

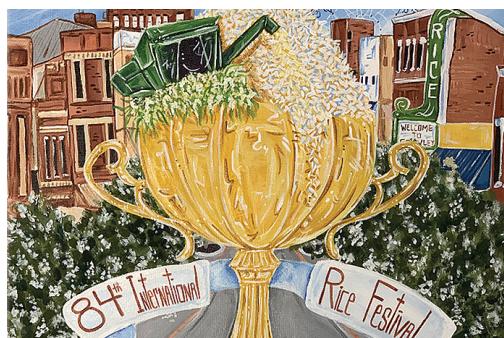
# WHOLE GRAIN



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International Shipping Woes Stymie Trade  
PAGE 24

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# More Proof of the U.S. Rice Industry's Resilience

BY BOBBY HANKS

CROWLEY, LA — My last two columns here have been about our industry's resilience and I've decided to go for the trifecta. There's a fine line between a trend and sounding like a broken record – but either way, I'm proud of our industry.

We've endured extreme weather, a raft of unfair trade practices, and more than a year of a global pandemic, and yet we soldier on. I'm particularly pleased we decided to convene the 2021 USA Rice Outlook Conference in person in New Orleans.

I know not everyone was able or willing to attend, and that's fine. I just felt that safely gathering together was important, especially after being forced to cancel the conference last year. We can recover from missing one year, but miss two and it starts to become a habit. Our conference is way too important to prematurely retire it.

USA Rice staff have been working hard to bolster the programming at Outlook for years, and they've done a great job. This year is no exception.

We're going to look at cybersecurity with speakers who have been victims of attacks and the people who hunt the offenders. We're featuring more than one session about rising input costs that have everyone on edge, and the supply

chain and transportation problems that plague us all and opportunities that tempt us.

End use will also be a focus area with presentations on consumer attitudes, trends, and uses for U.S.-grown rice beyond simply eating it. State research and outlook reports, global market, political, and regulatory analysis, and more!

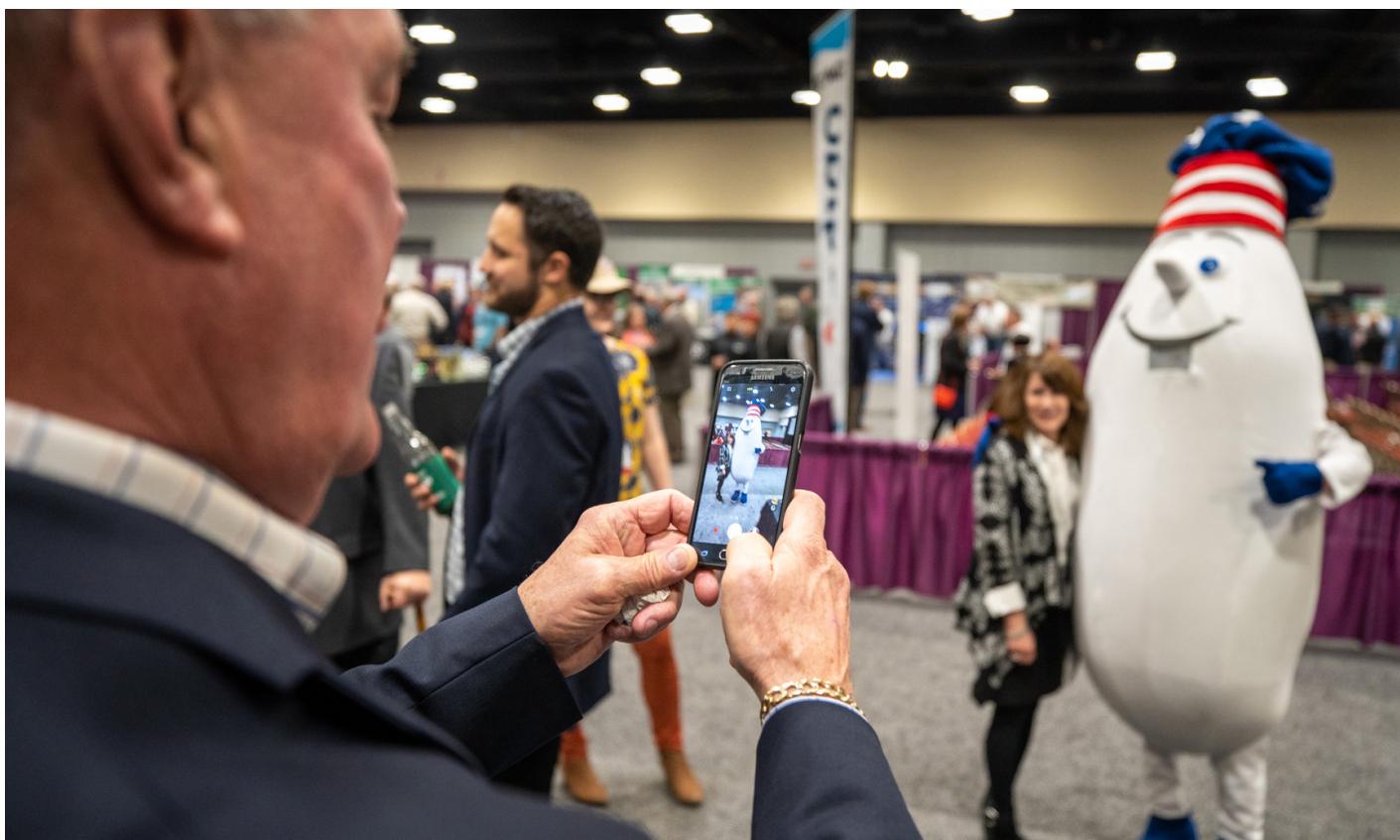
As always, we'll celebrate excellence at our Annual Awards Luncheon and I can't wait to learn who our recipients will be – if you miss the lunch, I'm sure you can meet them in future *Whole Grain* issues or on our podcast, *The Rice Stuff*.

I'm also looking forward to this year's keynote speaker, bestselling author and award-winning journalist Dan Gardner. Dan is one of those people who is able to look at a system, understand how and why it works the way it does, and then clearly show you an alternate path forward. His talk on Risk Management and Forecasting will serve us well in the board rooms and our family rooms.

Our days here at the conference will be packed, and we'll head home with lots of great new information. If you've joined us, thank you. If you haven't, we miss you and hope to see you next year in Austin!

Have a joyous Christmas season and a Happy New Year! 

I just felt that safely gathering together was important, especially after being forced to cancel the conference last year. We can recover from missing one year, but miss two and it starts to become a habit.



Ricky Rice is ready for his close-up. Are you?

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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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# SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS SO WE KEEP AT IT

BY BETSY WARD

ARLINGTON, VA — It's only been a few months since the last issue of the *Whole Grain*, but as you can see, we've been busy and I hope you spend some time with this issue reading all about it.

From promotions throughout Mexico and Central America (pages 21 and 22) to our ever-expanding presence on social media (page 9), we are working to keep U.S.-grown rice front and center in people's minds.

Of course, that's easy to do in rice country during National Rice Month, and you can read about celebrations throughout the mid-south on pages 14-18.

But it hasn't been all fun and games, we're facing some very serious issues that threaten our industry. India seems to be going for all kinds of records – the largest rice exporter in the world AND the most flagrant violator of fair trade protocols (page 13). There are also mind-boggling supply chain problems impacting our whole country (page 24).

My staff and I have been traveling in rice country this fall and hearing from our members firsthand about the many challenges here today and on the horizon. We are working hard, as we always do when there is a change in administrations, to educate folks about our industry and actions they can take to assist us.

Our next issue will no doubt share highlights of the USA Rice Outlook Conference going on in New Orleans December 5-7, but I also expect we'll be reporting back new initiatives we will deliver on your behalf. For more up to the minute news, be sure to subscribe to our *USA Rice Daily*, visit our webpage often, and be sure to subscribe to our podcast, *The Rice Stuff*.

I wish you all a meaningful holiday season, and a safe and prosperous new year! 



During the year, USA Rice staff covers the rice country map.



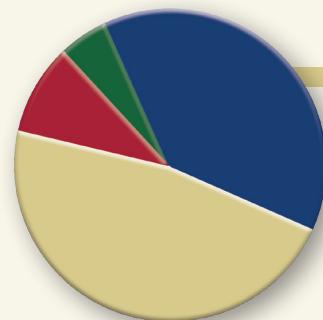
# USA RICE – GROWING THE FUTURE OF THE U.S. RICE INDUSTRY

BY REBECCA GREENWAY

ARLINGTON, VA — Each year USA Rice brings together funding from many sources – from rice farmers, millers, merchants, enterprise partners, and federal resources – and uses that funding to conduct programs on behalf of the entire U.S. rice industry. More than three hundred rice industry representatives sit on USA Rice boards and committees and they are tasked with oversight of USA Rice activities to ensure each year's goals and accomplishments address industry needs. Financial reports are designed to show sources and uses of funding, allowing board and committee members to monitor progress throughout the year.

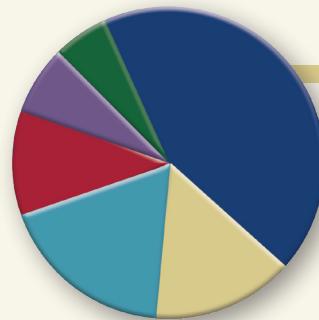
Our annual financial audit is conducted by an external CPA firm hired by the USA Rice Audit Committee – also comprised of representatives from all industry segments – and their report stated that USA Rice's financial records and reports were prepared according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, that no significant errors were found, and internal controls over financial assets and reporting were adequate. The audit report also included positive results from the required audit of USA Rice's compliance with federal regulations regarding expenditure of federal funds. It is the combined efforts of our volunteer leadership and staff that results in USA Rice's continued record of clean financial audits and compliance reviews. 

Rebecca Greenway is USA Rice CFO.



**FY 2020/2021 REVENUE - \$11,921,435**

State checkoff forwarded by USA Rice Council	\$4,863,377	41%	
USDA international promotion funds	\$5,411,990	45%	
Mill, merchant, farmer, and other rice industry dues	\$1,162,743	10%	
Other income	\$474,326	4%	



**FY 2020/2021 EXPENSES - \$11,921,435**

International Promotion (USDA Funded)	\$5,319,892	45%	
Rice State Relations, Membership & Meetings	\$1,642,442	14%	
Domestic Initiatives & Promotion	\$2,318,706	19%	
International Promotion (Rice Industry Funded)	\$1,106,211	9%	
Management & general	\$816,518	7%	
Government affairs	\$708,667	6%	

## WHERE THE RICE INDUSTRY MEETS

USA Rice is excited to be back in-person for the 2021 USA Rice Outlook Conference, the largest rice conference in the United States! This event focuses on bringing the entire industry together to examine current issues and trends, learn from experts and each other, and to celebrate excellence in our industry.

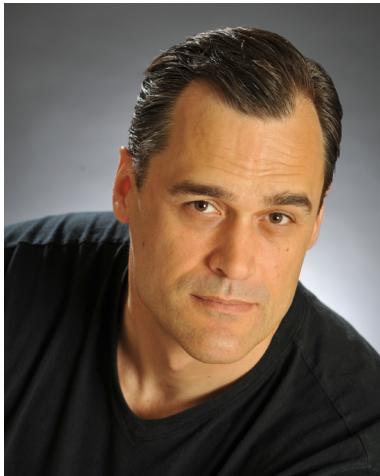
## LEARN • NETWORK • GROW

We aim to make your time at Outlook impactful to you, to your bottom line, and to your business. Don't miss this year's dynamic keynote speakers, new breakout sessions for all segments of the rice industry, a blockbuster tradeshow, and much, much more!

### Education Stages centrally located in the Exhibit Hall

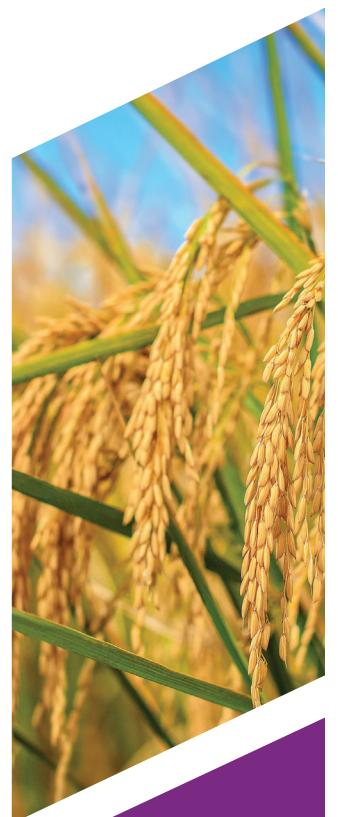
#### Session topics include:

- Emerging technology
- Rising input costs
- Cybersecurity
- Aromatic imports & consumer trends
- Infrastructure & transportation woes
- State outlook reports, and more



#### Keynote Speaker: **Dan Gardner**

Award-winning journalist and best selling author on Risk Management & Forecasting to do better in business and in life.



If rice is any part of your business, you need to be part of the USA Rice Outlook Conference.  
[www.usarice.com/outlook](http://www.usarice.com/outlook)

# RICE ROOTS RUN DEEP IN COASTAL CAROLINA

BY LESLEY DIXON | PHOTOS BY JANET MORGAN

**CHARLESTON, SC** — The low country of South Carolina, a sprawling area of marshland, brackish deltas, and barrier islands along the Atlantic coast, is steeped in history. Threading through the region’s past to its present – through hundreds of years of complex, sometimes turbulent history – is rice.

“Without rice, Charleston wouldn’t really exist,” says Chef Kevin Mitchell, an instructor at the Culinary Institute of Charleston, who has dedicated his career to studying and reviving historic low country cuisine. “Rice cultivation made Charleston one of the top three cities in the South. In my classroom, I always stress the importance of what rice is and how rice makes South Carolina what it is.”

## A TASTE OF HISTORY

Mitchell is a self-described “Yankee.” He was raised in New Jersey by his mother and his grandmother, a North Carolinian who started teaching him how to cook at the tender age of six, igniting a life-long passion in him that would eventually lead to his storied culinary career and a Master’s degree in Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. He may be a northern transplant, but after living and cooking for years in Oxford, Mississippi, Atlanta, and Charleston, the South has embraced him, and he the South.

“My grandmother introduced me to black-eyed peas, and okra, and all the other things we identify with southern food like mac and cheese, and fried chicken, and we always had rice. Coming to the South, getting my master’s, and teaching has allowed me to see southern food on a broader spectrum. I just want people to understand what the true influences are, and that rice is this very important thing that we can’t look at as a monolith.”

While southern rice dishes were always on the menu at his grandmother’s table, Mitchell became truly acquainted with South Carolina low country cooking when he first moved to Charleston in 2008 and helped run a test kitchen for famed Gullah chef Charlotte Jenkins, as she assembled recipes for her cookbook, *Gullah Cuisine: By Land and By Sea*.

The Gullah-Geechee people, who reside in the lowland coastal areas and islands of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, are descendants of slaves from the west coast of Africa. Also known as the Rice Coast, countries there, like Senegambia and Sierra Leone,

were famed for rice cultivation. By the early 1700s rice had become a major cash crop across the American south, especially in South Carolina, where plantations produced 20 million pounds of rice in 1720.

“We tested well over a hundred recipes, all from her family,” said Mitchell. “She introduced me to all these traditional Gullah recipes. That opened my mind to understanding the food of this particular culture in South Carolina.”

After the Civil War many rice fields were destroyed, but the people who remained in these wetland-rich areas settled their own villages near the old plantations, preserving and integrating their heritage with a Creole language and cuisine that blended African traditions with American ingredients.

## REBUILDING THE PAST

Not much remains of the old rice plantations in South Carolina, but one historic site that offers a unique glimpse into rice’s early history is Hasty Point Plantation, near Plantersville. Featuring a marvelously preserved wooden rice barn and original rice trunks (a kind of wooden sluice that controls flooding), Hasty Point is currently at the center of a historic preservation and environmental restoration project that will shine a light on rice’s fascinating past.



### THIS PAGE

Top: Chef Kevin Mitchell curates cuisine that blends African traditions with American ingredients.

Bottom left: Drum session at Hasty Point Plantation.

Bottom right: Standing on a lock used to control water from the river to a rice paddy, Craig Sasser of Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge plans to grow more rice to teach folks about the cultivation process and to create a habitat for ducks and migratory birds that feed on the rice.

### NEXT PAGE

Top: Young dancers join drummers in a celebration of history and community sponsored by the Village Group, a local youth organization.

Middle: The Open Space Institute has preserved more than 1,000 acres of the former plantation on the banks of the Great Pee Dee River.

Bottom: A restored rice barn at Hasty Point Plantation is a potential classroom where people can learn about the history of rice culture.



The Hasty Point Plantation will become available for historic tours, community events, and recreational activities like hiking, biking, and duck hunting. Much of the property's wetlands will be carefully restored to their original glory...



“What’s really cool about the Hasty Point rice trunks is that it’s about a three-hundred-year-old technology,” says Emily Purcell, director of conservation programs for the South Atlantic at Ducks Unlimited. “As we work on these historic rice projects, what we’re really trying to do is put back what the slaves who cultivated these fields originally placed on that landscape. Because they did it right, and they understood it. If we can just get it back to how it was, that’s how it functions best.”

Ducks Unlimited has partnered with Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge, Open Space Institute, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase and preserve Hasty Point Plantation from its original owner, Bob Schofield, who wanted the property to be used for education and conservation. The land will become available for historic tours, community events, and recreational activities like hiking, biking, and duck hunting. Much of the property’s wetlands will be carefully restored to their original glory, which is where Ducks Unlimited comes in.

“DU can play a great role in helping to restore and enhance the wetlands, giving the wetland managers the tools they need to create a good habitat,” says Purcell. “This could involve raising the elevation of the dikes, rebuilding berms to increase resiliency of the dikes, and installing rice trunks and water control structures, and maybe some canal work to improve circulation within the impoundments.”

All this may sound very technical, but Purcell is humble about it. “At DU, mostly we’re just really good plumbers,” she jokes.

But all modesty aside, restoring Hasty Point’s wetlands will be a boon for ducks, waterfowl, and shorebirds, offering up around 1,000 acres of potential habitat, as well as contributing to the restoration of native vegetation. As for duck hunting, Hasty Point will be a resource for youth and community hunting in an area where public access can be hard to come by.

#### THE INTERSECTION OF NATURE, HISTORY, COMMUNITY, AND RICE

Raye Funnys is the director of public services in Georgetown County, where Hasty Point is located, and the founder of the Village Group, a local Plantersville non-profit youth organization. The Village Group provides summer and afterschool programs, bike clubs, STEM clubs, and other activities for kids in the community. Funnys sees the Hasty Point Plantation project as the perfect opportunity to connect local youth with area history and ecosystems and teach them about rice cultivation.

“We try really hard to keep our young people engaged, to show them our history and from whence we came,” says Funnys, who works with many kids who have Gullah heritage at the Village Group. “It’s my responsibility as a community leader to do that. It’s an opportunity for them to understand our history and shape their thinking about the future.”

Funnys is Gullah Geechee himself, and still resides in the nearby village where he grew up working on his family’s small farm. The Hasty Point Plantation is quite literally close to home for him and is a shining example of how nature, history, community, and rice all intersect to shape the character of the South.

“I’m very proud to be a Gullah Geechee person and to know that my ancestors worked hard under adverse conditions to make a difference in this country,” says Funnys. “I’m proud to be a part of this historical area.” 

*Lesley Dixon is a history buff who lives in Austin, Texas, and is a big fan of perloo, purloo, pilau, pilaf, paella, or any variation of rice with stuff in it.*



## CHEF VIDEO SERIES FOCUSES ON FOODSERVICE

BY CAMERON JACOBS



Chef Hari Cameron leans into the task.

ARLINGTON, VA — To answer the need foodservice operators had as their business models altered due to the COVID-19 pandemic and consumer dining patterns changed, USA Rice developed a series of three educational videos highlighting advantages U.S.-grown rice can bring to a foodservice operation, its reputation, and its bottom line.

The videos have three distinct themes – authenticity, sustainability, and seasonality – and star James Beard-nominated Chef Hari Cameron as the host highlighting different rice-based concepts.

The *Authenticity* video features three U.S.-grown rice varieties and how each can be applied to create truly authentic dishes for customers. The second video focuses on *Sustainability* and spotlights the U.S. industry’s environmental accomplishments, demonstrating that more U.S.-grown rice on menus supports

local agriculture, decreases food miles, and increases whole food offerings. The third video, “*Be More Seasonal*,” explains why it’s important to incorporate seasonal flavors and menu offerings to stay relevant all year long, and how easy U.S.-grown rice can be flavored and plated according to the season to transform existing menu offerings.

“We know the foodservice industry is facing challenging times,” said Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of marketing and domestic promotion. “As operators look to the future and consider adapting their models, we wanted to launch this video series that is about inspiring chefs and moving U.S.-grown rice to the top of their minds.” 

*Entering his fifth year with USA Rice, Cameron Jacobs is dedicated to telling the hull truth about U.S.-grown rice.*

## NATIONAL RICE MONTH PROGRAMMING – GREAT NEWS ABOUT A GREAT GRAIN

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

ARLINGTON, VA — More than thirty years ago, an act of Congress designated September as National Rice Month (NRM), and ever since, the U.S. rice industry has capitalized on the annual month-long celebration to raise awareness of U.S.-grown rice and recognize the contributions the U.S. rice industry makes to America’s economy.

“National Rice Month gives us the opportunity to shine the light on the folks that work so hard year-round to produce a nutritious and high-quality crop,” said Cameron Jacobs, director of domestic promotion. “Everyone in the U.S. rice industry deserves special recognition and appreciation for fighting through droughts, floods, and fires to ensure another successful harvest.”

Throughout September, USA Rice hosted dedicated social media campaigns, contests and giveaways, special edition newsletters, and recipe debuts as part of the organization’s promotional programming.

“We utilized a combination of outreach strategies to make sure the word got out on National Rice Month, clueing the public in about the annual celebration of our favorite month and grain,” said Jacobs. “It’s exciting to see more consumer engagement year after year during NRM as interest continues to grow about where our food comes from.”

USA Rice partnered with ShopRite retail dietitians across seventeen store locations and three states to host a series of promotions highlighting the nutritional benefits of rice, promoting NRM, and encouraging the use of U.S.-grown rice.

A USA Rice team of Registered Dietitian (RD) influencers created and photographed six new rice recipes distributed via their individual blogs. Chef Hari Cameron created a U.S.-grown rice recipe developed especially for NRM: Riso al Salto, a saffron rice pancake with cherry tomato and gooseberry, made with sprouted brown medium grain rice.

Daily social media posts across all platforms inspired audiences to #thinkrice every day of NRM. The scheduled posts yielded strong results with more than 96,000 impressions, 3,600 consumer engagements, and 356 new followers for the month.

NRM-themed editions of USA Rice consumer and school foodservice newsletters shared ways to celebrate and engage with USA Rice, including recipe inspiration, giveaways, and additional rice resources relevant to the respective consumer and school nutrition audiences.

“National Rice Month is about engaging and celebrating rice with both new and well-known audiences,” said Robbie Trahan, Louisiana rice miller and chair of the USA Rice Domestic Promotion Committee. “We employed a combination of retail and digital outreach tactics to reach consumers at multiple touch points and with different themes, from nutrition to versatility, from meal prep tips and recipes to sustainability.”

All of this comes against the backdrop of USA Rice members and state organizations donating tens of thousands of pounds of rice to area food banks throughout the month. 

*NRM 2021 for Deborah Willenborg was all about the installation of her new “Eat U.S. Rice” license plate holder. Get yours at <https://my.usarice.com/USA-Rice-Shop>.*



# INFLUENCER PROGRAM WRAPS UP THIRD YEAR WITH STRONG RESULTS

BY CAMERON JACOBS

ARLINGTON, VA — It's been another year of impressive returns for the USA Rice partnership with *thefeedfeed*, the food community influencer and recipe production program. Throughout the three-year program, *thefeedfeed* curators kept U.S.-grown rice at the forefront of the digital culinary and food space with a combination of recipe development, influencer messaging, and content creation.

Four food influencers were selected to promote U.S.-grown rice and engage their communities in a way that inspires consumption through the creation of sixteen rice recipes accompanied by photography, and blog and Instagram posts. These new recipes were then amplified across *thefeedfeed*'s social ecosystem to maximize reach and will be featured on their site in perpetuity. Two of the recipes, Mediterranean Rice Bowls and Brown Rice Breakfast Burritos, were also produced into Instagram reel recipe videos and distributed across relevant platforms.

In addition to traditional social media programming, USA Rice and *thefeedfeed* hosted a month-long recipe contest to encourage their online community to share their favorite ways to enjoy U.S.-grown rice in honor of National Rice Month. The contest boosted user-generated content from across the country.

"The combined digital tactics of the 2020-2021 *thefeedfeed* program generated more than 26 million impressions and more than 1 million consumer engagements, educating consumers in the domestic market, and keeping U.S. rice relevant throughout the year in our largest market," said Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of marketing and domestic promotion. "This strong digital presence and engaging content as a result of this partnership not only connects us with key demographics, but also works to enhance and strengthen USA Rice's investment into the digital space."

The 2020-2021 collection of recipes is available on the [thinkrice.com](https://www.thinkrice.com) recipe database.

"Year over year, USA Rice increases its engagement in the social conversation, reaching new and key audiences and exposing them to USA Rice messaging," said Klein. "This year's influencer content yielded an astounding 69 percent engagement rate and really demonstrates how well our messaging is resonating with consumers and how important it is to keep building on this success."

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

.....  
"This year's influencer content yielded an astounding 69 percent engagement rate and really demonstrates how well our messaging is resonating with consumers ..."  
.....

— MICHAEL KLEIN, USA RICE VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND DOMESTIC PROMOTION



Mouth-watering food photography inspires home cooks to create their own versions of Mediterranean Rice Bowls (right) and Brown Rice Breakfast Burritos (left).



## ANHEUSER-BUSCH AND USA RICE PARTNER TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE RICE FARMING

BY MOLLY DRENKARD

JONESBORO, AR — In early September, the Anheuser-Busch Foundation announced a donation of \$100,000 to USA Rice to support the organization's Rice Stewardship Partnership, a public-private venture between USA Rice, Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and supply chain partners that provides growers with technical and financial support to transition to more efficient irrigation, nutrient, and energy practices while creating wildlife habitat on working ricelands.

This marks the fourth year in a row that the country's leading brewer and its charitable foundation have supported this initiative.

"Anheuser-Busch's continued investment in the Rice Stewardship Partnership will provide opportunities to support U.S. rice farmers, as well as allow them to test new technology to improve their operations and meet sustainability goals," said USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward. "Investments like these are what sustain U.S. rice farmers and provide the opportunities to test new agriculture practices and we are very grateful for our strong partnership with Anheuser-Busch."

Announcement of the donation took place at the Anheuser-Busch rice mill in Jonesboro. USA Rice's Josh Hankins was among the speakers at the event and accepted the \$100,000 check on behalf of the Rice Stewardship Partnership. "Where we are standing today, surrounded by the largest rice producing counties in the nation's largest rice producing state, this region is dependent on a sustainably grown rice crop for our natural resources and our economic viability," said Hankins. "We are grateful for our strong partnership with Anheuser-Busch and their consistent commitment to the Rice Stewardship's efforts which will help keep our working ricelands productive, filling plates and mugs around the world."

U.S. Senator John Boozman (R-AR) also was in attendance along with the famous Budweiser Clydesdales. "Arkansas is proud of our role as the nation's leading rice producer," he said. "This investment will support continued research and development of innovative techniques and practices to improve production, conservation, and sustainability measures. Mutually beneficial partnerships like this that promote solutions for farmers, businesses, and outdoor enthusiasts help us meet the changing needs of the industry and evolving challenges to creating a safe and abundant crop."

As the largest end user of rice in the country, Anheuser-Busch sources all of its rice from American farmers, totaling more than \$120 million of rice and nearly 20 million bushels last year alone. Rice helps provide the clean, crisp taste that has been a Budweiser trademark since its creation in 1876, and remains a prized ingredient in Budweiser, Bud Light, and Michelob Ultra, among others.

"American farmers are the backbone of our industry, and we're committed to helping

The \$100,000 donation arrived in Jonesboro via special delivery on a horse-drawn beer wagon powered by a team of the famous Budweiser Clydesdales and their Dalmatian mascot.



them continue to develop their efficient practices and technologies," said Kimberly Rogowski, Anheuser-Busch's director of agronomy. "Rice plays a critical role in the high quality and great taste of some of our most popular beers, and we're proud to stand with USA Rice to help the industry thrive."

Anheuser-Busch owns 13 agricultural facilities across the country, including the rice facility in Jonesboro, that mills more than 2.6 million pounds of rice per day. Over the last decade, the brewer has spent more than \$5.5 billion purchasing rice, corn, barley, and hops from American farmers.

The Rice Stewardship Partnership was formed in 2013 when USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited joined forces to magnify conservation impacts vital to the future of rice production and wetland habitat, and it has grown significantly with new partners and supporters, such as Anheuser-Busch.

Rice Stewardship funders include the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Walmart Foundation, the Mosaic Company Foundation, Nestlé Purina PetCare, Chevron U.S.A., Freeport-McMoRan Foundation, Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation, RiceTec, Entergy, Anheuser-Busch InBev, BASF, American Rice, Inc. – Riviana Foods, Inc., Joe W. and Dorothy Dorsett Brown Foundation, Delta Plastics, Riceland Foods, Corteva Agriscience, Cargill, Wells Fargo, Farmers Rice Milling Company, Horizon Ag, Turner's Creek & Bombay Hook Farms, MacDon Industries, Dow AgroSciences, Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas, and Ducks Unlimited. 

Molly Drenkard is the director of corporate communications at Anheuser-Busch.

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\*MAX-ACE seed will be available for purchase late 2021 or early 2022. \*\*This is not a guarantee of performance nor a warranty of fitness for a particular use. Highcard is a trademark of ADAMA.

## ARKANSAS FAMILY-OWNED RICE MILL IS FIRST U.S. EXPORTER TO SHIP LONG GRAIN RICE TO CHINA

BY PETER BACHMANN

**ATKINS, AR** — In mid-September, Ralston Family Farms announced a 20-metric ton (MT) commercial sale of long grain rice to China that arrived in July, the first U.S. rice shipment grown and sold out of the mid-south. The shipment is just the second commercial U.S. shipment to be sold and unloaded in China since a phytosanitary protocol was signed in 2017. The first was 20 MT of California medium grain, shipped by Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) Rice last fall.

USA Rice spent more than 15 years working in the Chinese market and partnered with the U.S. government to lead talks with counterparts in China for nearly a decade before ultimately reaching an agreement in 2016 to allow U.S. rice shipments. USA Rice then shepherded U.S. rice mills, including Ralston Family Farms, through the complex inspection process, making them one of just 32 U.S. milling facilities approved for export to China.

USA Rice works extensively to promote and market the approved exporters to Chinese state traders and private importers to help build demand for the wide range of U.S. production. Other promotion activities spearheaded by USA Rice include social media campaigns, direct email, personal visits with traders, a trade mission bringing Chinese rice buyers to the U.S., a well-attended webinar about the 2020 U.S. rice crop, and exhibiting at international food shows, such as FHC China and SIAL China.

“The Ralstons are tenth-generation family farmers and everything they grow, they mill and package for retail,” said Kelly Robbins, executive director of the Arkansas Rice Federation. “They have done a lot of great work to get where they are, and we’re excited to see an Arkansas family operation be one of the first to successfully export to China.”

The company indicated that additional shipments are planned for the future.

“The Ralstons are showing once again what a forward-thinking and valuable member of the rice community they are,” said USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward. “They also



Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson (left) congratulates farmer Tim Ralston on his operation’s historic sale.

are one of just a few mills working to fill the increasing demand for U.S.-grown fragrant and specialty rices which is why we were happy to showcase their operation in our social media influencer campaign in 2019. Now we are looking forward to working with them to promote their product in China and continue to expand U.S.-grown fragrant rice production.”

As part of the announcement of the historic sale, the Ralston’s hosted an event at their farm attended by representatives from USA Rice and the Arkansas Rice Federation, along with Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward and Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson. [WE](#)

*Peter Bachmann is USA Rice vice president of international trade policy, working to remove trade barriers and increase exports overseas.*

## EU LIFTS 25 PERCENT RETALIATORY DUTY ON U.S. RICE, LIKELY TO BOOST 2022 EXPORTS

BY PETER BACHMANN

**ROME, ITALY** — On Halloween, Biden Administration trade officials delivered a treat to the rice industry by announcing a deal with European Union (EU) officials to lift the years-long retaliatory tariffs on U.S. products, including milled and broken rice.

U.S. rice was caught in the crossfire when the EU imposed the tariffs in June 2018 following the application of U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum imports under the authority of Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962.

Since May of 2021, U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Department of Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo have been in talks with EU trade negotiators and the European steel and aluminum industries to resolve the disputes. Ultimately, the U.S. agreed to provide a duty-free quota for European steel and aluminum and will keep the Section 232 tariffs in place for any steel or aluminum shipped in excess of the quota, maintaining some level of protection for American made steel and aluminum.

The announcement was timely as some of the EU’s retaliatory tariffs were set to double

on December 1, providing just enough time for the European Commission to formally repeal them.

“We are thrilled with this news,” said Mark Holt, Arkansas rice miller and chair of the USA Rice Subcommittees that oversee Europe, Africa, and Middle East trade policy and promotions. “Since the onset of Brexit and the tense trade relationship over the 232 tariffs started, our milled rice exports to Europe have suffered, but we hope this is a sign that things are turning around. In short crop years like we’re in, prices tend to be higher and that extra 25 percent tariff really makes it difficult to be competitive. Let’s hope a similar announcement on the UK soon follows.”

In addition to the EU retaliation, the United Kingdom, Turkey, China, and India all have some level of retaliatory duties in response to those imposed by the U.S. on steel and aluminum imports. While a resolution for the UK’s retaliatory tariffs against U.S. rice is likely, the Administration has been mum on any talks with Turkey, that also taxes U.S. rice. [WE](#)

# HAVE INDIA'S RICE PRODUCTION AND SUBSIDY PROGRAMS BECOME 'TOO BIG TO FAIL?'

BY PETER BACHMANN

**NEW DELHI, INDIA** — Between 2006 and 2011, India averaged 4.6 million metric tons (MT) in rice exports according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). However, in 2012, something changed and those exports more than doubled from 2011 levels, surpassing 10 million MT and vaulting India into the world's top exporter slot. They've never looked back. The USDA 2022 export forecast for India is 18 million MT following bumper crops in 2020 and 2021, almost quadrupling the initial five-year average.

How did this happen? India lifted a four-year ban on non-basmati rice exports in 2011, leading to the first significant bump. Around the same time, India began investing more government funding in propping up their rice farmers, despite several already existing support programs.

One of those primary programs is an artificially-created market reference price, known as their minimum support price (MSP). In theory, this reference price would be based upon the cost of production, however, since the 2008/09 marketing year, their MSPs for rice have more than doubled in local currency terms, while the cost of production has not. These MSPs set a price floor and the government is obligated to purchase any rice brought to them by farmers at the MSP rate, guaranteeing both a market *and* a minimum level of revenue.

If the government is guaranteed to buy at the price floor, private merchants have to offer a higher price to bring in rice, working in the farmers' favor. Alternatively, those same private merchants can buy the same rice from the government's stocks, often at a rate lower than the original MSP paid by the government. The Indian government is paying farmers for their rice, paying to store the rice, and then selling the rice at a loss to traders.

India claims that rice sold to private industry is not being exported, but there is no way to police what happens when it leaves their warehouses. This system essentially creates an indirect export subsidy for those traders that turn around and undercut the world market, dumping it in places like the United States. U.S. imports of Indian rice were 44,000 MT in 2000 and have grown to a record 267,000 MT in 2020.

India's tens of billions of dollars in subsidies are out of hand, hitting the U.S. rice industry both domestically as market share is lost, and then hitting U.S. exporters abroad where India's prices undercut the competition.

In 2020, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi successfully advocated for new laws that would reduce the government's rice subsidies that have led to over-production. This proposed legislation set off a series of deadly protests by millions of small farmers across the country in 2020 and 2021, and leading to the postponement of implementation.

"Where will they draw the line?" asked Bobby Hanks, rice miller and chair of USA Rice. "On one hand, the government says they need to pull back the support, but just two months ago, the same government approved billions more in fertilizer subsidies to counter rising input costs."

As India becomes more developed, they lose protections under the terms of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Hanks said, "They want to keep their subsidies in place, but they also want to significantly grow their GDP through increased food exports, meanwhile, malnourishment and poverty is prevalent all over India. It doesn't make sense and it appears they want to have their (rice) cake and eat it, too. All the while, they want to be considered 'developed' when it's advantageous and 'developing' when they get exemptions."

Poverty in India is growing almost exponentially during the pandemic, up from an already high rate and impacting hundreds of millions of people. Reducing the extensive input subsidies or the MSP offered to farmers would have a negative impact far beyond the rice fields.

"India has essentially gotten themselves into a 'Too Big to Fail' situation they can't get themselves out of," said Hanks. "The sad part is, it's a failed experiment and those millions of small farmers are not much, if any, better off than they were a decade ago when India ramped up their subsidy programs."

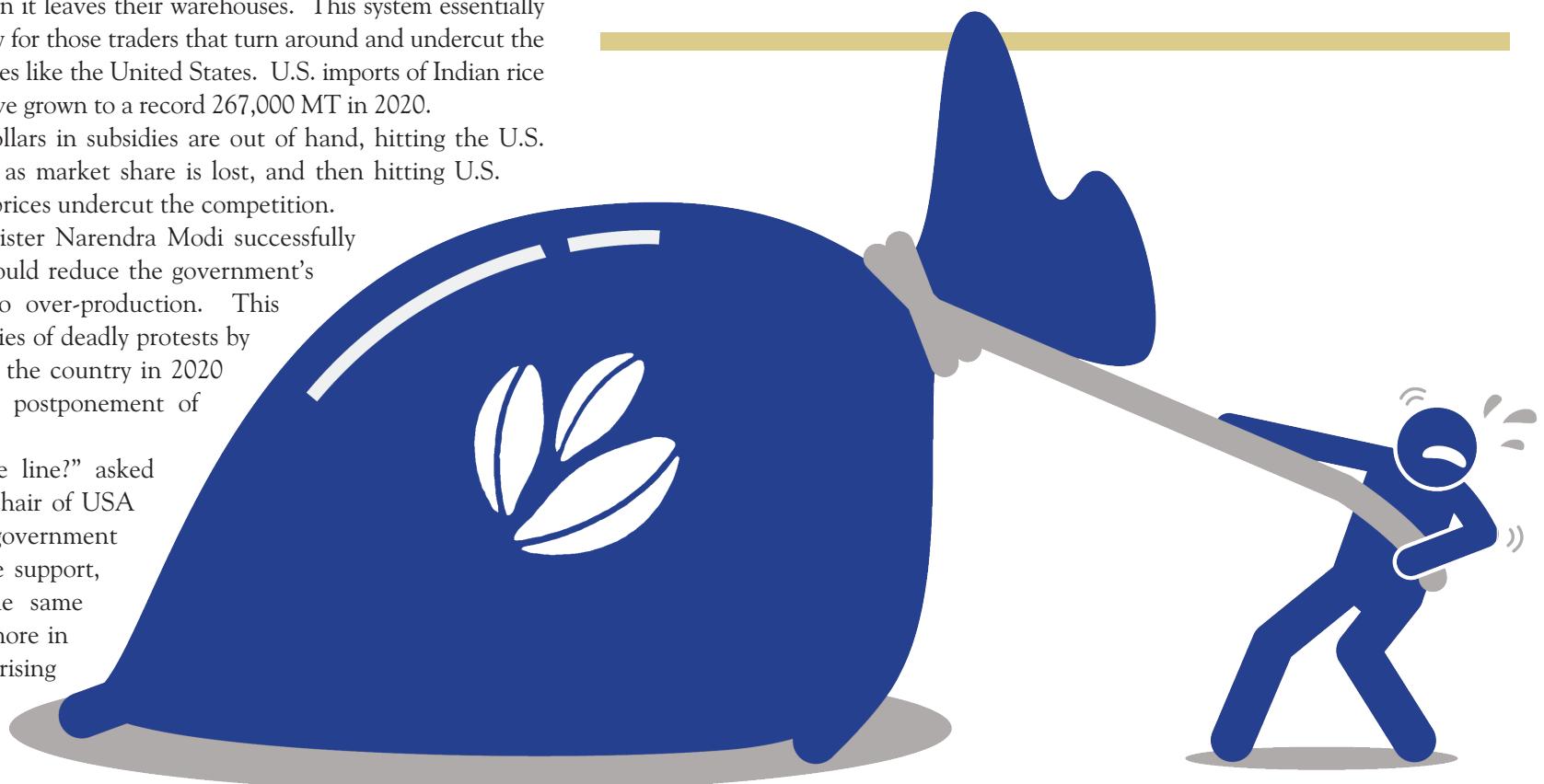
Hanks said USA Rice supports the U.S. Trade Representative pursuing a domestic support case at the WTO against India to help push for compliance with WTO commitments and level the global playing field. 

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## "Where will they draw the line?"

— BOBBY HANKS, RICE MILLER AND CHAIR OF USA RICE

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## DELTA FESTIVAL REIMAGINES RICE CELEBRATION

BY LAURA JANE GIACCAGLIA

MERIGOLD, MS — Delta Rice Promotions, the rice promotion board representing Mississippi, recently held its annual National Rice Month (NRM) celebration but with a twist this year. After downsizing in 2020 due to COVID-19, the historic event returned stronger than ever in a brand-new format transitioning from the traditional Delta Rice Tasting Luncheon to the Delta Rice Festival. The festival format allowed for a larger outdoor celebration of NRM while also increasing the event offerings for the public.

The history of NRM annual celebrations dates back to 1991 when President George H.W. Bush signed the official proclamation designating September as National Rice Month to raise awareness of U.S.-grown rice and recognize the contributions the U.S. rice industry makes to America's economy.

Mississippi's NRM celebration was the brainchild of former Bolivar County Extension Coordinator Dr. Martha Ray Sartor, and the late Bolivar County Agent Joe Love. In 1991, these two Mississippi State University extension agents decided to invite a group of Bolivar County Extension clientele and Farm Bureau members together to discuss expanding the annual "Rice Tasting Luncheon." They named this new venture Delta Rice Promotions, Inc. and created an annual NRM celebration in Mississippi during the third week of September.

The first event took place on September 13, 1991, and was a huge success – nearly 800 people attended! Each year, the scope of the event has grown as has attendance, with a record crowd of 1,500 at the 25th anniversary celebration.

COVID restrictions last year brought many new challenges, but organizers were determined to move forward. Adjustments were made and the 2020 event – a modest rice luncheon set up outside with a true farm-to-table setting – turned out to be the perfect way to say 'thank you' to sponsors.

Continued public health restrictions in 2021 required another outdoor event but instead of scaling back, organizers decided to go big, and created the Delta Rice Festival held on the streets of downtown Merigold. People celebrated the versatility of U.S.-grown rice and showed appreciation for those who work in the domestic rice industry with a variety of activities: tasting rice dishes from local restaurants, seeing exhibits, shopping with vendors, enjoying live music, and witnessing the coronation of the Delta Rice Queen, Dia Chawla from Greenwood, and the runner-up, Dobbs Roberts from Tunica.

"We applaud Delta Rice Promotions and their innovative response to a challenging situation," said USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward. "The new festival format was a great opportunity to draw in more attendees, celebrate National Rice Month, and promote homegrown rice, one of Mississippi's top agriculture exports. USA Rice was proud to be a sponsor." 

Laura Jane Giaccaglia is the Bolivar County extension coordinator & event organizer.

**"We applaud Delta Rice Promotions and their innovative response to a challenging situation ... USA Rice was proud to be a sponsor."**

— BETSY WARD, USA RICE PRESIDENT & CEO



Hands-on fun activities give kids a real "feel" for rice.

# NATIONAL RICE MONTH CELEBRATIONS KEEP LOUISIANA COOKING

BY KANE WEBB

**CROWLEY & LAKE CHARLES, LA** — National Rice Month (NRM) festivities here had something for everyone as Kids Day kicked off with Mayor Tim Monceaux signing a proclamation declaring September as National Rice Month in Crowley, the Rice Capital of the World. Joining Mayor Monceaux was the 83rd International Rice Festival Queen Jimi Joubert who reminded everyone that “September is National Rice Month, but every day is Rice Day in Crowley!”

Hundreds of children and their parents made their way through City Hall, where USA Rice teamed up with Acadia Parish Tourism to remind everyone to “Thank a Rice Farmer.” Part of the NRM celebration included National Rice Krispies Treat Day! All visitors received their favorite treat along with a chance to watch the comic *Rice Farming* TV episode, “How Rice Krispie Treats Are Made,” created by California rice grower Matthew Sligar.

“Matthew’s video was a hit, and an easy, relatable way for us to share the importance of the local and national rice industries, and the role that rice farmers play in providing the key ingredient to these fun-filled snacks,” said Nancy Loewer with the Acadia Parish Tourism Bureau.

Later in the day, the International Rice Festival held its annual Rice and Gravy Cooking Contest, where teams from the Crowley area prepared rice recipes for judging and samples for all attendees. Falcon Rice Mill and its Cajun Country Rice brand sponsored the event, and Supreme Rice Mill had a team that participated in the contest.

“Cooking events like this are a great way to promote rice,” said Robbie Trahan, an owner of Falcon Rice who also serves as chair of the USA Rice Domestic Promotion Committee. “There are a lot of titles you can earn as a cook, but in south Louisiana, being named the Best Rice and Gravy Cook is a true honor.”

Students in the Port of Lake Charles area geared up for a similar NRM cooking competition sponsored by the Calcasieu-Cameron Rice Growers Association. The event was cancelled last year due to Hurricanes Laura and Delta.

“It felt good to get back to tradition with our Rice Cook-Off,” said Cal-Cam Rice Growers President Adam Habetz. “With everything we have been through over the last

year, getting back to something familiar goes a long way, and celebrating National Rice Month with the Port of Lake Charles reminds everyone that our industry is strong and here to stay.”

One of the contest judges was Mary Jemison, who retired from USA Rice a few years ago, but jumped at the chance to sample the variety of dishes prepared by the young chefs. Farmers Rice Mill of Lake Charles provided rice cookers for each student who entered the contest.

Throughout September, and leading up to the International Rice Festival in Crowley on October 15-18, many more events honoring rice farmers and the rice industry were planned so the celebrating never stopped! [WG](#)

*Kane Webb is the USA Rice director of field services. He and his wife, Ginger, are proud parents of the 84th International Rice Festival’s Miss Crowley, their youngest daughter, Molly Jo.*

**“It felt good to get back to tradition with our Rice Cook-Off.”**

— CAL-CAM RICE GROWERS PRESIDENT ADAM HABETZ



Top: Sweet treats bring big smiles.  
Bottom left: A winning line-up.  
Bottom right: Cook-Off contestants know a rice cooker is better than a trophy any day.



## THE 84TH INTERNATIONAL RICE FESTIVAL

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

**CROWLEY, LA** — We know two things in this world – that rice is a great grain and that the people of Louisiana know how to throw a party. Both points were proven during festivities here surrounding the 84th International Rice Festival (IRF) – the largest and oldest (and free) agricultural festival in the state.

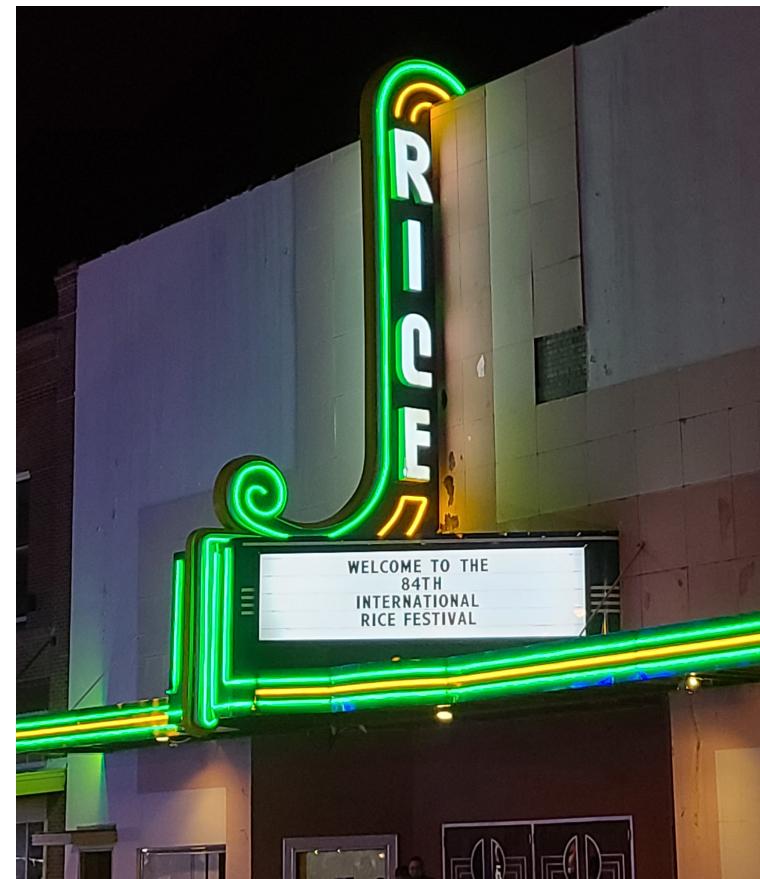
After skipping a year because of the pandemic – the only other time IRF missed a year was during World War II – people were ready to celebrate rice! And celebrate they did, converting downtown Crowley into festival central.

A rice and gravy cook-off, two formal balls, a rice grading contest, blood drive, and more were the lead in to three days of partying that included more than 20 musical acts on two enormous stages, two parades, a rice eating contest, a rice cooking contest, a frog derby, an accordion and fiddle contest, a classic car show, carnival rides, and the crowning of the 84th International Rice Festival Queen.

“It was a non-stop celebration of this industry that is so important to the region, the state, and the country,” said USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward who attended the event for the first time this year. “I’ve always heard what a great event this is, but it really needs to be seen to be believed – bravo to the festival organizers!”

USA Rice staff also lent a hand throughout the event, with Asih Grigsby, director of international promotion, serving as one of three judges for the International Rice Festival Queen competition, and yours truly doing what he does best – eat rice – as a judge in the Creole Cookery Contest where I helped crown the Chef de Riz.

The annual parade had it all: neon, glitter, queens, crowns, floats, and Farmer of the Year, Phillip Lamartiniere (right), who grows the crop that makes it all possible.



Joining Grigsby on the panel judging the Festival Queen competition were Arkansas Rice Federation Executive Director Kelly Robbins and Victoria Sagrera Bourque.

The competition was extremely competitive, but in the end, there can be only one IRF Queen, and Miss Caroline Hardy of Lacassine was crowned on the Supreme Rice Soundstage on Saturday.

“All of these young ladies were very impressive,” said Robbins. “While I know Queen Caroline will do a wonderful job as an ambassador for our industry, we couldn’t have made a poor choice – they were all wonderful, smart, poised, and very knowledgeable about rice!”

The title of Chef de Riz went to a young man who is quite comfortable with rice. Joshua Dietz was crowned champion, beating out dozens of other aspiring chefs, including his mother, who was Chef de Riz in 2019!

Junior Chef de Riz and a tri-color ribbon went to Katherine Richard, the 10-year old daughter of rice farmers Christian and Julie Richard of Kaplan, representing St. Michael’s School.

To hear more about the festival, listen to Episode 32 of *The Rice Stuff* podcast, and mark your calendars now for the 85th International Rice Festival, scheduled for October 20-23, 2022. [WE](#)

*Michael Klein’s collection of IRF pins is growing and he successfully snuck a long sleeve festival t-shirt past his wife.*

“It was a non-stop celebration of this industry that is so important to the region, the state, and the country – bravo to the festival organizers!”

— BETSY WARD  
USA RICE PRESIDENT & CEO



Left: The 84th International Rice Queen, Caroline Hardy, is congratulated by the judges who chose her for the honor. Above: Jimi Joubert, the 83rd International Rice Queen, let's the town of Crowley's motto go to her head.

## THE RICE STUFF PODCAST GOES BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE 84TH INTERNATIONAL RICE FESTIVAL

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

ARLINGTON, VA — Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of communications and domestic promotion and podcast co-host, was in attendance at this year's International Rice Festival, taking in all the festival had to offer, but also serving as a judge for the Creole Cookery Contest.

“It was a tough job sampling all those rice dishes before 11 am, but I was up to the task. They came to the right person!”

Klein shares his experience on *The Rice Stuff* podcast, Episode 32. While in Crowley he also sat down with the 2021 Rice Farmer of the Year, Phillip Lamartiniere; two of the three judges of the International Rice Festival Queen contest; and had the pleasure of interviewing three IRF Queens.

The 81st International Rice Festival Queen, Kathryn Shea Duncan; the 83rd International Rice Festival Queen, Jimi Madison Joubert; and the newly-crowned 84th International Rice Festival Queen, Caroline Elizabeth Hardy share their experiences as ambassadors for the U.S. rice industry.

“I enjoyed talking to two sides of the very prestigious competition,” Klein said. “We had judges talking about their experience and expectations, and then we had winners sharing what it all means to them and how they prepare. The pressure is unbelievable, but these young ladies handle it, are impressive, and do a great job promoting rice, the festival, and Louisiana.”

New episodes of *The Rice Stuff* are published on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month and can be found on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, and Stitcher. [WR](#)

Joshua Dietz (left) takes home the title of 2021 Chef de Riz and a new ThinkRice chef's jacket.



“It was a tough job sampling all those rice dishes before 11 am, but I was up to the task. They came to the right person!”

## STUDENTS GET SMART ABOUT U.S. RICE

BY KANE WEBB

CROWLEY, LA — Every year during the third week of October, the town of Crowley, Louisiana, stops everything they're doing to celebrate all things R-I-C-E at the International Rice Festival. But a group of local elementary students got a jump on the festivities this year with a rice production tutorial that made a special visit to their school.

The second-grade class at St. Michael's Catholic School devoted a week to studying the grain that has been the backbone of this area's economy for more than a hundred years, learning about research being done at the Louisiana State University (LSU) Rice Research Station, meeting farmers who grow the crop, and hearing about the importance of local rice mills, and the need for support of affiliated industries such as equipment dealers. These second graders are studying it all.

The first day of Rice 101 started off with a presentation by Dr. Adam Famoso of the LSU Rice Research Station about rice breeding and how and why this work is so important. Dr. Famoso brought real rice plants so the students could see them firsthand and learn about different rice varieties and their different characteristics.

Local producers Robbie Broussard and Christian Richard helped students plant their own rice seeds while learning step-by-step the processes that go into an annual crop.

Sunshine Quality Solutions, a farm equipment supplier in southern Louisiana, parked a combine and grain cart in front of the school and students lined up to climb aboard. As you might guess, it was a big hit! For many, it was their first time sitting inside a tractor cab.

"This one-on-one instruction allows those of us in the local rice industry to tell our story to these students, our future consumers," said Julie Richard, who farms with her husband Christian near Kaplan. "We also connect with the future of our industry. Who

knows, there may be a future rice breeder, an engineer who designs tractors for John Deere, or the next group of producers right here at this school. This is another crop for us as we, representing the U.S. rice industry, have planted seeds in the minds of seven-year-olds. Let's hope they grow!" 

**"This is another crop for us as we, representing the U.S. rice industry, have planted seeds in the minds of seven-year-olds. Let's hope they grow!"**

— JULIE RICHARD, RICE FARMER

Playing in the dirt takes on new meaning for elementary school students when the end product is the economic backbone of their community.



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# NATURAL DISASTERS EXACERBATE CRISIS IN HAITI

BY ASIHA GRIGSBY

**PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI** — On August 14, 2021, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake rocked the small island nation of Haiti and nearby countries, with the death toll at more than 1,200 people and thousands of homes and businesses leveled. The epicenter was located in the southwestern part of Haiti, less than 80 miles from the capital city, Port-au-Prince. Hurricane Grace descended upon the island two days later and was reduced to a tropical storm as it made landfall. It dumped up to 10 inches of water in some areas, causing major flooding and landslides; the most significant landslide blocked the main national interstate between Jeremie and Les Cayes, leaving emergency relief efforts at an impasse for several days. These natural disasters followed closely on the heels of unprecedented gang violence and the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse on July 7, 2021.

Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry declared a month-long national state of emergency through September and called on the international community for much needed humanitarian assistance. At least 19,000 Haitians are without adequate shelter and an estimated 1.4 million face immediate food insecurity.

"Our hearts go out to the Haitians who are struggling not only with physically rebuilding their country but still emotionally recovering from the assassination of President Moïse, escalating gang violence, the COVID-19 pandemic, and general economic hardship," said Tim Walker, chair of the USA Rice Western Hemisphere Promotions Subcommittee. "Haitians are strong, however, and will get through this unprecedented confluence of adversities."

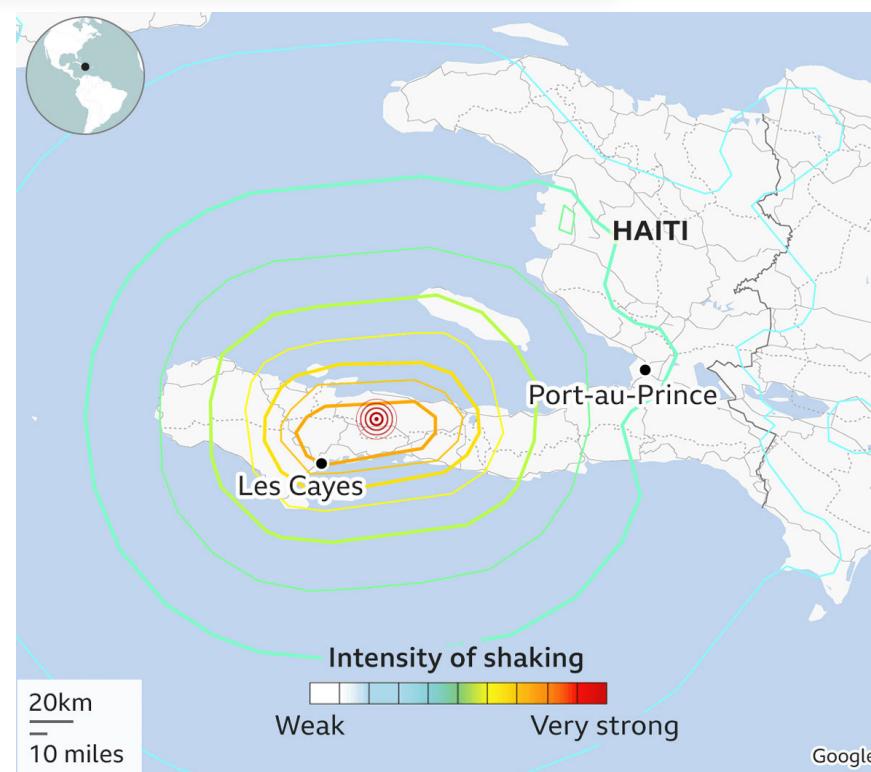
Episode 26 of *The Rice Stuff* podcast focused on Haiti with USA Rice's local consultant Christine Coupet Jacques joining the show. The episode can be found in your podcast app or at [www.thericestuffpodcast.com](http://www.thericestuffpodcast.com).

Haitians consume rice daily and access to this shelf stable good is essential in times of crisis. The U.S. supplies more than 90 percent of Haiti's rice imports and favorable logistics mean that exporters can quickly supply this market. In the first eight months of 2021, the U.S. exported nearly 260,000 tons of rice to Haiti, valued at \$138 million and additional shipments will be needed as Haiti rebuilds. 

*Asiha Grigsby does celebrity voice over work on the side and is currently auditioning to become the third co-host of the USA Rice podcast, The Rice Stuff.*



Left: Some shipments of U.S. rice have been off-loaded but landslides and flooding makes transportation challenging. Bottom: The ripple effect from the epicenter.



Earthquake hits Haiti / Aug 14, 2021

Source: USGS

"Our hearts go out to the Haitians who are struggling not only with physically rebuilding their country but still emotionally recovering from the assassination of President Moïse, escalating gang violence, the COVID-19 pandemic, and general economic hardship."

— TIM WALKER, CHAIR OF THE USA RICE  
WESTERN HEMISPHERE PROMOTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

# USA RICE MARKETING CAMPAIGNS IN LATIN AMERICA

BY SARAH MORAN

ARLINGTON, VA — With nearly half of U.S. rice exports ending up on the plates of consumers in Latin America, USA Rice has focused on building a vibrant, dynamic marketing force there over the past three decades. This year, USA Rice has pulled out all the stops with a marketing campaign that encourages consumers from Mexico to Colombia to think about and buy U.S. rice.

In Mexico, the campaign centers around the newly registered Arroz Americano Auténtico (AAA) logo. To date, four importers of U.S. rice have signed licensing agreements with USA Rice to place the AAA logo on their bags of U.S. rice. Even though origin labeling is a requirement in Mexico, it's often placed on the back of rice bags but this logo is placed on the front of the bag, garnering attention – and sales! The nationwide AAA logo campaign includes signage on buses and billboards, radio ads, TV advertisements and a social media campaign on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube that has reached 90 million people to date.

USA Rice has hired Celebrity Chef Aquiles Chavez, a great ambassador of Mexican cuisine, to promote U.S. rice in 50 videos and Facebook Live events throughout the year. Another partnership with well-known Chef Giuseppe di Pasquale specifically focuses on educating the next generation of chefs in the foodservice industry. During a webinar series of fifteen classes, Chef Pasquale and well-respected nutritionists discussed the attributes of U.S. rice and encouraged its use by foodservice establishments to upgrade menus and maximize profits.

In Central America, the AAA logo is undergoing the registration process as promotions there are focused on getting consumers in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua to Think Rice (Piensa en Arroz in Spanish). Per capita rice consumption of the northern tier countries is nearly 30 pounds per year, which is relatively low compared with their neighbors in Nicaragua and Costa Rica who annually consume 140 pounds and 110 pounds, respectively. Utilizing an army of social media influencers, USA Rice's Piensa en Arroz social media campaign has reached more than 7.2 million people over the past year showcasing new ways of cooking U.S. rice and highlighting the health benefits of rice.

Promoting U.S. rice at the point of sale – in supermarkets and grocery stores – is a hallmark activity of USA Rice, and throughout 2021, USA Rice conducted 650



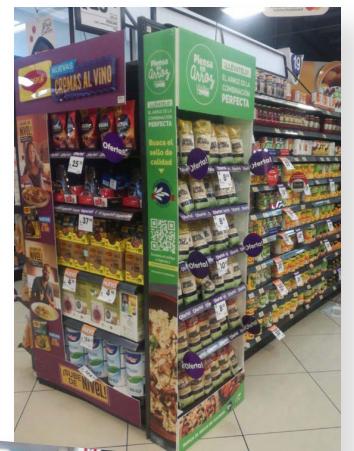
**“It is an honor for us to contribute to the Arroz Americano Auténtico campaign, leading Mexican families to consume quality competitive products with the support of USA Rice.”**

— JUAN CARLOS GUTIERREZ, CEO OF SURTIDORA EL BAJIO

in-store activities in Central America and Colombia. Marketing efforts include Piensa en Arroz signage, employing in-person staff to engage with consumers and encourage them to reach for U.S. rice, and QR codes that send consumers to the regional USA Rice website, [piensaenarrozrecetas.com](https://piensaenarrozrecetas.com), where they can find recipes and information about the U.S. rice industry.

These marketing campaigns will continue in 2022, and are financed through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service with funds earmarked for the promotion of U.S. agricultural exports. 

*Sarah Moran, USA Rice vice president for international, continues to be amazed that people, known as influencers, have full-time jobs posting pictures, quotes, and memes on social media.*



Colorful graphics and enthusiastic promoters make marketing efforts come alive!

# INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION

## USA RICE HITS THE ROAD IN MEXICO

BY SARAH MORAN

**MEXICO** — Asiha Grigsby, USA Rice director of international promotion for the Western Hemisphere, hit the road in Mexico in September to visit import and promotional partners. Her trip began in Guadalajara at the Americas Agricultural Cooperator's Conference and continued in cities throughout the region.

While in Guadalajara, Grigsby approved TV and online ads designed to raise awareness for U.S. rice brands in conjunction with the roll out of the Arroz Americano Auténtico (Authentic American Rice) logo campaign. The campaign continues through December and will extend into 2022 with additional support from trade partners. The next stop was Ecatepec, about twelve miles north of Mexico City, at the headquarters of La Merced, a distributor of various products containing U.S.-origin rice, where Grigsby persuaded company executives to join USA Rice's Arroz Americano Auténtico campaign.

Grigsby also met with USA Rice Chef Ambassadors Guiseppe di Pasquale in Mexico City and Aquiles Chavez in Pachuca. Both chefs shared their latest creations inspired by U.S.-origin rice: Chef Pasquale's black garlic rice with roasted cherry tomatoes is on the menu at his restaurant, Gusto di Italia, and Chef Aquiles featured his rice croquettes on

Chef Aquiles (left) and Asiha Grigsby spice up the rice on Facebook Live.



a Facebook Live video, with a special guest appearance by Grigsby as the in-house rice expert and sous chef at his restaurant, Sotero.

“Chef Aquiles knows his stuff when it comes to cooking with U.S. rice,” Grigsby said. “He has an unlimited reserve of energy and I thoroughly enjoyed working beside him in the studio kitchen.”

Although Zoom and other virtual platforms provided a secondary method of communication over the last year, nothing can replace the impact of face-to-face contact.

“Making personal connections with trade partners has been challenging since the onset of COVID-19 restrictions and it's been great being welcomed back by our many trade contacts in our largest export market,” Grigsby added.

Mexico imports nearly a quarter of all U.S. rice exports, amounting to nearly 580,000 MT of U.S. rice in the first eight months of this year, valued at \$225million. [WG](#)



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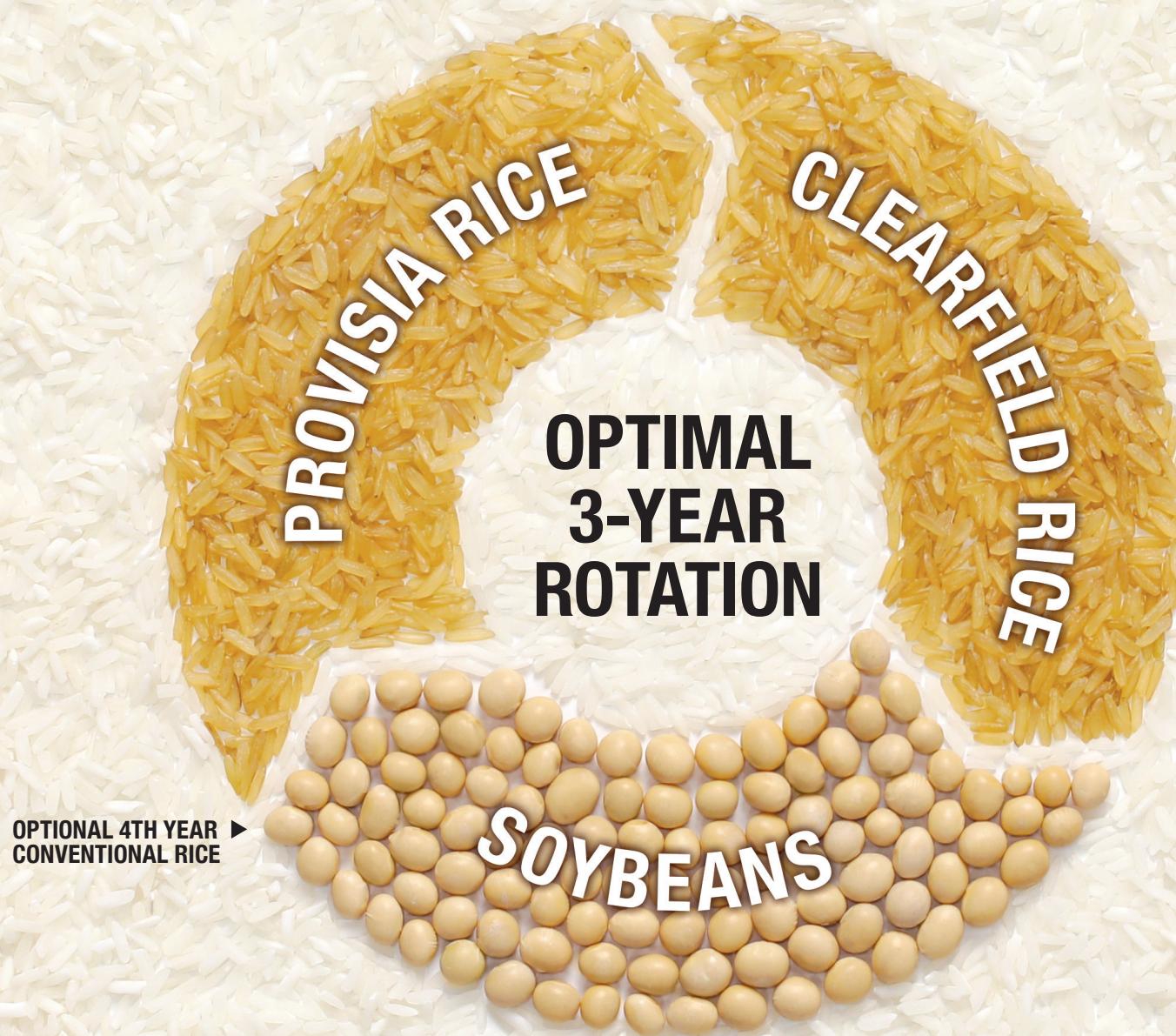
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# WAITING, AND WAITING, AND WAITING FOR SHIPS TO COME IN

BY JAMISON CRUCE

ARLINGTON, VA — Since early 2020, U.S. exporters of all types have faced challenges in timely, efficient delivery of goods to markets overseas, particularly southeast Asia, due to container shortages and port congestion caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and staff shortages. U.S. agricultural exports have been particularly impacted because of the inherent necessity of the products – food, animal feed, or something else perishable – that is relied upon in a timely manner by importers.

These problems are further complicated by Chinese shippers paying generous premiums for shipping containers to be returned to China without being reloaded with U.S. goods. Additionally, COVID-19 restrictions and protocols have severely limited the number of port crews to load and unload shipments, hampering what is normally an efficient process, and causing fees and penalties to rack up for U.S. exporters.

USA Rice has been engaging with the Federal government through multiple avenues, including outreach to Capitol Hill and the Biden Administration, and as a result, the Biden Administration issued Executive Order 14017 on America's Supply Chains in June 2020, aimed at addressing supply chain challenges to the economic recovery, especially in the food and agriculture sectors.

USA Rice also met with the Federal Maritime Commission (FMC), and at the urging of the agriculture industry, the FMC launched a new audit program to assess carrier compliance with rules on detention and demurrage.

“As this crisis persists, cascading bottlenecks exacerbate the situation,” said Chris Crutchfield, president and CEO of American Commodity Company, a handler and marketer of U.S. rice based in Williams, California. “It’s no longer just container shortages, but shortages of chassis, truck drivers, adequate and reliable port labor, compounded by overall port congestion from ships waiting to berth and containers, both empty and filled, crowding the port yards.”

In August, Crutchfield was appointed to a three-year term on the FMC National Shipper Advisory Committee (NSAC) representing the U.S. rice industry. The NSAC is a new advisory group created earlier this year that provides information, insight, and expertise pertaining to conditions in the ocean freight delivery system to the Commission,

specifically focusing on policies relating to the competitiveness, reliability, integrity, and fairness of the international ocean freight delivery system. The NSAC reports to the FMC and is comprised of 12 cargo exporters and 12 cargo importers.

Help *could* be on the way.

The issue has caught the attention of the U.S. Congress where several hearings have been held this year. Reps. John Garamendi (D-CA) and Dusty Johnson (R-SD) have introduced the Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2021, a bill focused on prohibiting shipping companies “from unreasonably declining export cargo bookings if the cargo can be loaded in a safe and timely manner.” USA Rice and more than 220 other agriculture organizations have endorsed the legislation, providing momentum for the implementation of solutions.

In October, President Biden held a Global Supply Chain Summit as part of the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), and announced new measures to try and alleviate strains on global trade including deals with domestic ports, railroads, trucking companies, and labor unions, to expand their hours of operation. At the summit were leaders from Australia, Canada, Mexico, India, Japan, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Korea, Indonesia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. China was notably not in attendance.

In November, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was signed into law and, in addition to the traditional surface transportation reauthorization, this bipartisan package includes nearly \$17 billion for ports and waterways, and \$8 billion to address critical water supply needs. The bill also includes an apprenticeship pilot program to look at solutions for the nationwide truck driver shortage.

“Unfortunately, there’s no clear timeline for when this issue gets better,” said Crutchfield. “It’s very complicated, with no one solution. America’s infrastructure has given us a competitive advantage as exporters for many years, and if we want to regain that efficiency, we need to get creative, get on the same page, and get this funding invested back into our roads, ports, and waterways as quickly as possible.” 

*Jamison Cruce is the USA Rice director of government affairs.*



“Unfortunately, there’s no clear timeline for when this issue gets better ...  
It’s very complicated, with no one solution.”

— CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF AMERICAN COMMODITY COMPANY



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## REGULATORY ROUND-UP

BY BEN MOSELY



ARLINGTON, VA — In a year that could easily be characterized as unpredictable, one theme has emerged as a constant. There has been a continuous stream of regulatory actions and proposals from the Biden Administration as well as a slew of so-called activists. USA Rice has been actively defending the industry on several of these regulatory fronts and we will surely be facing more in the coming year.

### FOOD SAFETY

Starting the year off on the wrong foot would be an understatement in the food safety arena after an activist-driven and partisan Congressional report was released on February 4 entitled “Baby Foods Are Tainted with Dangerous Levels of Arsenic, Lead, Cadmium, and Mercury.”

This sensationalized report which caught many off guard, including the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA), was riddled with inaccuracies and half-truths. Yet the ensuing press reports and social media activity were soon followed by absurd legislative proposals and then an official kickoff of FDA’s “Closer to Zero Action Plan” to address the issue of heavy metals commonly found in infant foods.

Rice is the only ingredient in baby food for which there already exists an FDA action level on contaminants, specifically arsenic, despite rice being just one of many foods we feed our nation’s children. The U.S. rice industry takes arsenic in rice issues seriously. We’ve spent millions of dollars researching mitigation strategies and have shared the findings of our research with the FDA.

USA Rice supports FDA’s “Closer to Zero” initiative, and in particular, the agency’s reliance on scientifically rigorous data collection and analysis to drive regulatory decisions. We are urging the agency to resist calls to base regulatory decisions on faulty reporting, and emotion, and instead to use sound science to dictate public health

policies. However, we witnessed the first ever arsenic-related recalls of baby food this year as well as one major manufacturer opting to eliminate rice products altogether. In December, USA Rice will be submitting public comments to the FDA on the “Closer to Zero Action Plan.”

### WOTUS

In June 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Army announced they are seeking to establish a new definition of “Waters of the United States.” The Department of Justice on behalf of the two agencies recently filed a motion requesting remand of the Navigable Waters Protection Rule (NWPR) in a Massachusetts District Court. Other remand motions were filed, ultimately leading to a District Court vacatur ruling resulting in a nationwide decision by the agencies to vacate the NWPR. The pre-2015 rules are currently in place. The agencies intend to organize 10 virtual meetings with diverse stakeholders to provide regional perspectives on the opportunities and challenges with the definition of WOTUS.

### PESTICIDES

USA Rice continues to monitor domestic and international regulatory actions pertaining to pesticides used by U.S. rice growers and millers, and is working closely with other grower groups and pesticide registrants in support of pesticide registration and tolerance decisions in the United States, as well as with our trading partners on the issue of Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs). [WGR](#)

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

## LISTEN UP!

Two rice-related podcasts cover the U.S. industry from top to bottom, north to south, east to west, and all points in between!



**The Rice Stuff**  
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