

WHOLE GRAIN



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Welcome to Outlook!

BY KEITH GLOVER

LITTLE ROCK, AR — I couldn't be more honored to be serving as the chair of USA Rice's Board of Directors after some four decades in the rice industry and about as many deeply involved in the various committees, boards, working groups, and task forces of USA Rice and the USA Rice Millers' Association, one of the oldest agribusinesses in the United States. And I'm especially grateful to be able to welcome the rice industry back to my home state for the 2024 USA Rice Outlook Conference here in Little Rock, Arkansas.

If you're reading this at the conference — thank you for being here! If you're catching up with this issue after the conference — I'm sorry you missed it and I hope you will mark your calendar for the 2025 USA Rice Outlook Conference right now! It's going to be December 7-9 at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside and believe it or not, we're already planning.

We know 2025 will have no shortage of challenges for the rice industry specifically, and agriculture in general, and while USA Rice will be working on your behalf throughout the year, remember that the Outlook Conference is a great opportunity to receive valuable updates and level set for the coming year.

For example, at the 2024 conference, I'm looking forward to the session on the Federal Regulatory Landscape. Always complex, it's very likely going to be turned on its head by the incoming Trump Administration. We also have sessions here on getting the most out of federal crop insurance programs and the ins and outs of ag labor and the H2A programs that are so vital for our industry.

But it's not just farm policy we unpack. We have several sessions on consumers and trends — from what parents are thinking about when they choose rice to feed their children to how the retail space is evolving and how artificial intelligence and machine learning can help predict consumer food trends.

All this, plus a look back at the early history of rice and some educated analysis by our world class researchers to see what's ahead for the industry, and so much more.

Thank you to the sponsors, exhibitors, and advertisers for making the USA Rice Outlook Conference possible, and thanks to all the attendees for making it a success year after year.

See you in the sessions and the Exhibit Hall!





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USA Rice's

WHOLE GRAIN

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

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STAYING INFORMED

BY PETER BACHMANN

ARLINGTON, VA — The year has flown by and I want to take this opportunity to remind you that while our staff does a lot for the industry, keeping you informed is a crucial element of our mission.

I don't mean patting ourselves on the back to announce a big win on farm policy or trade that you can read about in your local newspaper or see on the TV news. And I'm not talking about claiming involvement in an industry win that we didn't have anything to do with. We'll leave that to others. No, I'm talking about the day-to-day things our hard-working staff do on your behalf.


From laboring behind the scenes to keep pressure on trading partners and regulators to collaborating with social media influencers and chefs to support your rice. We work tirelessly to make the case for U.S. rice in places you would expect, and some that might surprise you.

We do our best to keep you informed about these activities — our staff regularly report to the USA Rice committees and boards with jurisdiction over the issues and participate in industry meetings all year long. But I know there are many people in our industry who don't attend our meetings, sit on

our committees, or attend industry events. But we maintain a robust media ecosystem of our own that they all have access to, as do you.

We publish the *USA Rice Daily* almost 300 times each year — if you don't receive it, let us know. We record an industry podcast, *The Rice Stuff*, twice per month and have recently surpassed 100 episodes (see story below). We produce this magazine, the *Whole Grain*, that highlights some of the most exciting stories, and we update our website daily.

I trust you find having all this information at your fingertips helpful to you. And I ask you to please help us spread the word. Forward the Daily at least once per month to someone you know in the industry who doesn't already receive it. Recommend our podcast to folks who are doing some driving — whether in a field or on a highway. And when you're done reading this issue, don't toss it out or even recycle it. Give it to someone who needs to know how USA Rice is fighting for them.

Thank you in advance for your help and your support throughout the year. 

THE RICE STUFF TURNED 100!

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG


ARLINGTON, VA — More than four years ago, USA Rice launched *The Rice Stuff* — a podcast by, for, and about the rice industry. In mid-September, the 100th episode dropped and the production crew took a moment to take a victory lap.

Hosts Michael Klein and Lesley Dixon reflected on the journey: the almost 200 guests who have joined them, the tens of thousands of downloads the pod has had, and other cultural phenomena that are 100 years old, or just missed 100 episodes (the list will surprise you!).

Arkansas rice farmer Jennifer James shared her thoughts on the centennial celebration — why her? Because *The Rice Stuff* would never have happened if Jennifer hadn't pulled Michael aside during one USA Rice July Business Meeting to ask, "why don't we have a rice podcast yet?"

"I didn't have a good answer for her, so here we are," Klein said. "And while this may not be what Jennifer envisioned, we try to make every episode informative and entertaining."



New episodes of *The Rice Stuff* are published on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month and can be found on your favorite podcast services or at www.TheRiceStuffPodcast.com. 

Deborah Willenborg, USA Rice director of marketing & communications, realizes she should tally up the many miles she's clocked on her treadmill while listening to Michael and Lesley every other Tuesday to determine whether she's run an ultra-marathon yet.

RICE AND ROSES – A NEW YEAR'S TRADITION

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG



PASADENA, CA — The Tournament of Roses Parade, held here on New Year's Day since 1890, is an annual explosion of activity with vibrant floats, spirited marching bands, horseback riders, and hundreds of thousands of spectators who line the five-mile route to cheer on the electrifying procession.


The 2024 parade included an entry from Louisiana that featured a larger-than-life Mardi Gras jester, fleur-de-lis, and flourishes incorporating the iconic purple, green, and gold color scheme.

Every inch of every float in the Rose Parade must be covered with flowers or other natural materials, such as leaves, seeds, bark, or rice. And while floats are professionally designed, they are decorated by volunteers days before the parade – more than 900

volunteers devoted 80 thousand hours to the endeavor this year.

Among those volunteers was Kane Webb, USA Rice director of field services, who along with his wife, Ginger, and daughters Kana and Molly, traveled to southern California to be part of the team helping to decorate their home state's float.

"Rice is everywhere on it, but all over the other floats as well," said Kane. "For the most part, when you see white shapes and patterns on a float, it's rice! They mainly use broken and sometimes ground rice because the smaller the rice, the easier it is to glue onto intricate patterns."

On New Year's Eve, the floats were judged based on design, floral presentation, and entertainment value, and the Louisiana float won the Showmanship Award for the second year in a row. 

Hundreds of volunteers spend thousands of hours decorating Rose Parade floats with leaves, seeds, bark, and U.S. rice. And when the parade is over, millions of flowers and thousands of pounds of organic material becomes mulch or compost.



CHEF SARA MOULTON HAS A 'BIG TIME' IN MISSISSIPPI RICE COUNTRY

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

BENOIT, MS — Few household names have had a career in cooking and television longer than Sara Moulton. Beginning as a sous chef for Julia Child, she ran the executive dining room at Gourmet magazine, helped launch the Food Network, put her stamp on cooking on Good Morning America, and is also the queen of her own media empire.

With four cookbooks and a bustling social media presence, Moulton recently launched the 13th season of her PBS television show, *Sara's Weeknight Meals*, and included in the line-up of episodes is a segment featuring past USA Rice Chair Kirk Satterfield cooking up Mississippi rice and blackened catfish.

Moulton's New York-based production team joined up with a camera crew out of Starkville, Mississippi, to take over Kirk's family kitchen here for the episode called "Mississippi Dreams." Kirk, and his wife, Bridget, help Moulton make a savory meal of veggie-rich Delta & Pine Land Rice and catfish coated with a spicy rub and fried on a flat grill. And after a big time feast with extended family, Kirk takes Sara on her first ever ride on a combine.

This is the fourth episode in a series where Moulton cooks U.S.-grown rice alongside U.S. rice farmers. She first went crawfishing with



Louisiana rice farmer Randy Thibodeaux in Season 5 and hosted an outdoor dinner party for 30 at his farm where they served up etouffée the two made on the air. In Season 7, she traveled to Stuttgart, Arkansas, to learn about the relationship between ducks and rice from rice farmer Eric Vaught, and cook rice hush puppies with Eric and his family. And in Season 11, Moulton visited rice farmer Matthew Sligar in Gridley, California, where they cooked rice buns for hamburgers and made sushi with the incomparable chef and restaurateur Billy Ngo.

"Sara is so accomplished and so knowledgeable, she manages to make cooking accessible to all," said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice vice president of domestic promotion, who joined Moulton on her rice country trips. "As a classically trained French chef, Sara understands all about exotic ingredients and fancy techniques but brings cooking back down to earth for the rest of us."

Sara's Weeknight Meals airs on PBS and you can catch up with past episodes on her YouTube Channel. Her latest cookbook, *Sara Moulton's Home Cooking 101: How to Make Everything Taste Better* is available now. [WS](#)

Chef Sara Moulton and farmer Kirk Satterfield pose for a rice country version of *American Gothic* (top) after spending the day under the hot lights in the family kitchen while filming the latest rice-centric episode of *Sara's Weeknight Meals* (left).



ONLY THE BEST IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR VIDEO CONTEST WINNER

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — This year's National Rice Month Scholarship Contest has been awarded to Helen Lan, a graduating senior from Boerne, Texas, just outside of San Antonio. Lan's video, "The Tale of The Rice Ghost," was made with determination, creativity, a bevy of rice facts, and hundreds of Lego bricks.

"It brought back fun childhood memories," says Lan. "My mom hated those premade Lego sets, so she always bought us random bricks, and I never got any of those cool sets, like the Millennium Falcon. The Legos were just sitting around for a long time because when I started high school I didn't have much time for them anymore."

Her mother's insistence on Lego free-play paid off — Lan is set to graduate next year from Health Careers High School in San Antonio, and aims to become a surgeon. She will put her scholarship toward a pre-med degree, and she has already applied to some prestigious institutions such as John Hopkins University.


She also supplements her rigorous magnet school curriculum by volunteering at local hospitals. And when she's not studying or volunteering, she's participating in her school's nationally ranked Latin Club, or practicing music on the flute and the piano, which she has played since she was five years old.

Her diligence and creativity shines through in her video, which she created using stop-motion animation, a famously arduous and slow animation technique. The film took an entire day to complete, as she had to build the set pieces, take hundreds of photos, and edit them together.

The result is a charming, tongue-in-cheek story about U.S. rice that draws its inspiration from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and *The Lego Movie* (2014).

At home, rice is a staple for Helen, as her mom frequently prepares rice dishes for the family, and Lan particularly loves her mother's homemade Chinese rice dumplings. Through her scholarship project, she was surprised to discover how much rice is grown in the U.S. as well as its health benefits. While she eats rice almost every day, she had never considered how

versatile it is, and how close she is to rice country in central Texas.




Helen will receive her award in person at this year's USA Rice Outlook Conference in Little Rock. For her, this scholarship not only marks a significant achievement but also a stepping stone toward her dreams of a career in medicine. 



Grand Prize Winner Helen Lan

Lesley Dixon lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband, who may or may not have a few Lego sets of his own lying around.

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RICE STEWARDSHIP PARTNERSHIP OPENS NEW OFFICE IN JONESBORO, ARKANSAS

BY EMILY WOODALL

JONESBORO, AR — The USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited (DU) Rice Stewardship Partnership (RSP) continues to grow! Last year, the RSP celebrated its 10-year anniversary, the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives introduced resolutions recognizing this feat, rice-targeted conservation programs surpassed 1000+ unique and individual rice farms covering more than 800,000 acres, 25 supply chain partners contributed more than \$10 million in private funding to leverage the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) investments on rice farms, and these investments delivered more than \$110 million in financial assistance to rice producers.

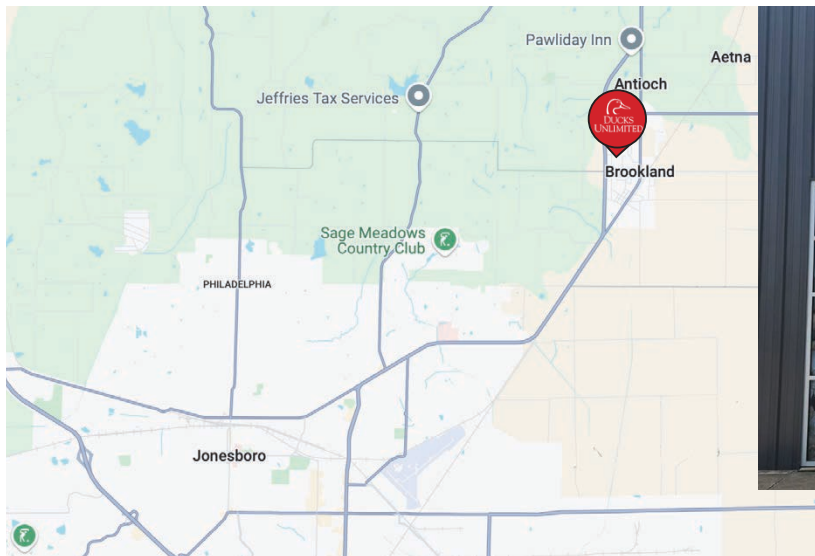
And this summer, Ducks Unlimited officially opened an Arkansas field office here. More than 100 partners, producers, and community members attended the open house celebration to learn about conservation efforts in the mid-South and in working ricelands.

The Jonesboro office will serve as the hub for all rice-

targeted programs and other DU work in the region, helping team members better serve conservation partners in this area.

“Over the last decade, the RSP has built a rice field team of 25+ professionals with great expertise and experience in on-farm conservation,” said Jeff Rutledge, a rice producer in Jackson County, Arkansas, and member of the RSP Advisory Committee. “The partnership’s impact continues to expand, because of its history of bringing technical assistance along with rice-targeted program dollars, and the new field office in the heart of the largest rice growing region in the country shows this combination is successful. We are thrilled to now have a home base for our staff and partners as well as a larger community presence. There is much to celebrate, but definitely much more to accomplish.” [Wes](#)

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



Store front access on 21 County Road, 912 Suite A, Brookland, AR 72417.

“Over the last decade, the RSP has built a rice field team of 25+ professionals with great expertise and experience in on-farm conservation... We are thrilled to now have a home base for our staff and partners as well as a larger community presence. There is much to celebrate, but definitely much more to accomplish.”

— JEFF RUTLEDGE, MEMBER OF THE RSP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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USDA AWARDS GRANT TO PROTECT SACRAMENTO VALLEY RICELAND HABITAT

BY JOSH HANKINS

WASHINGTON, DC — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making major investments in delivering voluntary and incentive-based conservation practices, including a nearly \$13 million grant to protect California's Central Valley rice lands for migratory waterfowl. The project aims to secure long-term protection of a minimum of 4,000 acres of winter-flooded rice lands in the Sacramento Valley.

This project is part of the USA Rice-Ducks Unlimited Rice Stewardship Partnership (RSP), which has a mission to conserve working ricelands, water, and wildlife. The partnership promotes innovative practices to improve conservation, production, and sustainability measures.

The grant is awarded under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which incentivizes a voluntary, partnership-driven approach to conservation on working agricultural lands.

The funding is part of a \$1.5 billion investment by USDA in voluntary conservation practices on agricultural landscapes, which support habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife, offer additional revenue streams for farmers and ranchers, and provide a host of ecosystem services. 



Sandhill cranes overwinter in California rice fields that provide habitat and nourishment. (photo by Mary Wurlitzer)

Josh Hankins is USA Rice director of grower relations and the Rice Stewardship Partnership.

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USA RICE EARNS GOLD FROM USDA

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — USA Rice has been recognized as a MyPlate Gold Champion National Strategic Partner

by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. MyPlate is the USDA program that serves as a nutrition guide and visual reminder for healthy eating based on the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

USA Rice joined twenty committed MyPlate champions in being officially recognized as the inaugural class of Gold Champions by USDA Deputy Under Secretary Cindy Long, and USDA Director for Nutrition Security and Health Equity Carey Cotwright. Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice vice president of domestic promotion, accepted the award on behalf of the organization and the greater domestic rice industry. Jacobs also was featured in a filmed interview on the importance of serving as a MyPlate partner for USDA.

“Both enriched and whole grain rice play a vital role in attaining and maintaining healthy diets consistent with federal health recommendations, while remaining affordable, accessible, and culturally relevant,” said Jacobs. “As representatives of this powerful grain, we have a responsibility to participate in the MyPlate program and promote healthy eating patterns to our different audiences. USA Rice is honored to be recognized and to serve as a Gold Champion National Strategic Partner.”

To achieve the gold level designation, strategic partners must be active and consistent in promoting MyPlate through website promotion, logo and message inclusion on consumer resources, and collaborating with other MyPlate organizations. USA Rice also featured the MyPlate team on Episode 91 of *The Rice Stuff* podcast, all in effort to make MyPlate a household name. [WCC](#)

INFLUENCER PROGRAM RESULTS HIT HISTORIC HIGH IN 2024

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — End-of-year results from two USA Rice social influencer programs, one with *thefeedfeed* influencer agency and one a registered dietitian blogger program, racked up another year of impressive returns. The influencers kept U.S.-grown rice at the forefront of the digital culinary and food space, and promoted U.S.-grown rice as an integral part of a healthy diet through a combination of recipe and video development, outreach, and content creation.

In total, 12 foodie and nutrition-focused influencers were selected based on their familiarity with rice and culinary expertise to promote domestic rice and engage with their respective followings to inspire consumption and usage through the creation of forty new rice recipes. Each recipe was accompanied by professional photography and a recipe video, and was distributed on each influencer's platform. The created recipes included nutritional and USA Rice messaging and covered multiple domestic varieties and all meal parts.

“The combined tactics of the 2023-2024 USA Rice influencer

program generated more than 73 million impressions and more than 13.5 million consumer engagements in promotion of U.S.-grown rice,” said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice vice president of domestic promotion. “These results overwhelmingly surpassed last year's historic metrics and continue to demonstrate that through this content program, the domestic rice industry is engaging with important demographics, reaching new audiences with USA Rice messaging and education around rice usage and nutritional benefits associated with consumption.”

In addition to the immediate impact of the influencer program, USA Rice and its member companies retain the right to use and access all created recipes, videos, and photos. The 2023-2024 collection of recipes is available on the [thinkrice.com](#) recipe database. [WCC](#)



U.S.-GROWN RICE BOOSTED BY ANHEUSER-BUSCH'S U.S. FARMED CERTIFICATION

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

ST. LOUIS, MO — U.S. rice farmers can give a hearty “cheers!” to Anheuser-Busch and the American Farmland Trust (AFT) for their new partnership that will be putting a “U.S. Farmed” certification and seal on several products from the nation’s top brewer and largest user of U.S.-grown rice.

With a goal of using consumer education as a means of keeping American farmers on their land, AFT’s label program is reserved for products that derive at least 95 percent of their agricultural ingredients from farms in the United States. The seal first appeared on Anheuser-Busch’s Busch Light beer in May, and Budweiser, Bud Light, and Michelob ULTRA, all beers made with U.S. rice, have also obtained U.S. Farmed certification and will follow suit.

“We’re very excited by the launch of U.S. Farmed,” said USA Rice President & CEO Peter Bachmann. “Our nation’s rice farmers are proud to play a critical role in our domestic supply chain and broader economy; and to be associated with some of the most well-known and respected brands in the world makes it that much sweeter.”

Bachmann, who is a Michelob Ultra drinker, said he expects U.S. Farmed to highlight the importance of U.S. agriculture and manufacturing, and help consumers make the connection between rice farms and American restaurants, bars, and kitchen tables.

“American farmers are the backbone of this country, and Anheuser-Busch has been deeply connected to the U.S. agricultural community and committed to sourcing high-quality ingredients from U.S. farmers for more than 165 years — that’s who we are,” said Anheuser-Busch CEO Brendan Whitworth. “We source nearly all the ingredients in our iconic American beers from hard-working U.S. farmers — many of whom we have worked with for generations. The U.S. Farmed certification takes our commitment to the next level, and we are proud to lead the industry in rallying behind American farmers to ensure the future of U.S. agriculture, which is crucial to our country’s economy.”

AFT says the program will transform the way consumers identify and shop for domestically sourced products and encourages



consumer-packaged goods companies to join the effort by obtaining U.S. Farmed certification for their domestically sourced products.

“With the launch of the U.S. Farmed certification, we’re taking a bold step to help secure the future of American agriculture and create both a movement and a market niche that celebrates and supports our nation’s farmers,” said Beth Sauerhaft, acting president & CEO of American Farmland Trust. “Each U.S. Farmed certification has the potential to open new opportunities for farmers to receive assistance with succession planning, farmland protection tools for their operations, and other useful tactics to safeguard their land — our nation’s food systems.”

“Our research has long shown that given the choice between food grown in the U.S. or imported, U.S. consumers would prefer the homegrown — they just don’t always know which is which,” said Kirk Satterfield, Mississippi rice farmer, recent past chair of USA Rice, and supporter of all Anheuser-Busch products. “The U.S. Farmed certification and label is going to make it easier for consumers to find the products and brands they want to be supporting, starting with the ‘Choose Beer Grown Here’ campaign.”

Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of communications & strategic development, would rather drink rice than eat corn.

USA RICE UNVEILS NEW GROWN IN THE USA MARK

BY CAMERON JACOBS



ARLINGTON, VA — The U.S. rice industry’s “Grown in the USA” mark has been around for decades. It signified to consumers that the rice contents of the package bearing the mark was 100 percent U.S.-grown. While it has been the dominant Country of Origin mark for U.S. rice, it is not the only one. Some rice packages bear different red, white, and blue themed designs or words “Product of Texas,” “California Grown,” “Certified Louisiana,” or similar.

In 2020, Washington, DC-based brewery Hellbender Brewing partnered with USA Rice to brew a beer using Louisiana-grown purple rice, following it up two years later with an Arkansas aromatic rice beer. In both instances, the Rice Grown in the USA (GITUSA) mark was placed on the beer cans.

“The experience with Hellbender was a lightbulb moment for us,” said Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of communications & strategic development. “We wondered who else might see value in promoting to their customers that they are using U.S.-grown rice? So we started quietly asking around.”

Klein said foodservice partners, who often highlight locally grown ingredients, were interested, but there was a hitch.

“The existing GITUSA mark was designed for a package of rice on a store shelf, not a menu or a restaurant’s webpage or their social media channels,” he said. “It was a horizontal rectangle, often in red, white, and blue and with the words ‘rice grown in the USA,’ so it communicated the message, but our partners wanted something a bit more modern and dynamic.”

Enter USA Rice’s Domestic Promotion Committee who started working with graphic designers and marketing consultants in 2023.

“We were given more than a dozen options that we got down to four or five,” explained Robbie Trahan, a Louisiana rice miller and chair of the Domestic Promotion Committee. “We then got it to two and sent the options to our Retail Subcommittee who debated and polled the Boards of Directors of our membership

organizations and the USA Rice Communications Committee before making the final recommendation that we accepted.”

The new mark, called “GITUSA Badge,” has a vertical orientation, is more compact, and can be made very tiny without losing messaging, making it the dynamic mark requested.

There are also some new elements to the mark qualification.

“The old mark was available to anyone using 100 percent U.S.-grown rice, and that’s still true,” explained Trahan. “The new mark has that requirement, of course, but also requires a commitment to support the industry’s climate and sustainability goals, and membership in USA Rice, or member organizations USA Rice Millers’ Association, USA Rice Merchants’ Association, or the USA Rice Council.”

Trahan said end-users of rice that meet all the licensing requirements but are not eligible to join one of the organizations mentioned, such as a restaurant, may still apply to license the mark from USA Rice and would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

“Ultimately, we know consumers are interested in where their food is coming from and how it’s being grown and manufactured, with a growing focus on environmental responsibility,” he said. “U.S. rice farmers are leaders in food safety, stewardship, and sustainability, dedicated to conserving resources while producing a high quality and profitable crop. This new mark signifies all of that to consumers and I look forward to it being used broadly in the retail and foodservice spaces.” [WE](#)

Cameron Jacobs is USA Rice vice president of domestic promotion. Outside of working to raise awareness of U.S.-grown rice, he enjoys rooting on his lowly Washington Wizards and explaining the parboiling process to friends and family.

“Ultimately, we know consumers are interested in where their food is coming from and how it’s being grown and manufactured, with a growing focus on environmental responsibility... This new mark signifies all of that to consumers and I look forward to it being used broadly in the retail and foodservice spaces.”

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



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CELEBRATION OF MODERN AG ON NATIONAL MALL LETS USA RICE PRACTICE RETAIL POLITICS

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

WASHINGTON, DC — The Future of Food & Farming was the theme of the 2024 Celebration of Modern Ag festival here in March that featured 50 exhibitors from all sectors of the ag industry. Equipment giants such as John Deere, Case IH, Claas, and New Holland exhibited alongside technology companies like Arva Intelligence and Guardian Ag; advocacy groups like CropLife America and American Farm Bureau Federation; and commodity representatives like the National Corn Growers, the International Fresh Produce Association, and USA Rice who endeavored to tie everything together for visitors.

Organized by the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM), the event is a true showcase of how innovation in agriculture is crucial to sustainably and safely providing food for Americans and the world.

Strategically spanning the National Mall between the U.S. Capitol and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the location ensured a consistent stream of Congressional and Agency staff and officials alongside tourists and school groups, all interested in the how, what, and where of agriculture.

“Hundreds of people stopped by our booth to learn about rice, tell us their favorite rice brand or dish, and of course, leave with recipes, USA Rice swag, and a newfound appreciation for our mighty grain,” said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice vice president of domestic promotion, who organized the group’s participation and staffed the booth for all three days of the event.

Handouts included USA Rice’s Sustainability Report, the Registered Dietitian nutrition fact sheet, and conservation practice postcards. Brands on display that helped reel in consumers were from 4Sisters, Ben’s Original, Botan, Cahokia, Della, Inland Cape, Mahatma, Nishiki, Planet Rice, Producers, Ralston’s, Rice Select, Riceland, Supreme, and Windmill.

Policy was also on the menu. Senator John Boozman (R-AR) came by to talk about the Farm Bill, and Congressmen Ralph Norman (R-SC) and Bruce Westerman (R-AR) visited separately to express their appreciation for the work of the U.S. rice industry. Additionally, the USA Rice booth attracted countless USDA staff members, EPA officials, and representatives of the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office to talk shop.



Senator John Boozman from Arkansas, the #1 rice growing state, gets a hero's welcome from the USA Rice Team.

“We discussed the census of agriculture, food aid, foreign market development, regulatory issues, trademarks and certifications, trade policy, and more with dozens of professional staff,” said Michel Klein, USA Rice vice president of communications & strategic development, who spent the first two days at the booth. “I was also impressed with the sophistication of regular consumers. We got detailed questions about nutrition, conservation, food safety, and even the current Indian export ban and how it was affecting prices and availability.”

USA Rice Manager of Government Affairs Shelby Young and summer intern Caroline Hardy joined Jacobs for the final day of the event.

Jacobs said it was a pleasure to get out and talk to people one-on-one about U.S.-grown rice.

“Obviously we have a passion for U.S.-grown rice and telling our industry’s story,” he said. “But it was clear from talking to people that rice is an important and beloved part of people’s lives. This was a special opportunity, and we appreciate AEM including us again.” [W3](#)



USA Rice’s Cameron Jacobs can give you ten more reasons to eat rice grown in the USA.



EPA ESTABLISHES OFFICE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS & USA RICE HOSTS EPA STAFF FOR TOUR OF RICE COUNTRY

BY SHELBY YOUNG


WASHINGTON, DC — On March 1, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it was establishing a new office to “expand engagement opportunities with agricultural and rural communities” through the creation of the EPA Office of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OARA). The OARA will serve as the primary liaison between EPA and the nation’s rural and agricultural stakeholders and “increase coordination with a network of existing agriculture policy advisors located in all 10 EPA regional offices across the country.”

OARA is intended to provide EPA with a direct link to coordinate more closely with other federal and state agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and state departments of agriculture. This new office will also host the EPA’s existing Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Federal Advisory Committee (FRRCC), on which Arkansas rice farmer Jennifer James currently serves representing USA Rice.

“We applaud the EPA for creating the Office of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and hope that this proves to be a successful collaboration between EPA, agricultural producers, and the other federal and state agencies, ensuring that regulations and guidance from the EPA are practical and science-based,” said David Petter, an Arkansas rice farmer and chair of the USA Rice Regulatory Affairs and Food Safety Committee.

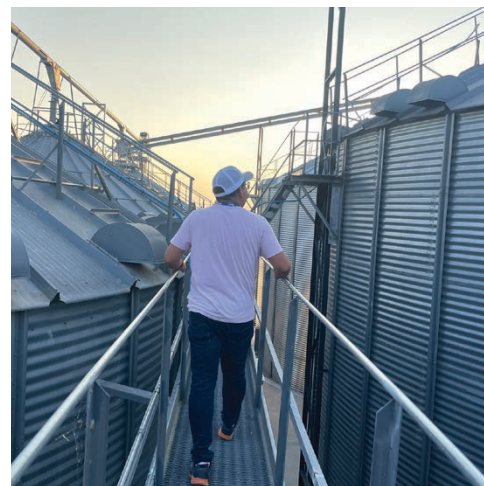
In August, USA Rice hosted scientists from the EPA Office of

Pesticide Programs and an agricultural economist from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Pest Management Policy for an in-depth educational tour of the U.S. rice industry in southwest Louisiana. The tour’s objective was to provide attendees with a comprehensive overview of the Louisiana Gulf Coast rice producing and processing region to educate and build relationships in a friendly and comfortable environment.

“While only so much can be covered in four days, we’re hopeful the knowledge and experience gained, and the relationships that were built during this tour, dramatically improve the understanding among these individuals of the challenges we face and create a basis for communicating our support or opposition to current and future regulatory proposals,” said USA Rice President & CEO Peter Bachmann. “We look forward to building on the success of this tour annually for years to come.” 

Shelby Young is USA Rice manager of government affairs/PAC.

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FARM BILL: WHAT A LONG STRANGE TRIP IT'S BEEN

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

WASHINGTON, DC — As readers know, the Farm Bill is central to the ag economy, and whether they fully understand it or not, vital to all Americans — at least the ones who eat or plan to eat. The 2024 Farm Bill, already late and as of press time, not yet passed, is a massive and complex piece of legislation estimated to cost \$662 billion over five years that will greatly impact the price of food, what food is grown, and the livelihood of American farmers.

USA Rice played a key role in updates to the previous Farm Bill, particularly the maintenance and improvements to the Price Loss Coverage program and ensuring crop insurance coverage for rice farmers using alternate wetting and drying and furrow-irrigated production practices. But the ink was barely dry on the signatures of the 2018 Farm Bill before the trade association went to work on the next Farm Bill. The one we're still waiting on (again, as of press time).

So, what has USA Rice been advocating for and how have they done it? Let's take a look.

First and foremost, USA Rice believed it was imperative a comprehensive Farm Bill be passed in a timely fashion and that it provided a sound and strong safety net for rice farmers. Underlying this was a definite need to increase funding for the Farm Bill in recognition of market realities and specifically to bolster the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program by increasing rice reference prices that make up the foundation of the rice safety net.

USA Rice has been making the case that net farm income has been drastically declining and that represents a threat to the industry, rural communities, and U.S. food security. Input costs have been soaring and commodity prices — especially rice, thanks to India's gross market distortion (see pages 28 and 30) — have been depressed or even going backwards.

The situation is unsustainable.

And while the House Ag Committee passed version of the bill does make meaningful investments in the farm safety net, the Senate Ag



Committee hasn't gotten there yet, despite the valiant efforts of Ranking Member, and great friend to the rice industry, Senator John Boozman.

It's also worth pointing out that even if the Farm Bill passed right after the *Whole Grain* went to press, it's likely that any farmer assistance triggered by market conditions under the new law wouldn't actually reach growers until the fall of 2026 — two years from now. That's a long time for farmers, their employees, and bankers to wait.

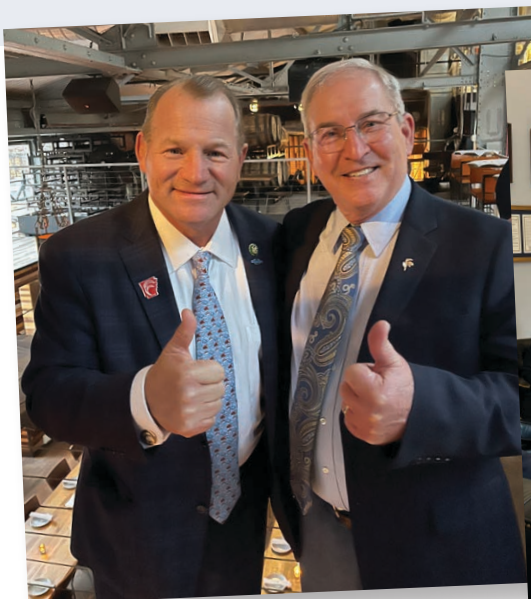
So, what has USA Rice been doing?

Anyone involved in governing will tell you, hearing directly from constituents is supremely impactful. And since February 2020, USA Rice has conducted seven Washington, DC fly-ins and one virtual "fly-in" (during the height of the pandemic), bringing more than 350 rice farmers and industry representatives face-to-face with Senators and Representatives and their key staff to talk farm policy — with the Farm Bill dominating most of the conversations.

USA Rice has also brought four industry witnesses to testify before various House and Senate

SELECT USA RICE FARM BILL PRIORITIES

- Increase rice reference price
- Increase payment limits
- Make rice base acre reallocations voluntary
- Protect safety net programs from government "grab back"
- Ensure conservation programs are voluntary, local, and incentive-based
- Avoid one-size-fits-all approach to conservation programs
- Increase funding for foreign market access programs
- Keep actual food in Food Aid
- Maintain flexibility in crop insurance and really consider unintended market consequences to changes




Lately it occurs to us that the cost of rice production versus the price is cause of great concern. Rice industry leaders recently came to Capitol Hill to press for passage of a new Farm Bill as the need for a viable safety net has never been greater.

Committees, most specifically about Farm Bill provisions, but all highlighting the importance of the legislation. USA Rice has also had numerous members participate in Farm Bill roundtables with members of Congress, not to mention farmers, millers, and other industry representatives opening their operations and businesses to lawmakers so they can see firsthand the impact of the Farm Bill and the dire need for Congressional action.

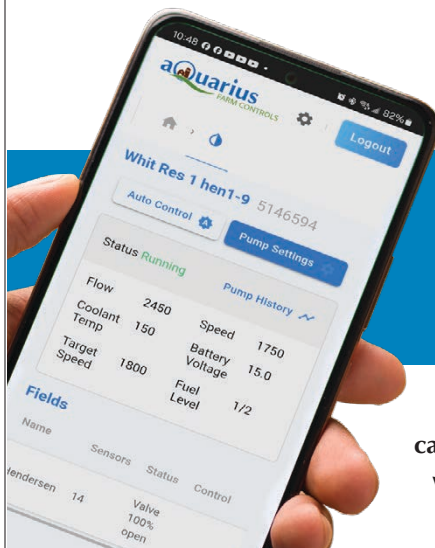
Since June 2021, *The Rice Stuff* podcast has released seven episodes about the importance and mechanics of the Farm Bill and the rice industry's needs there. Since September 2021, the *USA Rice Daily* has published 42 articles on the topic, and 11 education and analysis sessions on the bill or elements of it have been presented at USA Rice Outlook Conferences since 2019.

To say nothing of scores of media interviews USA Rice staff and members have done along with the countless meetings, phone calls, and events the USA Rice Government Affairs team have conducted every day with Farm Bill as the theme.

The bottom line is: the U.S rice industry needs an effective, modern Farm Bill; and USA Rice, with the direction, guidance, and donated time of its members, has been doing everything it can to make that happen. 

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USA RICE CO-SPONSORS INAUGURAL FOOD AID SHOWCASE AND SUPPLIES GLOBAL AID IN RECORD NUMBERS

BY JESICA KINCAID

ARLINGTON, VA — As the 2023-2024 fiscal year closed out, the U.S. rice industry celebrated a banner year for rice in food aid. A total of 161,000 MT of rice – bulk, bagged, fortified, and regular milled – was purchased to feed those in need through U.S. government international assistance programs. This marks the highest total volume of rice used in food aid in nearly 15 years, and more than triple the total of FY 2023.


Heading into the last month of the fiscal year, U.S. rice had already had a very strong showing in international food assistance programs around the globe. Through August 2024, approximately 84,000 MT of rice had been implemented in international assistance programs in 27 countries. Fortified and regular milled rice were utilized in all three main U.S. government assistance programs – the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Title II, and two U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs: McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Food for Progress.

FY 2024 also saw the implementation of a new government initiative using Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds to purchase U.S.-grown commodities to distribute in countries suffering from hunger and malnutrition. Under this program, the U.S. rice industry recently was tapped to provide 63,410 MT of milled bagged rice, 42,000 MT of which was fortified. Six new countries will be among the recipients of this aid, bringing the total number of beneficiary countries to 33 in 2024.

In May, USA Rice co-sponsored the inaugural International

Food Aid Showcase at USDA Headquarters in Washington. The event brought together more than 200 representatives of USDA, USAID, commodity groups, and Private Volunteer Organizations (PVOs) to share insights about successes and challenges in international food assistance.

Texas rice producer and Chair of USA Rice Farmers LG Raun represented the U.S. rice industry on a panel made up of farmers, millers, shipping experts, and PVO staff, speaking on behalf of each stage of the food assistance supply chain. He expressed what it means, as a producer, to contribute to the life-saving USDA and USAID programs supported by U.S. grown commodities. “I was honored to represent the U.S. rice industry at this first International Food Aid Showcase,” said Raun. “U.S. grown rice, both regular milled and fortified, is a critical and growing tool in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, a trend that looks to continue in the coming months and years.”

“At a time when the number of people in need is growing throughout the world, the U.S. rice industry is proud to have contributed in a significant way to fighting hunger,” said Garrett Williams, with Producers Rice Mill in Stuttgart, Arkansas, and chair of the USA Rice Food Aid Subcommittee. “The industry looks forward to continuing our participation in international assistance programs in the coming year and beyond.” 

Jesica Kincaid is a consultant for USA Rice working on trade policy and promotion, data analysis, and food aid.



U.S. ag commodities such as U.S. rice get a 'thumbs up' from those around the world receiving relief from hunger and malnutrition.





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DRINKING IN U.S. RICE AT AMERICAN SAKÉ FESTIVAL

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG



HOT SPRINGS, AR — The fourth annual American Craft Sake Festival, organized by the Saké Brewers Association of North America, took place here last spring.

The three-day event kicked off with visits to a farm, a mill, and a brewery where VIP attendees toured Origami Saké Brewery to understand the saké brewing process, Cypress Creek Mill to learn about rice milling, and Isbell Farms to experience firsthand a working rice farm, learn about the rice production process, and the grain's role as an ingredient in high quality saké.

"It was great to have such a passionate group of saké professionals and enthusiasts come out to our mill and farm to see the curtain pulled back on the production process, meet our family, and experience the work we put into our saké rice that is distributed here and around the world," said Whitney Jones, media manager at Isbell Farms.


The festival agenda also featured an educational conference with a series of seminars focused on saké brewing techniques, styles, and culture, as well as an exclusive welcome party with the brewers and sponsors of the event that included USA Rice and the Arkansas Rice Federation.

USA Rice Vice President of Domestic Promotion Cameron Jacobs kicked off the conference speaker series with a discussion

highlighting the U.S.-grown rice difference along with an overview of USA Rice, offering ways the organization can support members of the Saké Brewers Association of North America.

A wide range of saké stakeholders participated in the information sessions, including Cypress Creek Milling & Isbell Farms, the University of Arkansas, Kyoto Electronics Manufacturing, Iida Trading Group, and Lucas Smolic with Wetlands Saké.

As the speaker series wound down, taiko drummers announced the opening of the Saké Tasting Tent that featured 20 different breweries serving more than thirty varieties of saké. Guests also experienced a sumo demonstration, voted for the people's choice "Best Saké" award, and, of course, sampled saké well into the night. Two of the top three crowd favorites, Ben's American Saké and Brooklyn Kura, are brewed with U.S.-grown rice.

"This was an incredible event and big kudos to the Saké Brewers Association of North America and Origami Saké for organizing it," said Jacobs. "Saké presents a unique opportunity for the domestic rice industry, and our involvement in the festival helped create awareness of U.S. rice among domestic brewers and positioned USA Rice as a partner in supporting the North American saké industry." 



ANHEUSER-BUSCH FOUNDATION AWARDS \$15,000 TO THE RICE FOUNDATION IN 7TH ANNUAL 'BREW ACROSS AMERICA' COMPETITION

BY SHELBY YOUNG

WASHINGTON, DC — In September, Anheuser-Busch hosted the seventh annual Brew Across America competition here, bringing together six teams of members of Congress from both sides of the aisle to craft exceptional beers, foster bipartisan cooperation, and showcase their mission to bring people together over beer. This year, Brew Across America supported charities benefiting farmers and rural communities including The Rice Foundation.

The Rice Foundation was paired with House Ag Committee Representatives Nikki Budzinski (D-IL) and Zach Nunn (R-IA) who brewed their Midwestern Pale Ale, 'This BudZ for You,' at the Anheuser-Busch Brewery in St. Louis, Missouri, earlier this year. Their beer was the winner of the 2024 People's Choice Award, based on popular vote from the hundreds of event attendees. As a result of the win, the Anheuser-Busch Foundation made a \$15,000 donation to The Rice Foundation.

Supporting American farmers is part of Anheuser-Busch's 165+ year legacy. Each year, they purchase more than \$700 million in high-quality ingredients from American farmers, including rice, and are proud to be the first company to offer U.S. Farmed certified brands nationwide.


"It's not lost on us that Anheuser-Busch is the number one user of U.S.-grown rice," said USA Rice President & CEO Peter Bachmann. "Our nation's rice farmers are proud to be associated with one of the most well-known and respected brands in the world through our industry's partnership with their company. We appreciate the generous donation to The Rice Foundation by Anheuser-Busch and the opportunity to be part of this great event, and we applaud Representatives Budzinski and Nunn for brewing the crowd's favorite beer and representing the House Agriculture Committee well!"



The winners! (from left) Reps. Zach Nunn and Nicole Budzinski and USA Rice's Peter Bachmann.

"Our nation's rice farmers are proud to be associated with one of the most well-known and respected brands in the world through our industry's partnership with their company."

— USA RICE PRESIDENT & CEO PETER BACHMANN

The Rice Foundation is a 501c(3) organization, that promotes research, education, and leadership for all segments of the U.S. rice industry. Financial support helps The Rice Foundation work to ensure the long-term sustainability and future competitiveness of U.S. rice. 

RICE GETS THE ROYAL TREATMENT AT 87TH INTERNATIONAL RICE FESTIVAL

BY KANE WEBB

CROWLEY, LA — The 87th Annual International Rice Festival (IRF) took place in mid-October, bringing together an estimated 100,000 attendees to celebrate the state's deeply rooted connection to rice with the theme "Rice: a Louisiana Cuisine."

The festival is Louisiana's longest-running free agricultural event, as well as one of its largest, and Festival President Joshua Spell, a Crowley native and executive chef at the popular local eatery Fezzo's, emphasized the importance of keeping the festival free for the community.

"There's not many festivals of this scale that are still free," said Spell, who has served on the festival Parade Committee for many years. "We want to keep it, as long as we can, right here in downtown Crowley, to give back to our community. We have these events during the festival to celebrate our farmers, our rice mills, and the workers. At the end of the day, it's all about rice."

A highlight of the festival was the crowning of the 87th International Rice Festival Queen, Alanna Abshire. Abshire is a recent graduate of Louisiana State University Eunice and will represent the festival and the rice community throughout the year.

The festival also featured a competitive Rice & Creole

Cooking Contest, where USA Rice staff member and host of *The Rice Stuff* podcast, Lesley Dixon, served as a judge. Participants vied for the prestigious "Chef de Riz" title, with Alex Theall emerging as the winner. His cabbage and rice dish, a labor of love that took weeks of experimentation to perfect and hours to prepare, was a favorite of judges and attendees alike.

The yearly festival is also an opportunity to honor exceptional members of the Louisiana rice community. Bryson LeBlanc, Akian Massey, and Troy Dalfrey were recognized with milling industry awards, while Troy Fruge was named Rice Farmer of the Year, and Christian Leonards earned the title of Junior Rice Farmer of the Year.

The festivities culminated in Saturday's lively grand parade, where local officials, businesses, schools, and nonprofit organizations tossed candy and beads from decorated floats in true Louisiana style. In the Children's Parade on Friday, local elementary school classes showcased floats with imaginative themes, like a New Orleans streetcar and a Cajun seafood restaurant — with every inch of the floats covered with rice products.


Celebrated "zydecajun" musician Wayne Toups, a Crowley



Bottom left: The 87th IRF Queen Alana Abshire (center) with Prince Parker Lane Nero (left), and Princess Kavery Hanks. Bottom center: Chef de Riz Alex Theall (center) flanked by the cooking contest judges. Right: Dr. Ronnie Levy (left) and 86th IRF Queen Isabella Hardy try threshing rice the old-fashioned way.

local, electrified the crowd on Friday night at the main stage. His unique fusion of zydeco, rock, country, and blues had festival-goers dancing and singing along to both his originals and beloved covers.

Dr. Ronnie Levy and his team from the LSU Ag Center performed a demonstration of a historical rice thresher from the early 20th century, providing a glimpse into rice farming methods from a century ago. Both the 86th International Rice Festival Queen, Isabella Hardy, and the newly crowned 87th IRF Queen, Alanna Abshire, pitchforked the first rice shocks into the thresher — the first of many ceremonial honors for the incoming rice dignitary.

USA Rice was among the many sponsors of this year's festival joining local industry partners Supreme Rice, Falcon Rice, the Wright Group, JohnPac, the Acadia Parish Rice Growers Association, and Louisiana farmers. 

Raised on a rice and cattle farm in south Louisiana, USA Rice's Field Services Director Kane Webb lives in Crowley, Louisiana, Rice Capital of America, along with his wife, Ginger.



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USA RICE TESTIFIES BEFORE HOUSE WAYS & MEANS TRADE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIA AND WTO ISSUES

BY KARAH JANEVICIUS

WASHINGTON, DC — In February, Bobby Hanks, a Louisiana rice miller and chair of the USA Rice International Trade Policy Committee, testified before the House Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade, at a hearing entitled, *Advancing America's Interest at the World Trade Organization's (WTO) 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13)*. Hanks was one of five witnesses providing feedback to legislators and the only witness strictly representing the interests of agricultural producers.

"It is widely understood and accepted that the global rice market is among the most distorted of any sector, a factor that underscores the vital importance of the U.S. farm safety net for rice farmers," Hanks told the panel. "The impact of the price distortion of world rice prices on our industry is the main reason we are represented here today, and because the WTO should and could play a vital role in making sure our industry can compete fairly."

Hanks also reiterated USA Rice's role in the formation and leadership of the Aggies for WTO Reform Coalition.

"One of the coalition's top goals is to avoid any backsliding on agriculture commitments," said Hanks. "We are especially concerned about the insistence by India that their subsidies for commodities like rice should be exempt from WTO rules. India has threatened to take hostage virtually any outcome at the WTO unless they get what they want. But for our coalition, the status quo is better than any outcome the Indian delegation at the WTO has proposed."

Hanks predicted that India would demand permanent public stockholding exceptions at MC13 by holding up progress on negotiations across the WTO chapters. He said, "By tying public stockholding to unrelated discussions, India may prevent any critical breakthroughs around dispute settlement and the eventual restoration of the Appellate Body."

Both India and China's consistent side-stepping of their WTO commitments made them prominent discussion topics

"One of the coalition's top goals is to avoid any backsliding on [WTO] agriculture commitments."

— BOBBY HANKS, CHAIR OF THE USA RICE INTERNATIONAL TRADE POLICY COMMITTEE



Bobby Hanks hammers home persistent problems with India and the WTO during House Ways & Means testimony.

amongst all five witnesses and a bipartisan swath of subcommittee members.

Full Ways and Means Committee Chairman Jason Smith (R-MO) made an appearance at the hearing, and asked Hanks about the impact of India's egregious policies on U.S. workers and the importance of the U.S. Trade Representative pushing back on India's efforts to weaken WTO rules.

"As you know, southeast Missouri is home to 187,000 acres of planted rice, making the state fourth in production and generating more than \$150 million for the local economy. I regularly meet with Missouri rice producers who have consistently told me that they face an unlevel playing field abroad," said Chairman Smith. "U.S. export opportunities are being diminished by foreign competitors that flaunt WTO rules and unfairly subsidize rice production. India has been the most egregious violator, flaunting both the letter and spirit of WTO rules." [WTO](#)

When Karah Janevicius, USA Rice director of international trade policy, isn't traveling the world promoting U.S. rice, she's home making sure her friends are well fed on the best grain money can buy.

IRAQ RESUMES PURCHASES OF U.S. RICE

BY SARAH MORAN

BAGHDAD, IRAQ — After months of uncertainty following U.S. government-imposed financial restrictions, Iraq again is purchasing rice from the United States helping to bring predictability back into this market.

ADM Rice sold a vessel of U.S. rice to Iraq in August, and recently finalized another sale of 44,000 metric tons of U.S. long grain, with that shipment expected in January 2025.


“We are grateful for these rice shipments to Iraq and thank all those who assisted in restoring this market for us, including many in Congress who took an interest in finding a solution,” said Keith Glover, Arkansas rice miller and chair of USA Rice. “We look forward to being able to supply the full 200,000 tons for this year’s MOU.”

The initial sale came after Senators John Boozman (R-AR), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) met with Iraq’s Ambassador to the United States Nazar Al Khirullah to inquire about progress with the resumption of U.S. rice purchases for Iraq’s food basket items. The Senators and eight other Members of Congress sent a letter to the U.S. Treasury Department earlier this year encouraging a quick resolution of financing issues that prevented

regular sales from occurring.

USA Rice staff and industry representatives engaged in regular interagency meetings in partnership with officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Treasury Department, and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative to help find banking solutions to facilitate new business.

“While we anticipate some medium to long-term challenges on the banking side for Iraq, these are positive steps in the right direction at a critical time for our industry,” said USA Rice President & CEO Peter Bachmann. “Financial restrictions that were imposed on Iraqi banks at the beginning of the year remain, but viable provisional solutions have been developed that enable the continued flow of U.S. rice to this top market.”

Iraq is the second largest long grain, milled export market for U.S. rice. The Iraqi government provides regular allotments of food items to their citizens, and rice is an essential part of that food basket. 

COO Sarah Moran travels the globe for USA Rice, often accompanied by her daughter’s Hello Kitty that reports back to the family about their travels.

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USA RICE HELPS LEAD IN DELIVERING U.S. AG PRIORITIES AT WTO MC13

BY SARAH MORAN

ABU DHABI, UAE — World trade ministers met in early March for the World Trade Organization (WTO) 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13). Agriculture, of course, made it on the list of hot topics as well as fisheries, dispute settlement, and the moratorium on e-commerce.


Michael Rue, a rice producer from California and co-chair of the USA Rice International Trade Policy Committee, and Karah Janevicius, USA Rice director of international trade policy, joined the U.S. Agriculture Coalition for WTO Reform to represent U.S. rice interests on the ground at MC13.

Although U.S. negotiators were initially optimistic, India remained a blockade in making meaningful progress on the discussion involving public stockholding (PSH), the practice by which India buys rice from its farmers at an established price and subsequently stores the grain until they decide to sell it to mills and other traders. Building a coalition of like-minded countries, the United States stood firm in its approach to push forward a comprehensive discussion on agriculture to include PSH, domestic support, market access, and export restrictions.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Ag Coalition met with key principals and stakeholders including the WTO Deputy Director General Angela Ellard, U.S. Ambassador to the WTO Maria Pagán, as well as other government delegations and agriculture groups to emphasize the importance of preserving the global trade mechanism and agricultural trade rules.

“The largest concern for the U.S. rice industry is India’s over-subsidization of rice. While India does not dispute the existence of this practice, they do underestimate their actual price supports. India’s over-subsidization impacts U.S. and world rice prices, decreasing our competitiveness abroad and at home in the United States, and disrupting food security in very troubled parts of the world,” said Rue. “We fundamentally oppose India’s use of market price support as an implementation tool for its public stockholding programs and we are troubled by the country’s persistent approach to block meaningful progress at the WTO and continue to defend its trade distorting practices in the name of food security.”

Throughout the weeklong session, U.S. negotiators shared updates, as they could, indicating their firm stance in lock step with U.S. Ag Coalition priorities. Unsurprisingly, all 166 WTO members were not able to agree on an outcome for agriculture given the deep divides.

“We appreciate the hard work of our U.S. delegation in Abu Dhabi,” said Rue. “Not much has changed with India and it’s a tough job they have to push forward a solution that all members will sign off on. While Indian farmers claim to be hurt by WTO rules, developed and developing countries alike agree that what India is doing on PSH can most certainly not be in the name of global food security.” 

Michael Rue is boots on the ground for USA Rice at the WTO MC13.



TURKISH DELEGATION VISITS CALIFORNIA RICE INDUSTRY


BY KARAH JANEVICIUS

SACRAMENTO, CA — At the invitation of USA Rice, a delegation of five senior representatives of the Turkish Grain Board (TMO) and a representative from the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, toured rice country in the Sacramento Valley in October to get acquainted with the California rice production process from the field to the export vessel.

The group started their visit with a technical meeting with USA Rice staff and industry representatives, followed by a visit to USA Rice Asia Trade Policy Subcommittee Chair Michael Rue's family operation. The group had the opportunity to see harvest in action along with Rue's drying facilities. Additionally, the program included rice mill visits to Farmers' Rice Cooperative and Sun Valley Rice, and a stop at the California Rice Experiment Station in Biggs.

Transportation and shipping are crucial steps in the supply chain in today's political and economic environment, and so a tour of the paddy loading facility in Stockton and the Port of Oakland was included in their itinerary as they learned about all aspects of handling and shipping U.S. paddy and milled rice to Turkey.

While Turkey produces rice, domestic supply only covers about 70-75 percent of local rice needs and consequently imports are necessary to satisfy demand. The U.S. used to be a major supplier to Turkey, exporting more than 100,000-150,000 metric tons, however, those sales declined after Turkey introduced a 25 percent retaliatory tariff on all types and forms of U.S. rice in 2018 in response to U.S. duties on steel and aluminum. Unfortunately, that retaliatory tariff on rice, which also includes some tree nuts and distilled spirits, is still in place. The TMO is authorized by the Turkish government to import all types of rice at zero percent duty.

"It was timely to have this esteemed delegation from Turkey visiting California rice country in the midst of harvesting another sizeable crop," said USA Rice President & CEO Peter Bachmann who was on the tour. "As historically important customers for the U.S. rice industry, it has been a pleasure to re-establish the in-person relationship since the TMO's last visit to the U.S. in 2019. We were proud to be able to showcase California's production and underline the reliability of the U.S. as a consistent, high-quality rice supplier." 



Safety first for the delegation from Turkey during a rice mill tour in California.

"As historically important customers for the U.S. rice industry, it has been a pleasure to re-establish the in-person relationship since the TMO's last visit to the U.S. in 2019."

— PETER BACHMANN, USA RICE PRESIDENT & CEO

BREEDER WORKSHOP TO EXPAND PADDY EXPORTS FOCUSES ON CENTRAL AMERICAN CONSUMER PRIORITIES

BY STEVE LINScombe

SOUTHWEST, LA — USA Rice held its inaugural Breeder Workshop at the Louisiana State University (LSU) AgCenter H. Rouse Caffey (HRC) Rice Research Station this summer, fostering a unique exchange between U.S.-based rice researchers and Central American industry professionals. The workshop aimed to identify U.S. rice varieties that align with Latin American consumer preferences, a crucial step in enhancing product appeal and regaining market share for U.S. paddy rice in the region.

Six Central American industry professionals from Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica participated in the event, which provided a platform for sharing insights and discussing the specific characteristics that appeal to consumers in their respective countries.

The Rice Breeder Workshop was led by Dr. Adam Famoso, rice breeder and resident director at the HRC Rice Research Station, who brought a wealth of knowledge in rice genetics and breeding techniques. Dr. Famoso's expertise was instrumental in guiding discussions and analyzing the complexities of rice varieties. Dr. Maria Guadalupe Montiel, a native of Argentina, an LSU alumna, and a rice breeder with Horizon Ag, contributed significantly to the workshop. Her experience as a rice breeder in Argentina offered a valuable perspective, enriching the discussions with insights into regional consumer trends and agronomic practices.

Over the course of two days, participants delved into the preferences of Latin American consumers, focusing on traits such as grain size, texture, and cooking properties. A highlight of the workshop was the cooking tests, where various rice varieties, both in development and commercially available, were prepared according to a technical recipe commonly used in Costa Rica. This hands-on demonstration provided valuable feedback on how these varieties perform under traditional cooking methods used in Central America.

"This activity was born from a conversation that the FECARROZ executive board had with me during the 2023 USA Rice Outlook Conference," said Asiha Grigsby, USA Rice senior director of international promotion for the Western Hemisphere. "Although a large group of Latin American delegates participated in the annual Rice Quality Symposium, they wanted the opportunity to evaluate the rice in a more controlled environment using their own cooking methods. Thus, the breeder workshop was born."


The schedule also included tours of LSU's experimental plots, a visit to Supreme Rice Mill, farm tours, and grocery store visits, offering a comprehensive view of the U.S. rice industry from field to market.

"The success of this first Breeder Workshop underscores the importance of international collaboration in the agricultural sector," said Grigsby. "By aligning U.S. rice offerings with the specific needs of Latin American consumers, the industry can enhance its global competitiveness and ensure



Top: Measuring rice grains before and after cooking. Left: Careful observation of cooking methods. Bottom: On a field tour with LSU's Adam Famoso (right).



a steady demand for U.S.-grown rice. As USA Rice continues to build bridges with international markets, events like this workshop are vital as they not only facilitate knowledge exchange and innovation but also strengthen the bonds between producers and consumers across borders." 

Dr. Steve Linscombe is director of both The Rice Foundation and the Rice Leadership Development Program.

USA RICE RECEIVES MORE THAN \$6M IN ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO FORGE NEW EXPORT MARKETS

BY SARAH MORAN

WASHINGTON, DC — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has allocated \$300 million to 66 U.S. organizations, under the new Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP), to build demand for American food and farm exports in high-potential markets around the globe. USA Rice received \$6.25 million, with \$500,000 of that earmarked for countries in Africa.

RAPP was created in part to encourage U.S. exporters to expand beyond traditional and established markets, focusing on regions such as Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South and Southeast Asia, where consumer demand and purchasing power are growing. The new \$1.3 billion program was first announced in October 2023 at the request of Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry leaders, John Boozman (R-AR) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI).

The RAPP funds for USA Rice are in addition to the earlier awarded 2024 Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) allocations of \$3.3 million and \$1.8 million, bringing the total amount of available funding to \$11.4 million.

“We applaud Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack and the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service for prioritizing the health and vitality of export markets for U.S. agriculture,” said Steve Vargas, chair of the USA Rice International Promotion Committee. “About half of our rice production is exported and we are confident this infusion of new funds will help find new markets for U.S. rice to enhance the strength of the U.S. rice industry.”

“When news of RAPP first came out last fall, USA Rice was quick to join the chorus of organizations highlighting that this approach should be seen as temporary and complimentary and should not replace a permanent funding increase for MAP and FMD when the Farm Bill is reauthorized,” said USA Rice President & CEO Peter Bachmann. “We are very pleased to see that the House Agriculture Committee’s 2024 Farm Bill base text includes a full doubling of the MAP and FMD programs which is a monumental investment in continuing to maintain and grow our agricultural exports for many years to come. We are hopeful that this critical provision remains intact as the Farm Bill development process continues and ultimately makes it to enactment.”

In addition, USA Rice has received an additional \$500,000 of RAPP funding on behalf of the California Wild Rice Advisory Board and the Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council to promote U.S. wild rice in conjunction with those organizations.

This summer, USDA announced a second tranche of \$300 million in RAPP funding would soon be available. USA Rice submitted an application for that additional funding in October and expects an announcement regarding the allocations prior to the change in Administration in January. [wcr](#)

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— STEVE VARGAS
CHAIR OF THE USA RICE
INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION COMMITTEE

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New USDA funding casts a wider net for
“more, new, better” export markets.



USA RICE EXPANDING TO NORWAY

BY SARAH MORAN

OSLO, NORWAY — Earlier this year, USA Rice expanded its European promotional program to cover Scandinavian countries, including Norway. These countries represent a relatively homogeneous target with high purchasing power and a growing preference for Japanese sushi and Korean food.

From May through August, USA Rice teamed up with a local importer in Norway to promote and increase awareness for U.S. rice, displaying eye-catching posters at 10 locations of the popular Bambus sushi stores located in Oslo and neighboring cities such as Asker, Strømmen, and Sandvika. The colorful posters promoted the high quality and sustainability story of U.S. rice. Each poster



contains a QR code leading to the website of the local importer to generate further sales and interest.

“USA Rice also developed materials for the importer’s sales team to support their interaction with foodservice buyers, including information in Norwegian about the benefits and advantages of using U.S. rice,” said Eszter Somogyi, USA Rice director for Europe, Middle East, and Africa. “We were very pleased with the results of this promotion and

are already brainstorming new ways to support U.S. rice importers in the region.”

Norway is a top 10 U.S. rice export market in Europe bringing in more than \$1 million of U.S. rice last year. [WRI](#)

U.S. RICE JUMPS ON READY-TO-EAT TREND IN SOUTH KOREA

BY SARAH MORAN

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA — A groundbreaking collaboration between USA Rice and E Mart, South Korea’s largest retailer, launched last December with new Ready-to-Eat (RTE) products utilizing U.S. rice flour. The collaboration marked a significant milestone in the marketing industry and introduced three RTE rice flour dishes at more than 120 E Mart stores nationwide.

“This initiative was not just a product launch, it was a strategic move to tap into the evolving consumer trends favoring convenience and quality in the Korean market,” said Chris Crutchfield, California miller and chair of the USA Rice Asia/Turkey Promotion Subcommittee. “Societal changes such as the rise in single-person households, where



U.S. rice capitalizes on convenience and quality in the Korean market.

nearly half of South Koreans live alone, have spurred the consumer shift towards ready-to-eat meals.”

Prior to this collaboration, E Mart did not utilize U.S. rice or rice flour products. During December 2023, 4 metric tons of U.S. rice flour was used at the retail market. The positive reception from Korean consumers has led E Mart to continue offering these dishes, and the expected monthly usage of U.S. rice flour is now 5 metric tons.

South Korea typically imports \$120 - \$150 million of U.S. rice annually. [WRI](#)

“This initiative was not just a product launch, it was a strategic move to tap into the evolving consumer trends favoring convenience and quality in the Korean market.”

— CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD, CHAIR OF THE USA RICE ASIA/TURKEY PROMOTION SUBCOMMITTEE

USA RICE SPONSORS INAUGURAL CENTRAL AMERICAN RICE CONFERENCE IN HONDURAS

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

SAN PEDRO SULA, HONDURAS — USA Rice staff and five member companies joined industry leaders at the inaugural International Rice Expo-Convention in September, hosted by the Central American Rice Federation (FECARROZ). USA Rice was a proud diamond sponsor of the event, which brought together more than 200 participants from across the Western Hemisphere.

The convention kicked off with an opening ceremony that included the Honduran Minister of Agriculture Laura Suazo, the Mayor of San Pedro Sula Roberto Contreras, and FECARROZ President Kamal Elias Dieck who addressed the audience, extolling the vital role of agriculture.

The two-day event was packed with educational sessions covering a variety of critical topics such as the effects of climate change on rice production and a reflection on the 20-year anniversary of the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR).

USA Rice facilitated a session on rice quality in Central America by University of Arkansas agricultural economist Dr. Alvaro Durand-Morat who also provided a brief overview of the 2024 U.S. rice crop. Meanwhile, chefs from the esteemed Washington Academy led cooking sessions, showcasing both traditional dishes like rice and beans, and innovative creations such as horchata with saké and cinnamon foam.

The exhibition hall buzzed with activity as 20 companies and organizations, including USA Rice,



FECARROZ President Kamal Elias Dieck welcomes USA Rice's Asiha Grigsby to the conference (top) and encourages media in attendance to *Piensa en Arroz* or 'Think Rice' (bottom).

manned their booths, handing out samples and engaging with attendees on the latest in rice production, trade, and technology. Each evening closed with a cultural presentation and reception, offering a glimpse into the rich traditions and diverse communities of Honduras.

"The success of the International Rice Expo-Convention marked a significant milestone for the rice industry in the region, providing a valuable platform for networking and knowledge-sharing among participants," said USA Rice President & CEO Peter Bachmann. "USA Rice is proud to have brought such a large delegation to this inaugural event and we look forward to continued collaboration with FECARROZ and other partners across Central America in future projects and initiatives. We think that over time, the U.S. participation at this conference will grow and provide an additional outlet for regular in-person engagement with our important customers in the region and help facilitate business-to-business meetings for buyers and sellers prior to the annual USA Rice Quality Symposium held every December on the sidelines of the USA Rice Outlook Conference." [Web](#)





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