

WHOLE GRAIN



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Welcome to Austin!

BY KIRK SATTERFIELD

BENOIT, MS — As is our custom, we're distributing this issue of the *Whole Grain* in conjunction with the USA Rice Outlook Conference — the largest rice-specific event in North America — and I have been looking forward to the event since the end of last year's conference in New Orleans.

This year we're in Austin, Texas, where great food and music provide an excellent backdrop for an intense few days of learning, networking, and celebrating excellence.

From input cost analysis and projections to the challenges of family businesses, and from new technology and government programs to meeting the new Rice Development Leadership Class, we're making time spent here worth it!

I want to thank the hundreds of rice industry professionals who have made the trip to Austin, and I want to say to those

who didn't — please consider joining us next year. This conference is the culmination of months of work to develop programming and find presenters who will make a difference in everyone's bottom line.

Now more than ever the U.S. rice industry is facing outsized challenges and we need to understand them as best we can and arm ourselves with information and strategies to ensure our success.

That is the driving principle behind the USA Rice Outlook Conference. Every year they load up our toolboxes, and I know I head home with a clarity of purpose and an energy that I draw on all year long. Go ahead and mark your calendar for next year — I promise you won't regret it. [We](#)



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USA Rice is the global advocate for all segments of the U.S. rice industry with a mission to promote and protect the interests of producers, millers, merchants, and allied businesses.

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TURNING THE PAGE

BY BETSY WARD

ARLINGTON, VA — This end of year issue of the *Whole Grain* is always one of my favorites. Partly because it means we are gathering in-person at the USA Rice Outlook Conference, partly because it is loaded with advertisements from companies happy to support the rice industry, but also because it provides an opportunity to look back at some of the important accomplishments from the year and update them for you.

Be sure to look at the fantastic promotion program results we have here: National Rice Month recap on page 8, our new rice beer made with AROMA17 on page 6, an update on Puerto Rico on page 23, and celebrating two decades of promotion in the UK on page 16.

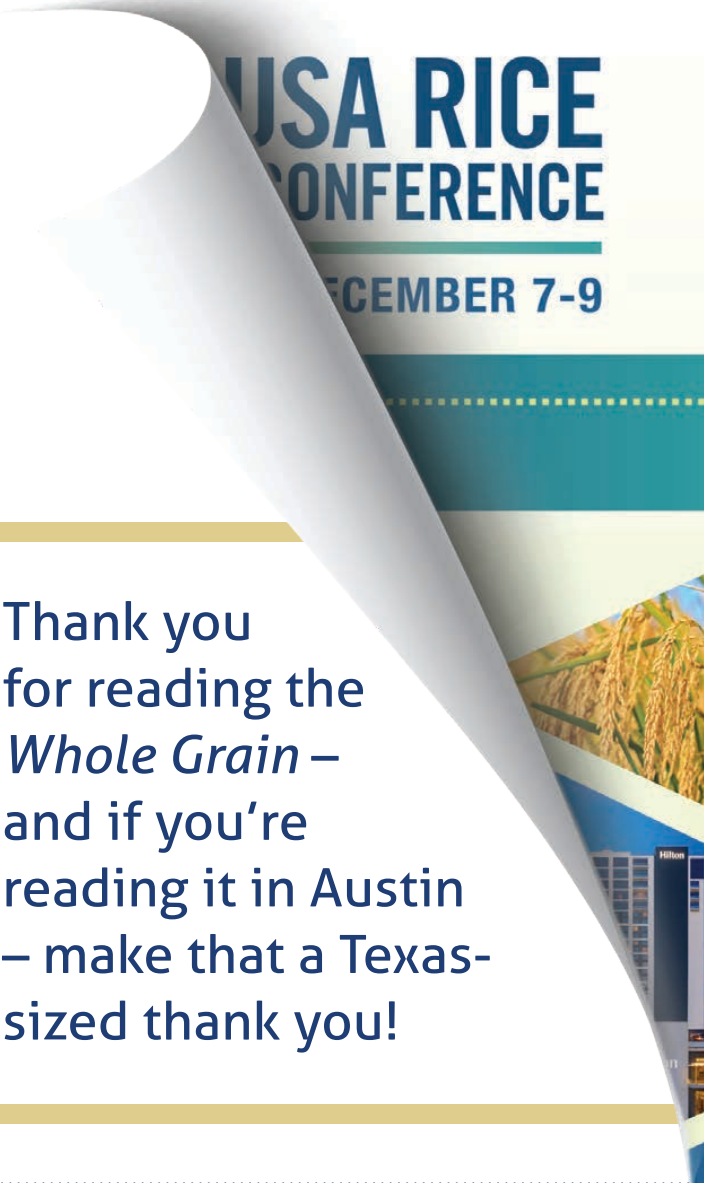
There's no shortage of policy news here too, including the groundbreaking new USDA Climate-Smart Commodity Partnership program. Rice received multiple grants totaling more than \$150 million and you can read about them on page 14, and the deepening crisis in Haiti that we follow and write about on page 22.

We also report on some of the many rice state events that we attended from fields days in California to harvest festivals in the south (pages 18-20), and more.

We've packed a lot into this issue – just like we've packed a lot into the USA Rice Outlook Conference this year. Thank you for reading the *Whole Grain* – and if you're reading it in Austin – make that a Texas-sized thank you! Also, a big tip of the hat to the many advertisers who support us and our efforts to improve and enhance the U.S. rice industry. We make a good team, so please, consider directing your business to them.

Have a wonderful and safe holiday season, and we'll see you in 2023! 🍷

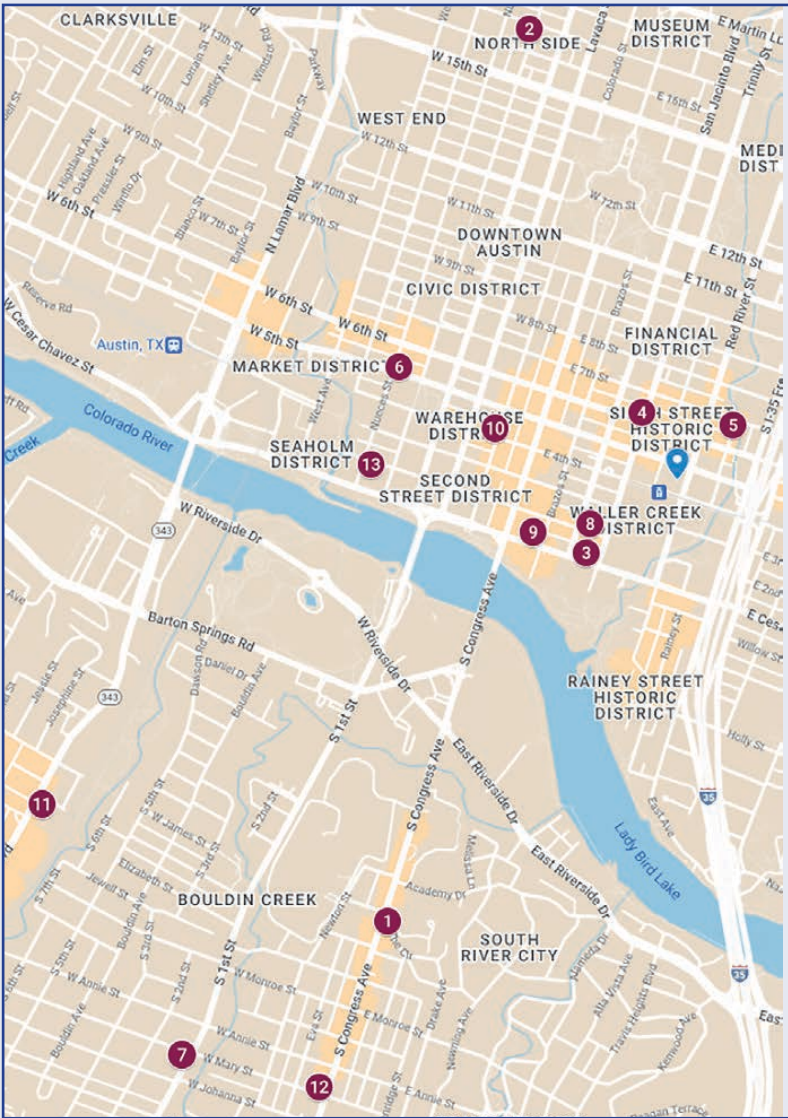
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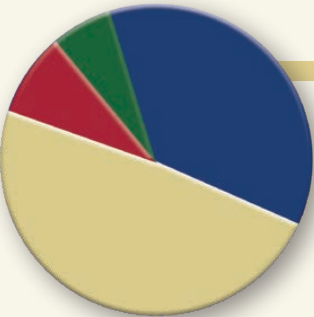
USA RICE – GROWING THE FUTURE OF THE U.S. RICE INDUSTRY

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.

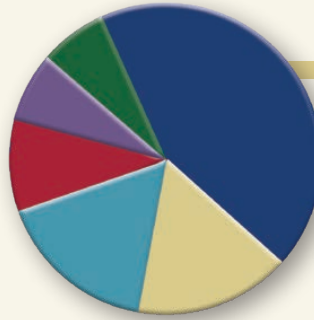
Our annual financial audit is conducted by an external CPA firm hired by the USA Rice Audit Committee – also comprised of representatives from all industry segments – and their report stated that USA Rice's financial records and reports were prepared according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, 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 2021/2022 REVENUE - \$13,425,485

State checkoff forwarded by USA Rice Council	\$4,752,393	35%
USDA international promotion funds	\$6,487,523	48%
Mill, merchant, farmer, and other rice industry dues	\$1,162,685	9%
Other income	\$1,022,884	8%



FY 2021/2022 EXPENSES - \$13,425,485

International Promotion (USDA Funded)	\$6,400,784	48%
Rice State Relations, Membership & Meetings	\$2,294,769	17%
Domestic Initiatives & Promotion	\$1,985,368	15%
International Promotion (Rice Industry Funded)	\$1,131,261	8%
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USA RICE & HELLBENDER BREWING CO.
DEBUT *LONG GRAIN LAGER*

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

WASHINGTON, DC — USA Rice recently debuted its latest craft beer collaboration to the Washington, DC, market with a crisp rice-based lager, made in partnership with local brewery Hellbender Brewing Company. *Long Grain Lager*, a five percent ABV beer brewed with Arkansas-grown jasmine rice, celebrates the U.S. rice industry, and pays homage to industry leader and Arkansas rice farmer, Jennifer James, and her commitment to sustainability by using AR17 jasmine rice grown on her family farm.

The can has an eye-catching label depicting rice harvest and featuring the Grown in the USA logo as well as a QR code that links to Jennifer’s Meet the Farmer profile on thinkrice.com for consumers looking to learn more about her and find more general information on the domestic rice industry.

“First off, big kudos to Hellbender Brewing Co. for their continued commitment to support America’s farmers and use ingredients that are sourced as local as possible,” said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice senior director of domestic promotion. “We are thrilled to partner with them once again to create a new rice beer that elevates the traditional profile of a lager-style beer by adding the aromatic qualities of jasmine rice for a refreshing and easy drinking final product.”

The beer, available both in cans and on tap, was released to the public with much fanfare at a release party last month that featured rice-based trivia, a rice-focused food truck, and opportunities to win prizes from USA Rice. Cans of *Long Grain Lager* sold out



quickly, and generated excitement in the local craft beer community with media coverage and social media posts – all of which mentioned U.S.-grown rice.

“A lot of the credit for this successful collaboration goes to Jennifer and her willingness to help us reach outside of the typical consumer audience to boost awareness of U.S. rice,” said Jacobs. “From the positive media coverage to the personal interactions with USA Rice staff at the can release party to those who just stumble across the beer and are exposed to industry images, logos, and information, this project has helped move the needle when it comes to explaining the U.S.-grown difference.”

Readers may remember USA Rice’s first rice beer brewed with Hellbender in the spring of 2020, *Serves You Rice*, a saison-style beer made with U.S.-grown purple rice. [Read more](#)

Michael Klein is more of a bourbon drinker, but he’ll drink beer, especially if it has U.S.-grown rice in it.

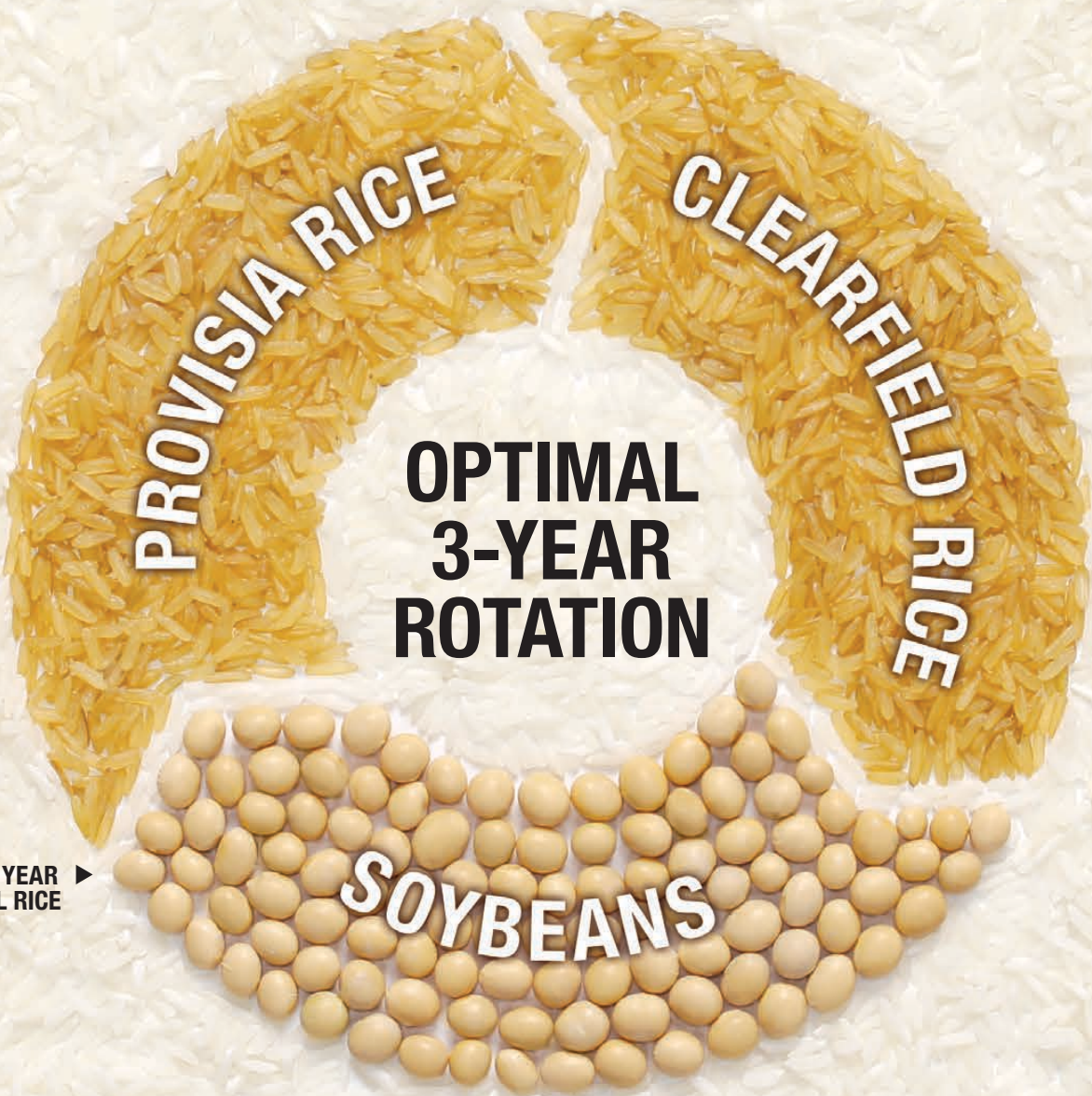


“From the positive media coverage to the personal interactions with USA Rice staff ... this project has helped move the needle when it comes to explaining the U.S.-grown difference.”

— CAMERON JACOBS, USA RICE SENIOR
DIRECTOR OF DOMESTIC PROMOTION

Cameron Jacobs is the USA Rice Answer Man at the Long Grain Lager release party.

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FOODSERVICE PROFESSIONALS RECEIVE CREDIT FOR TRAINING WEBINAR HOSTED BY USA RICE

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — USA Rice recently hosted an accredited training webinar for school nutrition and foodservice professionals on the importance of using and sourcing U.S.-grown rice in their respective operations. The sixty-minute webinar, “U.S.-Grown Rice 101 for Foodservice Professionals,” provided a free opportunity for participants to increase their knowledge of U.S.-grown rice and the domestic rice industry while earning a Continuing Education Unit (CEU).

Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice senior director of domestic promotion, who conducted the training, opened the webinar with an introduction to USA Rice and the organization’s role as the global advocate for the U.S. rice industry. He gave a thorough overview of the crop’s production cycle, the industry’s economic impact and commitment to sustainability, U.S.-grown varieties, and the nutritional power of rice. Participants were then presented information on the vital role rice can play in all aspects of foodservice operations from back-of-house to customer experience.

The live webinar covered current and emerging trends that positively impact rice’s popularity and use, from shifting consumer preferences toward global flavors and cuisine to plant-based or plant-forward diets becoming mainstream. Jacobs also shared information on all USA Rice foodservice partner offerings.

“This accredited training webinar provided a significant and cost-effective opportunity to help teach those responsible for feeding folks every day the power of rice in every sector of the foodservice industry, all while promoting the U.S.-grown difference,” said Jacobs. “Rice brings a tremendous amount of value both in the kitchen and on the menu for foodservice operations and through presentations like these, we’re able to get in front of our target audience and share valuable information while making new connections.”

The webinar was accredited by three governing bodies: the Association of Nutrition Food Professionals (ANFP), the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR), and the School Nutrition Association (SNA).

“Following completion of the original webinar, attendees received a link to the recording of the training session, available on demand from the thinkrice.com suite of foodservice resources, to share



with their colleagues,” said Jacobs. “They also received additional information on our foodservice resources and how to stay connected with USA Rice.”

Lesley Dixon is a writer and editor based in Austin, Texas, where she lives with her husband and cat. She is excited to attend Outlook in her hometown, where traffic on I-35 will take longer than a cross-country flight.

RICE’S STRONG NUTRITIONAL REPUTATION REITERATED IN DIETITIAN SURVEY

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — In October, USA Rice exhibited at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics’ 2022 Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE) in Orlando, Florida, to engage directly with nutrition professionals, answer rice-related questions, and distribute USA Rice resources.

Nutrition professionals who visited the USA Rice booth participated in a survey on rice usage, applications, nutritional reputation, and the importance of product of origin claims. More than 80 attendees (about one in five booth visitors) who represented dietitians, food policymakers, healthcare providers, nutrition scientists, and other food industry leaders from across the country, completed the questionnaire that asked: “Do you use or recommend rice as part of a healthy diet?”; “What is the best use or application of rice?”; and, “Does using rice grown in the United States matter to you?”

“This survey is important because we hear directly from experts in the nutrition field across a range of different capacities on what they think about rice,” said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice senior director of domestic promotion. “And I am happy to report, once again, that the results paint an overall positive picture for rice’s role and reputation, and provided some significant takeaways relevant to U.S.-grown rice when it comes to the nutrition landscape.”

An overwhelming majority of respondents (97.5%) use and recommend rice and rice products as a foundational component of a healthy diet and lifestyle because it’s a whole grain (75.6%), gluten-free (68.3%), a beneficial complex carbohydrate (56.1%), and a good source of energy (51.2%).

“Nearly 60% of survey respondents indicated country of origin is important to them which is why we encourage all of our members to use the Grown in the USA logo on their packaging,” said Jacobs. “Half of the survey respondents said that rice held a strong nutritional reputation, with an



USA Rice’s Emily Woodall can talk conservation OR nutrition all day long.

additional 20% adding they saw no change to rice’s reputation despite recent misinformed media reports and persistent anti-carbohydrate sentiments.”

The number one recommended variety by the nutrition professionals was whole grain brown rice at 89%, with 60% specifically recommending whole grain aromatics. Wild rice (58.5%) and aromatic white rice varieties (37.8%) rounded out the top three recommendations.

The top rice characteristics identified by survey respondents were versatility (89%), affordability (69.5%), taste (65.9%), and ease of preparation (62.2%), while confusion on carbohydrates, rice’s role within a diabetic diet, and a lack of understanding between white and brown rice were presented as barriers to use and acceptance.

When it came to using and recommending rice, only three respondents cited heavy metal concerns, while more than 81% indicated nothing prevented them from recommending rice as part of a healthy diet.

ANOTHER NRM IN THE BOOKS!

BY CAMERON JACOBS

ARLINGTON, VA — September National Rice Month (NRM) is a wide-ranging celebration filled with promotional events and activities throughout U.S. rice country, from fun events like regional rice festivals to more sobering activities like huge industry donations to area food banks.

“The whole month is all about shining the spotlight on U.S.-grown rice and the thousands of people across the country responsible for producing our favorite grain,” said Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of communications & domestic promotion. “To do that, we deploy a combination of outreach tactics and promotional partnerships to reach as many consumers as possible.”

USA Rice, in partnership with *thefeedfeed*, the online foodie community, hosted a series of NRM sweepstakes and tapped a network of registered dietitian (RD) influencers to create and photograph six new rice recipes that were distributed across their individual platforms. James Beard-nominated Chef Hari Cameron developed a new recipe specifically for NRM – rice pudding crème brûlée – made with both U.S.-grown jasmine and medium grain rice. USA Rice also collaborated with high-end appliance manufacturer Zojirushi and Ari Lang of *@wellseasonedstudio* for an online giveaway of a rice cooker, samples of U.S.-grown rice, and NRM branded items.

A daily campaign, published across all USA Rice social media platforms, inspired followers to celebrate NRM and *#thinkrice* and generated strong results with more than 60,000 consumer impressions and 266 new followers for the month. Special editions of the school foodservice and consumer newsletters were distributed and shared ways to celebrate and connect with USA Rice, including recipes, giveaways, and other rice resources.



On the retail side, USA Rice partnered with two chain grocery stores, Shoprite and Hy-Vee, to conduct promotions for shoppers in the mid-Atlantic and midwest regions. Shoprite store events varied by location and included cooking demos, educational displays, customer giveaways, and community events in honor of NRM. USA Rice supported the Hy-Vee KidsFit Club, a program encouraging students and families to eat healthy and stay active. Five thousand students received co-branded USA Rice cafeteria posters.

“USA Rice also celebrated domestic rice as part of Whole Grains Month,” said Klein. “We partnered with the Whole Grain Council to promote consumption and highlight the nutritional benefits of whole grain rice.”

Cameron Jacobs is USA Rice senior director of domestic promotion, and after five years working at USAR has finally “perfected” his Spam Musubi and Onigiri recipes and now is working on his jollof rice skills!

Opposite page: Crowley crowd celebrates NRM. Far left: ShopRite earns its name with great USA Rice-branded giveaways to celebrate NRM. Left: Filling food bank pantries.

USA RICE PITCHES U.S.-GROWN TO MAJOR FOODSERVICE SUPPLIERS

BY CAMERON JACOBS

ARLINGTON, VA — USA Rice recently wrapped up a distributor marketing campaign with UniPro, the largest foodservice distribution cooperative, as part of the organization’s foodservice supplier outreach program. The year-long campaign was developed to educate UniPro’s membership of 400 distributors and 560 branches on rice and promote the importance of sourcing and carrying U.S.-grown rice.

Starting in January, USA Rice sent the first of three sponsored emails to UniPro’s list of 2,225 independent distributors providing foundational information on U.S.-grown rice. The distributor marketing emails covered three distinct themes with messaging revolving around the continuous accessibility of domestic rice in stark contrast to items impacted by supply chain issues, a thorough introduction to the domestic rice industry that highlighted the demand for rice and promoted the U.S.-grown difference, and, finally, a celebration of National Rice Month and Hispanic Heritage Month that spotlighted the role of rice in Hispanic cuisines.

“Launching the distributor engagement program with UniPro was a great first step for USA Rice to connect and work with foodservice distributors and suppliers,” said Robbie Trahan, chair of the USA Rice Domestic Promotion Committee. “Through this marketing program, we were able to streamline communications to UniPro’s wide-ranging membership educating them on the rice category and highlighting the versatility and demand for U.S.-grown rice.”

Following the final outreach to distributors in September, the three sponsored promotional emails saw an average open rate of 18 percent and prompted many interactions with recipients.

“Anytime the U.S. rice industry is able to directly communicate the reasons for carrying domestic rice, varieties available, and benefits of U.S.-grown rice to a coalition of independent distributors with a collective sales volume of more than \$119 billion, it’s a strong win,” said Trahan.

Following the completion of the UniPro program, USA Rice partnered with Performance Foodservice Group (PFG) to conduct a similar distributor marketing campaign for the 2022-2023 year. PFG is the number two foodservice distributor in the U.S. with 65 operating companies, 3,000 sales associates, and 150,000 customers. They sell 1.9 million cases of rice annually, ninety-seven percent of which is U.S.-grown.

.....

“Through this marketing program, we were able to streamline communications to UniPro’s wide-ranging membership educating them on the rice category and highlighting the versatility and demand for U.S.-grown rice.”

— ROBBIE TRAHAN, CHAIR OF THE USA RICE DOMESTIC PROMOTION COMMITTEE

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Chef Jason Zimmerman making Mexican dishes better using U.S.-grown rice.

“We kicked-off the PFG partnership in Orlando, Florida, at the PFG FoodCentric Marketplace conference and trade show where USA Rice hosted an educational session featuring a chef-led culinary demonstration and discussion on how U.S.-grown rice can help foodservice operations increase profits and provide labor saving opportunities while still delivering authentic flavors and dishes,” said Trahan.

The forty-five-minute *Authentic Flavors to Maximize Profit & Labor* session with Senior R&D Chef Jason Zimmerman promoted the importance of U.S.-grown rice for any menu spotlighting relevant foodservice statistics, discussed the power of rice to boost profit margins and offset back of house labor issues, and highlighted the versatility of rice through a live cooking demonstration on the event stage. The audience received recipe cards for both dishes that also contained information on partnership opportunities with USA Rice.

“We have plans to continue the industry’s outreach to foodservice suppliers, including ad placements, sales team and customer promotions, coverage in internal and external newsletters, and the addition of USA Rice information to companies’ digital resource libraries used by distributor sales and marketing professionals,” Trahan concluded. [w](#)



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2022 MIDTERMS SHAKE UP CONGRESS

BY JOSIE MCCLAURIN

(Results are as of press time.)

WASHINGTON, DC — On Election Day, November 8, and in the weeks prior, millions of Americans cast their ballots in the 2022 Midterm Elections. This cycle afforded the electorate an opportunity to select one-third of the U.S. Senate and all seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, in addition to state, local, and other municipal positions.

Control of the House is yet to be determined with the fate of several seats dragging out several weeks or even months. Of those Members of Congress running for election in rice-producing states and districts, the vast majority of the incumbents seeking re-election won their races.

The House Agriculture Committee will see plenty of changes next Congress, with losses by Reps. Axne (D-IA), Lawson (D-FL), Maloney (D-NY), and Flores (R-TX). Several other races by incumbent House Ag Democrats are expected to be drawn out as the results were too close to call the week of the election. Some stability is expected, with a likely return of Rep. G.T. Thompson (R-PA) and Rep. David Scott (D-GA) as the top two Committee members. However, both leadership roles will formally be decided by their respective party and are not expected to be confirmed until early next year.

“With many retirements and a slew of incumbent losses since the 2018 elections, it is expected that somewhere in the neighborhood of two thirds of all of the House Ag Committee members will have never participated in the Farm Bill process,” said Peter Bachmann, USA Rice vice president of policy & government affairs. “That means the



Arkansas Senator John Boozman (center) hears firsthand about current California rice production issues.

agriculture industry will have our work cut out for us to quickly educate these newcomers on our priorities as Congress begins to draft the 2023 Farm Bill early next year.”

Democrats retained control of the Senate so it is expected that the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry will be chaired by Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) with Sen. John Boozman (R-AR) reprising his role as Ranking Member.

The new Congress will be sworn in on Tuesday, January 3, 2023, with committee assignments made in the weeks to follow. [w](#)

Josie McLaurin is manager of government affairs at USA Rice and is in charge of the USA Rice PAC, the organization’s primary tool for interacting with Members of Congress.

USA RICE JOINS INDUSTRY IN URGING THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS TO AVERT A RAIL SHUTDOWN

BY JAMISON CRUCE

WASHINGTON, DC — In late October and early November, USA Rice joined hundreds of other agriculture and business-focused organizations urging the Biden Administration and Congress to step in and find a resolution to avoid a potential rail labor strike or lockout.

So far, seven of the 12 rail labor unions have voted to ratify the National Tentative Agreement reached on September 15, 2022. Two unions have voted against ratification while votes are still outstanding from three additional unions.

On November 9, the National Carriers’ Conference Committee, which represents the nation’s freight rail carriers in national collective bargaining, announced the two unions that voted against ratification of the agreement had agreed to extend their cooling-off periods through December 4, avoiding a risk of shutdown or lockout until then at the earliest. Prior, one of the dissenting union’s cooling-off period was set to end on November 19.

In an October 27, 2022, letter to President Joe Biden, more than 300 organizations, including USA Rice, thanked the President and his Administration for leading on this issue by establishing the Presidential Emergency Board to help facilitate negotiations between the unions and railroads, while asking for intervention by the Administration.

“It is paramount that these contracts now be ratified, as a rail shutdown would

have a significant impact on the U.S. economy and lead to further inflationary pressure,” said the groups in the letter.

USA Rice stays engaged in all things transportation through membership in the Agriculture Transportation Working Group (ATWG) and the Ag Transportation Coalition. On November 3, USA Rice joined a letter by the ATWG, urging Congressional leaders to take “swift action to avert a rail strike or lockout that would lead to shutdowns or slowdowns of rail-dependent facilities resulting in devastating consequences to our national and global food security.”

The ATWG letter continues: “A strike or lockout combined with existing challenges in the rail system, at our ports, with trucking and with record low water levels on the Mississippi River impacting numerous barge shipments would be catastrophic for the agricultural and broader U.S. economies. Congress must act to prevent this from occurring if the parties cannot reach agreement.”

USA Rice continues to work to educate legislators on rail and other transportation and supply chain issues and the negative impacts a potential rail strike or lockout could have on the U.S. rice industry. [w](#)

Jamison Cruce is the USA Rice senior director of government affairs who may be suffering from lack of sleep not because of the looming rail strike but because he’s the father of a newborn.

USA RICE RELEASES PLC PAYMENT CALCULATOR FOR 2021 CROP

BY JAMISON CRUCE

ARLINGTON, VA — Following the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s announcement of the Market Year Average (MYA) prices for southern long and medium/short grain rice, USA Rice has released an updated Price Loss Coverage (PLC) payment calculator for the 2021 rice crop. Go to <https://www.usarice.com/resources/farm-tools> to access this USA Rice-developed tool that helps project potential rice PLC payments.

Users are able to input data to calculate payments, including base acres and payment yield. The MYA prices that will be used to calculate PLC assistance for long grain and southern medium/short grain are \$13.60/cwt and \$13.90/cwt, respectively. Commodity program payments are soon to be on the way to eligible farmers.

The MYA price for temperate japonica rice will be finalized and published in January 2023.



USA Rice has consistently advocated for the reauthorization and improvement of the PLC program as the primary tool that helps rice farmers manage their main risk, which is multi-year price declines. While the program does not make farmers whole, it is a strong safety net that provides farmers with modest support when they need it most.

“The Price Loss Coverage Program has traditionally provided a safety net for farmers who are contending with depressed prices, high costs of production, and thin margins,” said Curtis Berry, Mississippi rice farmer and chair of the USA Rice Farmers. “The assistance this program provides is welcomed as it continues to be crucial to the economic livelihood of many of our farmers, but improvements will be made in the next Farm Bill to ensure the PLC program remains relevant.” [w](#)

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USA RICE RECEIVES MAJOR CLIMATE-SMART GRANT FROM USDA

BY EMILY WOODALL

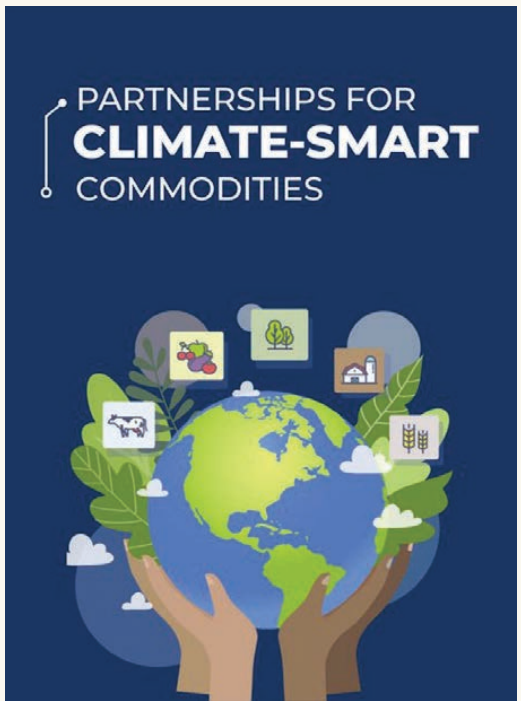
ARLINGTON, VA — In mid-September, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced the first wave of grants awarded under the Biden Administration’s Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities. More than a thousand applicants vied for \$3.5 billion being made available over the next five years and USA Rice’s project, Rice Stewardship Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities, was one of the rice-based projects selected.

“Rice is the ultimate climate-smart crop and the tremendous financial support we received from USDA is welcome recognition of that,” said USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward. “USA Rice is the lead partner for this \$80 million grant and we look forward to working with Ducks Unlimited, the National Black Growers Council, and our partners up and down the supply chain to enhance and strengthen the sustainability record of the U.S. rice industry.”

Other organizations with rice-based projects include: National Association of Conservation Districts, Rural Investment to Protect our Environment (RIPE), Field to Market, Texas A&M Agrilife Research, Supreme Rice, Winrock International Institute for Agriculture Development, AgriCapture, The Wolfe’s Neck Farm Foundation, and National Pork Board.

Emily Woodall is the USA Rice manager of rice conservation services, based in Little Rock, Arkansas.

“Rice is the ultimate climate-smart crop and the tremendous financial support we received from USDA is welcome recognition of that...”
— USA RICE PRESIDENT & CEO BETSY WARD



VILSACK CELEBRATES “EXCITING AND TRANSFORMATIONAL DAY” AT ARKANSAS RICE FARM

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

ENGLAND, AR — A packed house of farmers, millers, reporters, and ag service employees at every level – local, state, and federal – gathered here at Isbell Farms on September 16th to hear from Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack about the Biden Administration’s Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities.

“Consumers are increasingly asking, ‘is my consumer dollar supporting climate-smart commodities? Am I helping or hurting the environment?’,” Vilsack said. “As an agency, we can help create a value-added commodity and that’s what is behind the Climate-Smart Agriculture Commodity Program.”

The Secretary shared more details on the program that includes more than \$150 million in grant support for rice-based projects.

“We received more than 1,050 applications requesting a total of \$20 billion, though originally only \$1 billion was available,” said Secretary Vilsack. “The USA Rice project scored the highest of all applicants.”

Vilsack said he was able to allocate an additional \$2.5 billion to the program and then asked panel participants to explain their proposals.

Rice farmer Mark Isbell explained that the \$80 million USA Rice project was a collaboration with Ducks Unlimited and the National Black Growers Council (NBGC) to promote climate-smart practices amongst rice farmers.

“Our program is built on a solid history of rice and conservation stewardship efforts that has created an infrastructure to make this new program successful,” Isbell said. “We’ll impact 400,000 acres to enable growers to improve air, water, and soil quality that will reduce greenhouse gases and make a substantial impact on the environment in the future.”



NBGC Chair PJ Haynie III (top) joins Team Climate-Smart (bottom right) in reiterating the U.S. rice industry’s commitment to the future. Event host Mark Isbell (above) ensures that everyone in attendance, including Secretary Tom Vilsack (center), has a RICE day!



“Rice growers are essential for North America’s waterfowl,” said Dr. Scott Manley, Ducks Unlimited director of conservation programs. “Rice farmers manage approximately 750,000 acres of winter-flooded habitats each year, providing 35 percent of food waterfowl need during the migration season. The support offered through the Climate-Smart Commodities grant will help us continue critical crop and habitat work to ensure support for wildlife.”

Isbell said a significant percent of the program funds will be specifically targeted to traditionally underserved farm communities.

“There are many growers who have experienced historic inequities that have impacted their ability to establish base acres, or limited them access to capital, both of which you need to be successful,” Isbell said. “We need to fix that.”

Isbell also addressed the market part of the equation.

“The market for climate-smart commodities has developed slower than the practices, so we need to take some of this funding and direct it to help enhance the market so growers can benefit from the added value they are putting into their crops,” he said. “We also need to ensure consumer packaged goods companies don’t see this USDA support as taking care of growers completely. We need to ensure an equitable distribution down the value chain to ensure overall success.”

“The National Black Growers Council is excited about our partnership with USA Rice, the universities, Ducks Unlimited, and others,” said PJ Haynie III, Arkansas rice farmer and chair of the NBGC. “USDA is playing a major role here and we appreciate their willingness to look through the lens of historical inequities Mark addressed.”

Other grant recipients on the panel included representatives of Winrock International that is partnering with Riceland Foods on a project, and Tyson Foods that is looking at improving climate-smart practices in the poultry, beef, and feed supply chain.

Vilsack said he believes the programs that have been funded will be the equivalent of removing 50 million metric tons of CO2 from the atmosphere.

USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward, who met privately with Secretary Vilsack before the public event, thanked him for his support with the Climate-Smart Program and recently announced domestic food aid purchases of rice.

Isbell also took the opportunity to point out to the Secretary that ag, and rice in particular, continue to struggle as a result of high input costs, the higher-than-most cost of production for rice, and artificially depressed prices.

“Climate-Smart practices are great, but if we aren’t farming, they won’t help,” he said.

All of the speakers also thanked and recognized the hundreds of USDA employees across the country within the various departments, many of whom were in the audience of more than 200 attendees.

USA RICE CELEBRATES 20 YEARS IN THE UK

BY SARAH MORAN

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM — A delegation of USA Rice members and staff traveled here in mid-October to participate in the UK Rice Symposium and host a “USA Rice Day” at the U.S. embassy, celebrating two decades of promotions work in this important market.

USA Rice sponsors the symposium, the most important gathering for the UK rice industry that typically occurs every other year but, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has not been held since 2018. USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward gave an overview of the U.S. rice outlook and the latest consumer demands. Mark Holt, chair of the USA Rice Europe, Middle East, Africa Trade Policy and Promotion Subcommittees, talked about current US-UK trade relations.

“The last time we were here at this event, President Trump announced his intention to begin free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations with the UK,” said Holt. “Now, four years later, not much progress has been made. The UK is keen on signing FTAs with India and other countries and has even pursued MOUs with individual U.S. states; meanwhile, the Biden Administration chooses to not prioritize expanding market access through removal of tariffs. This is extremely frustrating for the U.S. rice industry as we know we’re on the bottom side of a tilted playing field. In most of our key markets, sanitary and phytosanitary measures are not necessarily a hindrance for us, so the primary way we can improve access in those markets is through the reduction in duties and other import prohibitive restrictions as part of a comprehensive FTA.”

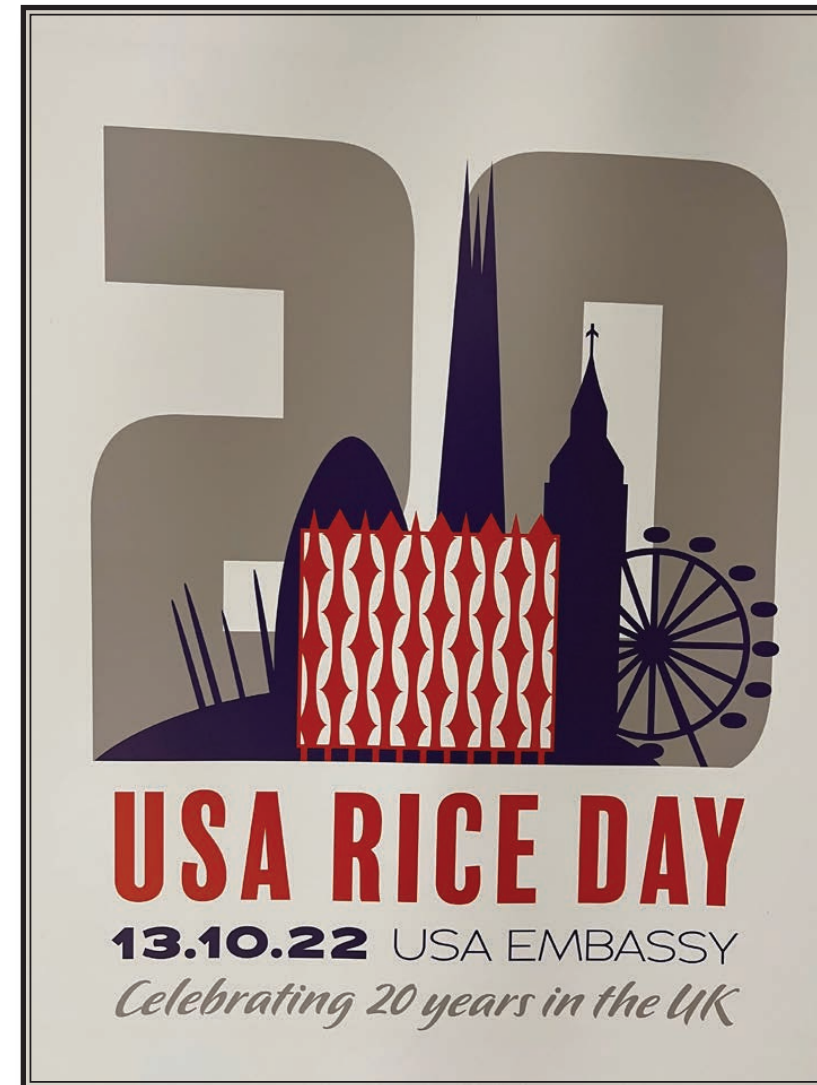
U.S. milled rice enters the UK under a tariff rate quota (TRQ) which limits the amount of rice that can be imported duty-free to roughly 13,000 metric tons and adds cost for importers who buy U.S. rice. Meanwhile, all U.S. rice entering the UK outside of that milled rice TRQ is subject to varying duties on a per ton basis.

USA Rice ended the week here by hosting more than 120 importers, wholesalers, agricultural media, foodservice personnel, and others at the U.S. embassy to celebrate 20 years of promotions work in the UK. Eszter Somogyi, USA Rice director for Europe, Middle East, and Africa, spoke about the history of promotions in this market.

“Our marketing program here teams up with local importers to help support the sale of their brands, and in nearly every activity we do, whether it’s end-cap displays or online advertisements, we see an uptick in sales of U.S. rice,” said Somogyi. “To date, the brands have contributed nearly \$150,000 to further these marketing activities, showing their appreciation of U.S. rice and interest in our marketing activities.”


“Our marketing program here teams up with local importers to help support the sale of their brands, and in nearly every activity we do ... we see an uptick in sales of U.S. rice.”

— ESZTER SOMOGYI, USA RICE DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST, AND AFRICA



Representatives from the U.S. wild rice associations, Beth Nelson with the Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council and Elizabeth Carranza with the California Wild Rice Advisory Board, talked about wild rice production in the U.S. and the health benefits of this grain.

The day concluded with a presentation by Chef Peter Sidwell on different U.S. rice types where he shared a selection of dishes he has developed using U.S. rice. These recipes are included on the USA Rice UK website (<https://usarice.co.uk/recipes>).

The UK is the 13th largest export market for U.S. rice, valued at \$13.6 million so far this year. It is one of the few markets that imports a wide variety of U.S. rice types including long grain milled, long grain parboiled, brown, and medium grain. 

Sarah Moran, USA Rice vice president international, sampled England’s national dish, chicken tikka masala, while celebrating 20 years of USA Rice promotions there and truly believes it tastes best when made with U.S. rice.

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IN A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER, ANNUAL CALIFORNIA RICE FIELD DAY OFFERS OPTIMISM

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

BIGGS, CA — For 110 years, the Rice Experiment Station has been delivering outstanding results for California’s rice industry, and hundreds gathered at this year’s annual Field Day for reports on what lies ahead.

Rob Doombas, chair of the California Cooperative Rice Research Foundation (CCRRF), welcomed attendees with words of encouragement during these difficult times and turned the program over to the new station director, Dr. Dustin Harrell. Harrell is not the only fresh face at the station, and he gave a quick overview of other recent additions to the research team and exciting new research that would be covered throughout the morning.

During the CCRRF business meeting financial reports were given and it was announced that there would be no yield contest for 2022 because so many areas have been sidelined by drought. But then the mood changed when two long-time rice industry staff were celebrated with standing ovations from the crowd. First, Dana Dickey, who for more than 20 years has served as the executive director of the California Rice Research Board, was honored at his retirement.

Then the 2022 Rice Industry Award was presented to Roberta Firoved, industry affairs manager for the California Rice Commission (CRC).

CRC President Tim Johnson, in his introduction of Firoved, talked about her illustrious career and her standing throughout the state and country as a true expert and advocate for rice, and her reputation as a consummate professional.

“If you use some compound in your rice operation, rest assured, Roberta has had a hand in making sure you had access to it and will continue to,” Johnson said.

Then the gathered broke up into groups to tour the station and receive updates on the long, medium, and short grain breeding programs that evaluated more than 86,000 entries in 2021 and is evaluating at least two promising new releases; rice agronomy research into fallowed fields and efficiency; pest, insect, and red rice management; and the state’s first herbicide tolerant rice, the non-GMO ROXY ® Rice Production System.

A second tour headed to another part of the station to learn about the Weed Science Program and the many experiments going on there to improve the tools in growers’ toolboxes.

Following the tours, lunch was served that included sushi, tri-tip steak, fresh fruit and vegetables, and four California rices developed at the station: basmati, jasmine, short grain, and medium grain. [WS](#)



CRC CEO Tim Johnson (left) presents Roberta Firoved with plaque of appreciation for her work on behalf of the industry (Katie Cahill photo).

BIRDERS FLOCK TO LOUISIANA FOR ANNUAL YELLOW RAILS & RICE FESTIVAL

BY KANE WEBB

THORNWELL, LA — Avid birders and ornithologists from across the country and across “the pond” descended on southwest Louisiana in late October for the 14th Annual Yellow Rails and Rice Festival. Participants from 29 states and the United Kingdom took to the rice fields near here for the chance to catch a glimpse of the elusive Yellow Rail.

Several people were repeat attendees but for many it was their first time to join in the festivities. In addition to adding the Yellow Rail to their birding “bucket list,” everyone also gets an opportunity to ride on a combine, tour a rice mill, and get an up-close perspective on how U.S. rice is produced, processed, and delivered to their table.

Rice farmers Shirley and Kevin Berken, along with Donna Dittmann and Steve Cardiff with the Avian Events Support Team, organize the annual event so that birders may learn about rice farming, and see firsthand the practices rice farmers use to create the habitat that so many birds and other species call home.

“We had to make a few schedule adjustments due to weather, but everyone who came spotted a Yellow Rail and rode on the combine,” said Kevin. “They also took in a variety of species, including King Rails, shore birds along the coast, and a Whooping Crane.”

Falcon Rice Mill hosted the mill tour, giving attendees a behind the scenes look at the milling and packing process, to go along with their rice harvesting experience for the trip.

“The countdown to next year’s event has already started, and if the previous 14 years have taught us anything, registration will fill up quickly,” said Kevin. “Thanks to this unique birding experience, everyone leaves here with a memorable encounter with the Yellow Rail, and a better understanding of what rice farmers and the U.S. rice industry mean to wildlife and waterfowl habitat.” [WS](#)

Kane Webb is the USA Rice director of field services, based in Crowley, Louisiana.



A BIGGER AND BETTER DELTA RICE FESTIVAL

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

MERIGOLD, MS — Delta Rice Promotions, the organization dedicated to promoting U.S.-, and specifically, Mississippi-grown rice, held the 2022 Annual Rice Festival in celebration of National Rice Month (NRM) on the streets of downtown Merigold on September 15.

Hundreds of people came to celebrate the versatility of U.S.-grown rice and show appreciation for those who work in the domestic rice industry with a variety of activities: tasting rice dishes from local restaurants, learning about rice farming through hands-on exhibits, visiting vendors and community organizations, enjoying live music, and witnessing the coronation of the Delta Rice Queen Anna Scott Gant, and Rice Ambassador Brant Davis.

“Of course, we learned a lot from last year’s first-ever street festival,” said Laura Jane Giaccaglia, the Bolivar County extension coordinator for Mississippi State University who organized the event. “We kept the things that worked well and tried out different ways to promote homegrown rice, one of Mississippi’s top agriculture exports.”

USA Rice again exhibited at the event and was strategically set up next to Ducks Unlimited to capitalize on the symbiosis of the two groups – what’s good for rice is good for ducks! Staff from both organizations gave out ball caps, recipe cards, fact sheets, and more, all in the name of promoting homegrown rice. Staff also answered questions about farming practices, and the festival was well-timed, coming the day after the announcement of an \$80 million Climate-Smart USDA grant for USA Rice, Ducks Unlimited, and the National Black Growers Council.

“People were excited to hear that the industry’s commitment to sustainability is ongoing and that farmers are being supported for their conservation efforts,” said Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of marketing & domestic promotion. “That positive news, plus the beautiful weather put everyone in the perfect mindset to celebrate National Rice Month.”

USA Rice’s new chair, Mississippi rice farmer Kirk Satterfield, took a few hours out from his



The Delta Rice Festival showcased many ways to appreciate Mississippi rice: in debate (left), in boutonnieres and bouquets (above), and even in the pool (top)!

on-going rice harvest 40 miles southwest to visit the festival.

“We really appreciate all the work Delta Promotions does to help raise awareness for our crop,” Satterfield said. “Events like today’s, the cookbooks, contests, and more do a lot to remind folks of all that goes into getting delicious and nutritious rice on their plates.” [WS](#)

Deborah Willenborg attended this year’s Delta Rice Festival and while in Mississippi, fulfilled a life-long dream of dining at Doe’s Eat Place.



FIRE AND RICE AT THE 85TH INTERNATIONAL RICE FESTIVAL

BY LESLEY DIXON

CROWLEY, LA — Tens of thousands of rice fans descended here for the 85th International Rice Festival (IRF) to once again pay tribute to the mighty grain that is a staple in just about every cuisine on Earth and beloved by people and wildlife alike. The theme this year was “Fire and Rice,” a tribute to IRF President, the Chief of Crowley’s Fire Department, Louis “Buddha” Romero, Jr.

But the chief was not alone in being honored. Dr. Ronnie Levy, the rice specialist with the Louisiana State University (LSU) AgCenter was named Festival Honoree, Reece Guillot of Crowley was named Farmer of the Year, and 18-year-old Hudson LeBlanc of Rayne was named the Junior Farmer of the Year. Also honored as the rice millworkers of the year were Robert Viator who retired this summer from Supreme Rice after 43 years in the rice industry, and Lee Johnson who has worked more than a decade at Falcon Rice Mill and still is.

Festival activity was virtually non-stop with two cooking contests, two formal balls, a 5K race, a rice eating contest, a frog derby, an accordion and fiddle contest, a classic car show, carnival rides, rice threshing demonstrations, two massive parades, more than 20 musical acts on two huge stages, and the highlight, the crowning of the new Rice Festival Queen.

Last year’s First Runner Up, Sadie Zaunbrecher of Crowley, was named the 85th International Rice Festival Queen on Saturday. Her duties for the next year include representing the rice industry across the state and the country; she is scheduled to attend the 2022 USA Rice Outlook Conference in Austin, Texas; the 2023 Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, California; and the 2023 RMA Convention in the Bahamas to name a few events.

More than 100 chefs were competing for the title of Chef de Riz and the coveted chef’s coat. USA Rice’s Michael Klein, Kane Webb, and Deborah Willenborg joined Supreme Rice’s John Morgan to evaluate the dishes, finally bestowing the title on Jill Villejoin for her dish “Cajun Hibachi Steak and Rice Bowl.”



Above: Chef de Riz Jill Villejoin, flanked by cookery judges, Kane Webb (left) and Michael Klein, dons the coveted Think Rice chef’s coat.
Left: The 85th International Rice Queen Sadie Renee Zaunbrecher ensconced on her new throne. (photo by Kathryn Shea Duncan)
Below: Much like floats in California’s Rose Parade, every element in the Children’s IRF Parade float must be constructed with some part of a rice plant – seeds, hulls, or stalks.

“The passion for rice and the rice industry is so apparent throughout the festival, and the pride people here take in their local grain is invigorating,” said Willenborg who was attending her first IRF. “It takes your breath away and it’s wonderful to experience.”

The 84th International Rice Festival Queen Caroline Hardy, said in her farewell speech, “I believe in the future of agriculture, the first line of the FFA Creed and a phrase that has stuck with me since I first heard it as a high school freshman in ag club. That 14-year-old girl has come a long way and may have traded in a blue corduroy jacket for a green banner and a sparkly crown but the intention of being a steadfast advocate for farmers and other agriculturists has remained, rhinestones or not.”

“The passion for rice and the rice industry is so apparent throughout the festival, and the pride people here take in their local grain is invigorating. It takes your breath away and it’s wonderful to experience.”

— DEBORAH WILLENBORG, USA RICE DIRECTOR, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS







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GEOPOLITICS IN HAITI HITS BREAKING POINT WITH CEASED SHIPMENTS OF U.S. RICE, GOVERNMENT REQUESTS FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

BY PETER BACHMANN

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI — Since Prime Minister Ariel Henry’s September announcement that he was ending subsidies for fuel, violent protests and an uptick in gang violence has ravaged the country. This is an escalation of the violence, kidnappings, and theft of food, fuel, and other goods that have been a part of everyday life here since last year’s assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse. U.S. rice exports have been taken by gangs directly off ships, off trucks after discharging at port, and even taken from humanitarian warehouses.

While exports generally continued throughout this tumultuous period, the recent uprising in Haiti led to a more dangerous situation for exporters and vessel operators resulting in ceased shipments here for all of September and October. In addition to the physical threat to exports headed to Haiti, importers have struggled with rising costs due to inflation and difficulty in obtaining U.S. currency because of instability in Haitian currency markets.

“U.S. rice in Haiti is looked upon with high regard,” said Bobby Hanks, a rice miller and frequent exporter to Haiti. “When the rice is stolen, it’s used to feed the families of gang members and it’s also used almost like a currency and resold on the Haitian black market. Right now, with the ports essentially inaccessible, shipping lines are not willing to take the risk to dock and discharge, meanwhile the people of Haiti are running out of food and approaching a humanitarian crisis.”

After much prompting by the U.S. rice industry, along with other private sector partners and Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA), the U.S. State Department has engaged in communications with the Haitian government, the Organization of American States

(OAS), and the United Nations to coordinate assistance.

In October, Prime Minister Henry called on the OAS and the United Nations to help quell the impending humanitarian crisis. Likewise, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called for humanitarian assistance for Haiti, help securing the ports, and a renewal of the diplomatic process.

“It’s preventing our children from going to school, it’s preventing the sick from having access to health care, it’s preventing people from accessing potable water, and even blocking roads and keeping food from being transported in the country,” said Prime Minister Henry, referring to the impact of the hostile presence of the gangs.

In an op-ed published in *The Hill*, Senator Cassidy said, “This will affect the United States. Poor Haitians will flee the island in search of food. This will happen more quickly if Louisiana rice stops arriving. We will see them arrive, not in the tens of thousands but in the hundreds of thousands, at our overwhelmed borders.”

Hanks added: “We want to thank Senator Cassidy for helping us engage the U.S. government and the other international bodies involved in coming together to support the people of Haiti during this difficult time. We are hopeful that with the help of foreign troops to secure critical infrastructure in Haiti that the country can take steps toward a swift recovery.”

Haiti is the top market for milled long grain rice from the U.S., importing roughly 40,000 metric tons per month. [w3](#)

Peter Bachmann is the USA Rice vice president of policy & government affairs.

RECAPTURING MARKET SHARE

BY SARAH MORAN

ARLINGTON, VA — Latin America is the primary destination for U.S. rice exports but U.S. market share has decreased drastically over the past two decades. In the beginning of this century, U.S. market share for Mexico and Central America averaged 98 percent; two decades later, the market share averaged 73 percent.

“It wasn’t that these countries were importing less rice,” said Keith Gray, co-chair of the USA Rice Marketability and Competitiveness Committee. “They increased their imports by a whopping 50 percent over those two decades but they began importing from other origins like Uruguay, Brazil, and other South American countries – not just the United States.”

The USA Rice Marketability and Competitiveness Committee, created in 2011, was tasked with recapturing that market share by investigating quality concerns raised by Central American importers of U.S.-origin rice. Researchers and rice breeders have spent years developing varieties that capture the quality characteristics desired by these important export markets.

As a way of showcasing this work, USA Rice organized a Quality Symposium and invited all public and private rice research institutions to share their new lines. The first Quality Symposium, held in 2020, was virtual with more than 150 attendees. Subsequent iterations of the event have been held live at the USA Rice Outlook Conference.

The 3rd U.S. Rice Quality Symposium is scheduled on Thursday, December 8, from 3:15 – 5:15 p.m. during the 2022 USA Rice Outlook Conference in Austin, Texas. More than 20 international buyers are expected to be in attendance to hear from seven rice breeders about more than 20 new varieties with consistent low chalk, high amylose grains that are able to be grown profitably for U.S. rice farmers. Come join us there! [w3](#)

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USA RICE HOSTS RICE COUNTRY TOURS FOR COCHRAN FELLOWS

BY SARAH MORAN

MID-SOUTH, USA — In October, USA Rice received funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cochran Fellowship Program (CFP) to host Central American rice industry professionals on a tour through rice growing regions in the mid-south. The primary goals of the CFP, named after the late U.S. Senator Thad Cochran from Mississippi, are to aid in developing agricultural systems in the Fellows’ home countries and to strengthen and enhance agriculture trade linkages with the United States.

In September, USA Rice met with another group of Cochran Fellows from Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana who were on a similar training trip coordinated by Dr. Ranjit Mane from the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff. In addition to visiting USA Rice’s offices in Arlington, the Fellows spent several days meeting with USDA officials in Washington and spent a week in Arkansas, touring rice harvest and meeting with researchers, producers, and exporters there.

The Central American delegation consisted of rice industry professionals from Honduras and Guatemala who traveled through Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Washington, DC, to gain perspective on U.S. rice quality and marketing. USA Rice members conducted in-depth tours of their farms to demonstrate the rice production cycle, ratoon crops, and U.S. rice’s unique sustainability story. The Fellows also received behind the scenes tours of mills, laboratories, research stations, ports, and grain terminals.

Special events included a jambalaya lunch with Louisiana Congressman Clay Higgins at the Louisiana State University Rice Research Station and a boat ride down the Arkansas River giving the Fellows an up-close perspective on the logistical advantage of U.S. rice over other origins. They also learned about the relationship between waterfowl



Cochran Fellows receive a comprehensive look at the U.S. rice industry, from the inside out.

and rice fields at the Ducks Unlimited headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee.

The tour concluded in the nation’s capital with a ceremony of completion hosted by USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Administrator Daniel Whitley at USDA headquarters. Whitley congratulated the Fellows on completing the program and gave an inspiring address emphasizing how they are the future leaders that will use their voices to spread sound science and influence policy in their home countries and beyond.

“The Fellowship provides hands-on training opportunities for agricultural professionals from middle-income countries, emerging markets, and emerging democracies to enhance their technical knowledge and skills in areas related to agricultural trade, agribusiness development, management, policy, and marketing,” said Asiha Grigsby, USA Rice director of international promotion for the western hemisphere who accompanied the Central American delegation. “The Fellowship offers increased knowledge about U.S. rice varieties, production, and a whole list of new contacts from the U.S. rice industry. We’ve invited them all to the USA Rice Outlook Conference and hope to see them here!” [w3](#)

STUDY SHOWS PUERTO RICAN CONSUMERS PREFER U.S. OVER CHINESE RICE

BY SARAH MORAN

FAYETTEVILLE, AR — Economists at the University of Arkansas estimated the impact of brand and country of origin (COO) labeling on purchasing decisions by Puerto Rican consumers and found that it provides a premium of \$0.28 per three-pound bag of medium-grain rice.

Drs. Lawton Lanier Nalley, Alvaro Durand-Morat, and Wei Yang surveyed nearly 350 rice-eating consumers to determine the economic impacts of disjunctive marking in Puerto Rico. Disjunctive marking, which is illegal in the U.S., is the addition of “or” or “and/or” between country names in COO labels. What is in the bag must be clearly and non-deceptively stated.

“More than half of the respondents indicated that origin of rice was important to them and the respondents strongly agreed that rice produced in the U.S. is safe for them to consume,” said Dr. Durand-Morat. “The majority of consumers believed the *Rico* brand is sourced from Puerto Rico when in fact it has predominantly come from China over the last four years. Our modeling showed that if consumers knew that *Rico* is sourcing its rice from China, the consumers’ willingness to pay (WTP) for the brand drops by 28 percent.”

In 2019, USA Rice accused Puerto Rican importers of Chinese rice of violating U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s (CBP) COO labelling regulations. Ultimately, one of the main importers of Chinese rice was fined \$10,000 by the Department of Consumer Affairs of Puerto Rico for violating the Deceptive Practices and Ads Regulation. After nearly four years, the investigation remains ongoing.

“This report gives economic credence to what we’ve been saying all along – that there is monetary value associated with using ‘and/or’ in the medium-grain rice market which *Rico* is exploiting to the detriment of Puerto Rican rice consumers,” said Peter Bachmann, USA Rice vice president of policy & government affairs. “We’d like to see COO labelling regulations more stringently enforced by CBP so that other brands cannot monetarily benefit from the good name and values of the United States without exclusively supporting our domestic industry.” [w3](#)



Crisp.



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