provided significant takeaways. For instance, more than half of all those polled said they ate rice two to three times a week, with less than 5 percent admitting to

rarely/never consuming rice. There is a direct link between those who eat rice only while dining out and those that indicated cooking was a barrier to consumption. This gives real credence to the theory behind the Rice Truck program's original argument that if you make rice easier to cook, people will eat more."

The final question on the survey was "What would make you eat more rice?" Given a choice of answers from "recipes, easier prep, healthier, and other," the second least chosen response was "healthier," suggesting that people are moving beyond food fads and toward more flavorful, accessible, affordable alternatives.

"While people were filling out the surveys, the Rice Truck team kept up a running dialog filled with great information about U.S.-grown rice, from sustainable growing practices and food safety standards to nutrition facts and cooking qualities and tips, but the one thing that resonated above all others this year was simply that we grow rice in the U.S.," said Jacobs. "That is a message they won't forget."

In addition to the market data, USA Rice also uses email addresses collected to communicate directly with consumers through the Domestic Promotion consumer newsletter that is distributed on a quarterly basis. 

Deborah Willenborg learned to use raw data to tell a story at her first post-college job working in a medical research lab at Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California, for a doctor who studied autoimmune disease.



"The immediacy and accuracy of this data collection method is valuable to USA Rice in understanding the mindset of the average consumer."

— CAMERON JACOBS, USA RICE
DIRECTOR OF DOMESTIC PROMOTION

Before filling out her survey, an enthusiastic consumer makes Rice Truck team member Deborah Willenborg swear on an Aroma rice cooker not to reveal her real age.

SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK

BY LESLEY DIXON

LITTLE ROCK, AR — Luck was truly on Randy McNeil's side last December.

En route to another conference after having just departed USA Rice Outlook, McNeil was surprised to see his phone blowing up with calls when his flight landed in Las Vegas. It was friends of his who were still in Little Rock, calling from the USA Rice Outlook Conference General Session.

That's when Randy learned he had won the Think Rice truck raffle, and he was stunned.

"I didn't know how to react, to be honest. I never win anything," said McNeil. "It would have been a lot more fun if I'd been at the drawing, I just wish I could have been there."

Finding himself in Las Vegas and flush with a little extra luck, McNeil decided to try his hand at a slot machine, where he promptly won another \$2,400 while waiting to meet up with colleagues.

"I'm not even a gambler, that's why it's so funny," he said. "It was just that one day, though. My wife told everybody, she was real excited."

McNeil, owner of Poinsett Rice & Grain with multiple locations in Arkansas, plans to use the truck as a family vehicle and keep the Think Rice wrap on the truck, at least for a while. He's worked in the rice industry for 40 years, and in a town like Jonesboro, Arkansas, the rice truck will simultaneously stand out and fit right in. "It helps me, since I'm in the rice industry. It'll be fun for a little while, and at least I won't be able to go anywhere I'm not supposed to be going!"

The truck is in such high demand, in fact, that a dealership has already tried to buy it back from him. But McNeil told them it wasn't for sale.

"I know it's all for a good cause, and I'm a big supporter of USA Rice. It's a great thing to travel through the U.S. and promote rice like that, and I hope you're getting a lot of mileage out of the program."

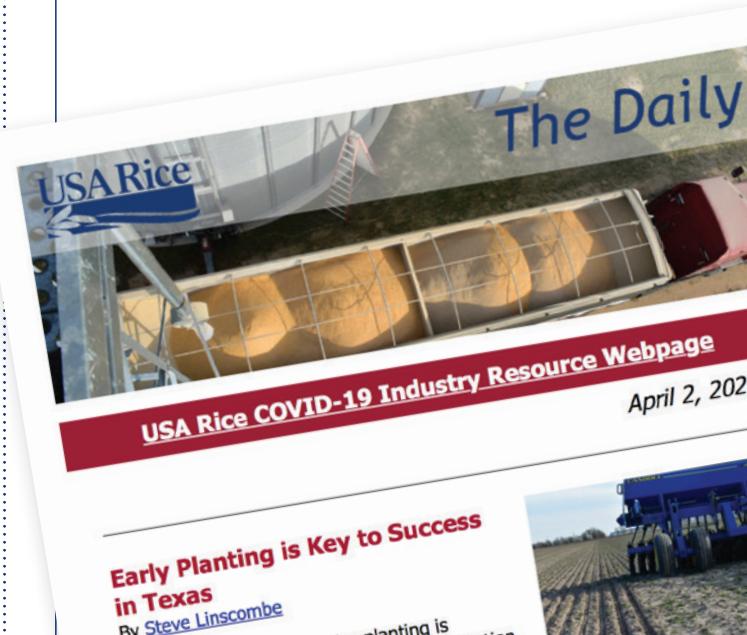
McNeil will certainly get even more mileage out of it, and it's good to see another Think Rice truck once again go to someone within the industry and stay in a rice-producing state.

"Tell everybody I appreciate it, and that I won't embarrass them in my new truck," McNeil laughed. [w](#)



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WHAT DOES CORONAVIRUS MEAN FOR TRADE WITH CHINA?

BY BEN CONNER

WASHINGTON, DC — The novel coronavirus, more specifically known as COVID-19, continues to spread rapidly while governments and businesses grapple with an appropriate response to the pandemic. Travel between the United States and China has been sharply curtailed and markets in both countries and throughout the world have tumbled over the last two months.

An unfortunate consequence from this situation is the potential wrench that may be thrown into the implementation of the U.S.-China Phase One agreement, meant to be a ceasefire in the trade war. However, U.S. government officials remain encouraged by China's compliance on a broad range of regulatory issues and some purchases made to date.

President Trump and Chinese President Xi signed the U.S.-China Phase One agreement on January 15, clearing the way to fix a long list of non-tariff trade barriers and requiring purchase commitments by China for up to \$40 billion in agricultural products per year for two years.

Two sections of the agreement text directly referred to rice:

- A commitment to register and publish an annual list of APHIS-approved rice export facilities in the U.S. following the phytosanitary protocol first signed in 2017.
- Additional commitments related to how China will administer their tariff rate quota, following the U.S. victory in a World Trade Organization case last year.

More recently, China announced the eligibility for more than 700 products to apply for tariff waivers, unfortunately not including rice. Importers in China have been encouraged to submit waivers regardless of their eligibility with the possibility of receiving exceptions, including rice importers. Absent a waiver from the Chinese government, U.S. rice imports remain subject to a 25 percent additional duty announced last summer, in which case, imported U.S. rice would be less competitive. China announced in late 2019 that purchases of U.S.-grown rice would be part of the Phase One agreement but details regarding quantity and logistics are yet to be known. Any purchases made would help China meet their Phase One commitments.

Purchases up to \$40 billion a year would be nearly double the U.S. record for agricultural sales to China, not to mention a potential shortfall of stocks after a record year of prevent plant acres across many commodities. Freight logistics and pricing for shipments to Asia have made the situation even more acute; in March, the Agricultural Transportation Coalition is citing up to \$3,200 per container increases in freight charges.



China has not yet requested a reprieve from those commitments and other aspects of the agreement continue to be implemented on schedule. As ground zero for the outbreak of COVID-19, China is now beginning to recover their shipping and factory production capacity, but we may have only seen the beginning of the impacts of this pandemic.

The coronavirus situation injects significant uncertainty into global markets, including agricultural markets. The scope and extent of that disruption will become clearer with time, but it is still too early to know how this will impact the Phase One deal, and particularly China's massive purchase commitments. In the meantime, U.S. and Chinese negotiators deserve credit for negotiating positive resolutions to longstanding issues that will allow China to see consistent growth as an export market for U.S. rice and other agricultural products, especially once the uncertainty of COVID-19 and the trade war have passed. 

Ben Conner is a partner at DTB Associates, a consulting firm specializing in agricultural trade policy.

An unfortunate consequence from this situation is the potential wrench that may be thrown into the implementation of the U.S.-China Phase One agreement, meant to be a ceasefire in the trade war.

STUDY CONFIRMS EQUALITY BETWEEN LAB AND COMMERCIAL RICE MILLING YIELDS

BY DR. JOHN GOLDBERG

WASHINGTON, DC — Customers domestically and abroad demand both consistency and accuracy when it comes to grading standards used for the rice they purchase. To ensure this, we rely on the services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) as third-party credible experts. The FGIS official milling quality appraisal is carried out in official laboratory mills following published, standardized procedures.

Over the years there have been rumors circulated that rice milled using FGIS procedures and laboratory mills produces conflicting yields with rice milled using commercial milling practices.

To address these concerns, FGIS contracted with the University of California-Davis (UC Davis) to evaluate whether the official FGIS laboratory mill and procedures provide comparable results to current commercial milling operations.

In December, UC Davis published their study, the *Evaluation of Laboratory Scale Rice Milling*. The UC Davis study took place over the course of two years with samples distributed across each of the eight quarters. One hundred and four samples were evaluated in triplicate, providing 312 data points.

- The laboratory mill had significantly higher total rice yields and head rice yields, but lower whiteness index than commercial mills.

- Most of the samples milled at the commercial mills had higher whiteness index than those milled in the laboratory mill.

- If rice samples were milled to the same whiteness in the laboratory mill as commercial mills, the total rice yields and head rice yields would likely be closer to the results from the commercial mills.

Total rice yields were about 1.6 percent higher for the lab-milled samples and head yields were about 2.6 percent higher for lab-milled samples when compared to those commercially milled. However, commercially milled samples had a 4.4 percent higher whiteness index, reflecting increased value added to the product and a more thorough milling process when compared to the lab-milled samples. Samples milled using both methods did produce U.S. #1 grade rice, albeit at a slightly varied level of quality.

What this study ultimately revealed is that commercial mills produce a higher quality product at a lower yield on a substantially larger scale than laboratory mills. Accusations that laboratory mills produce poorer yields than commercial mills at the expense of the producer are unfounded. As technology continues to improve, FGIS and the industry will have to continue to ensure that procedures are consistent across the board, but for now, commercial mills appear well-aligned with the FGIS protocols.

Dr. John J. Goldberg is the founder of Science Based Strategies, a Washington, DC-based food, agriculture, and environmental policy consulting firm, and a partner at the Normandy Group, LLC. Prior to his move to the private sector, Dr. Goldberg served 22 years as science advisor to the Committee on Agriculture in the U.S. House of Representatives, working on four Farm Bills under seven chairs.

HAITI: TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Consumer research reveals the power of "word of mouth" when it comes to promotion in Haiti. USA Rice radio ads, taste tasting activities, gastro fairs, social media, and public market promotions are all related to that word of mouth strategy. Last year, more than \$200 million of U.S. rice was shipped to Haiti, the largest long grain milled rice market for the U.S.



FARMERS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

BY LESLEY DIXON



WASHINGTON, DC — In February, USA Rice joined with 21 trade groups representing millions of farmers and ranchers on Capitol Hill to launch Farmers for a Sustainable Future (FSF), a coalition committed to environmental and economic sustainability. Members of the coalition discussed the FSF's purpose and principles before an audience of policy makers and media.

The mission of this groundbreaking coalition is to share with elected officials, the media, and the public U.S. agriculture's commitment to sustainability and the great effort that has already been made to reduce agriculture's environmental footprint. FSF will serve as a primary resource for lawmakers as they consider climate-related policies, and provide its guiding principles as a foundation to further advance the adoption of conservation programs.

Ben Mosely, vice president of government affairs at USA Rice, spoke at the event about the rice industry's many accomplishments in sustainability and conservation, as well as the importance of sustainability in agriculture: "All in all, the U.S. rice industry is invested in sustainability because it is personal. Rice farmers live on the land they work, and rice mills are an important economic driver in their communities."

FSF supports science-based research, voluntary incentive-based conservation programs, investment in infrastructure, and solutions that support rural communities while ensuring a healthy environment. The coalition recognizes what the rice industry has long known: that U.S. farmers and ranchers are stewards of the land who are committed to soil health, water conservation, air quality, and wildlife.

USA Rice's participation in the coalition is a natural fit, as rice farmers have made great strides in sustainability and conservation over the last several decades and continue to achieve higher standards with every harvest, as laid

out in the *U.S. Rice Industry Sustainability Report*. Joining with other industry leaders in the FSF will help rice tell its sustainability story, educate the public, and have a voice in agricultural policies.

"This is an opportunity to tell the great success story of American agriculture's sustainability efforts," said Arkansas rice farmer Jennifer James, who is chair of the USA Rice Sustainability Committee. "Sustainability is the future of agriculture, and farmers and ranchers are at the forefront of the movement, putting science, technology, and innovation to work on the land. FSF will be an invaluable resource for policymakers and the public alike, and USA Rice is honored to join the group." 

USA Rice's Ben Mosely takes his turn at the podium to make the strong case for the U.S. rice industry's commitment to environmental and economic sustainability.



"Sustainability is the future of agriculture, and farmers and ranchers are at the forefront of the movement, putting science, technology, and innovation to work on the land."

— JENNIFER JAMES, ARKANSAS RICE FARMER AND CHAIR OF THE USA RICE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE



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