

# WHOLE GRAIN



## RICE RIDES AGAIN!

PG 12

USA Rice Federation | Ducks Unlimited | USDA NRCS  
 Walmart.org | Mosaic | Nestlé Purina | RiceTec  
 BASF | Riceland | Corveva

**Congratulations**  
 Rice Stewardship Partnership 2019 Collaboration of the Year

**POWERFUL PARTNERS** PAGE 6

**FAMILY AFFAIR** PAGE 10

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Congressional Rice Caucus  
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**INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION:**  
Expanding the U.S. Rice Footprint  
PAGE 20

# The New Trelleborg 480/80R50 TM600

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**LITTLE ROCK, AR | DECEMBER 8 – 10, 2019**

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**TRELLEBORG**

# The 2019 Outlook Conference Raises the Bar

BY CHARLEY MATHEWS, JR.

**LITTLE ROCK, AR** — In addition to our regular mailing list, this last issue of 2019 USA Rice's *Whole Grain* is being distributed at the USA Rice Outlook Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas. I hope you are reading it while attending the conference, because we are extremely proud of how our conference has grown and continues to positively impact our industry.

"Outlook," as most of us call it in shorthand, is the largest rice-specific event in North America, and we work hard to ensure there is content for every segment of the industry. And with more than 24 hours of educational programming, I think attendees will not be disappointed.

This year, for example, across our four breakout stages we have sessions on estate planning, setting up an eCommerce platform, consumer trends and attitudes, conservation practices, gene editing for rice, the future of co-ops, and so much more.

Our two main stages will also be packed with seven additional hours of programming. At our Annual Awards Luncheon we will both honor extraordinary leaders in our industry and meet the leaders of tomorrow as the new Rice Leadership Program class is introduced. And our keynote speakers will tackle important issues, not just about agriculture, but about the very future of our great nation, and even our own mental health and happiness.

ProFarmer's Jim Wiesemeyer and USDA's Nathan Childs will talk about ag policy and impacts here and around the world, while A.B. Stoddard, associate editor and columnist with RealClearPolitics will share her insight into the 2020 elections that are fast approaching.

I'm particularly looking forward to our Monday keynote speaker, Dr. Shimi Kang. As a Harvard-trained psychiatrist and neurologist who believes stress and anxiety are a massive public health crisis, she knows full well what those emotions do to our bodies and our minds. And while it's easy to say we are just living in a stressful world now, I think you would agree that the world of agriculture, of farmers and those who depend on them, the stress levels are climbing ever higher. Dr. Kang promises to help us unpack the threats and send us home with greater awareness and tools to manage these parts of our lives and make us happier, more efficient, and even more creative.

I think a major factor that can contribute to happiness is a sense of community. And that's what we are working to create here at the USA Rice Outlook Conference. We have plenty of networking opportunities where you can catch up with old friends and make new ones, and I trust you will do both.

If all this sounds great but for one reason or another you were not able to join us in Little Rock, I want you to mark your calendar right now for the 2020 USA Rice Outlook Conference. We're going to be in Austin, Texas, December 9-11, and we know since we'll be in Texas, we have to deliver something even bigger and better than we are this year. Our team is up to the challenge, and I challenge you to be there to hold them to it! 



The author with last year's keynote speaker, Dr. Morgaine Gaye.

"I think a major factor that can contribute to happiness is a sense of community. And that's what we are working to create here at the USA Rice Outlook Conference."

USARices

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CIRCULATION: 24,000



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

USA Rice is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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**2020 USA RICE OUTLOOK CONFERENCE**  
**December 9-11 | Austin, TX**

**SAVE THE DATE**

## SPREADING THE WORD

BY BETSY WARD

**ARLINGTON, VA** – Our team puts a lot of time and energy into every issue of *Whole Grain*, in no small part because this newspaper serves as a calling card for everything we do for this industry. The rice industry leaders who populate the boards and committees of USA Rice and our member organizations are active, dedicated, and well-informed. But we know that’s only about 300 men and women filling these roles, with another 700 attending events such as the USA Rice Outlook Conference. But our industry is many thousands strong, so in an effort to ensure more people know about the great work we do, we publish this newspaper.



That’s why these issues cover such a wide variety of topics – we want to have something of interest to everyone, and we realize we may only be getting in front of some people for a few minutes each year – so we want to make them count!

In this issue you’ll read about new promotion programs going on overseas as well as trade agreements that help set the stage for promotion efforts. We of course write about some of the programs we undertake in the U.S., our largest market, such as the second year of the Think Rice Road Trip and our popular Foodservice Farm & Mill Tour. (Be sure to check out the video documenting this year’s tour in Mississippi – you can find it on the USA Rice YouTube page!)

We also celebrate rice by spending time at the International Rice Festival in Crowley, Louisiana, with an Arkansas rice farm that’s been at it for more than 100 years, and you get to meet the young man from Mississippi who won this year’s National Rice Month Scholarship video contest.

For good measure, we throw in the new and improved Congressional Rice Caucus, the leadership class trip to Italy, cover the exciting news of the recognition USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited received from a national sustainability organization, and more.

You’ll notice a fair number of advertisements in this issue – more than usual. And that’s because these companies are crucial partners of ours at our annual USA Rice Outlook Conference and we thank them for their continued support.

I hope you have as much fun reading this issue as we did assembling it. I wish you all a joyous and safe holiday season and a happy new year! 

**“... our industry is many thousands strong, so in an effort to ensure more people know about the great work we do, we publish this newspaper.”**

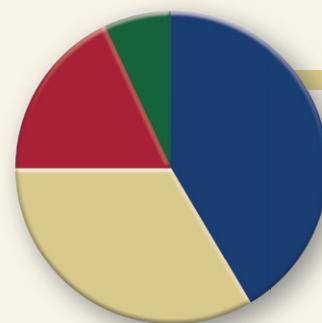
## USA RICE – WORKING TO BETTER THE ENTIRE RICE INDUSTRY

BY REBECCA GREENWAY

**ARLINGTON, VA** — Like all federated trade associations, USA Rice brings together funding from many industry sources – for us, this means farmers, millers, merchants, and associated businesses – and uses that funding to conduct programs on behalf of the entire U.S. rice industry. A total of more than three hundred rice industry representatives sit on USA Rice boards and committees that are tasked with oversight of USA Rice activities to assure 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.

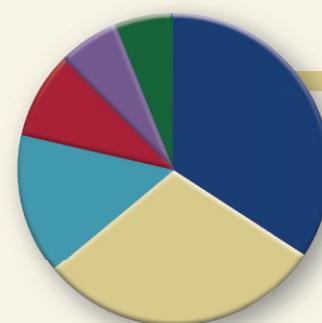
Our annual financial audit is conducted by an external CPA firm hired by the USA Rice Audit Committee – also comprised of representatives from all industry segments – and their report stated that USA Rice’s financial records and reports were prepared according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, 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 review of USA Rice’s compliance with federal regulations regarding expenditure of federal funds. It is the combined efforts of board and committee members and other volunteers and staff that results in USA Rice’s continued record of clean financial audits and compliance reviews.

*Rebecca Greenway is USA Rice CFO.*



**FY 2018/2019 REVENUES -  
\$11,532,900**

State check-off funds provided by USA Rice Council	\$4,699,600	●
USDA International Promotion funds	\$3,941,800	●
Mill, merchant, farmer, and other rice industry dues	\$1,877,500	●
Other income	\$1,014,000	●



**FY 2018/2019 EXPENSES -  
\$11,532,900**

International Promotion – USDA funded	\$3,941,800	●
Rice State Relations, Membership & Meetings	\$2,627,600	●
Domestic Initiatives & Promotion	\$2,133,000	●
International Promotion – Rice Industry Funded	\$1,235,800	●
Management and general	\$813,100	●
Government affairs	\$781,600	●



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## SERVING MANKIND AND NATURE: USA RICE—DUCKS UNLIMITED RICE STEWARDSHIP PARTNERSHIP UNITES RICE INDUSTRY TO DELIVER SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

BY CARTER PURCELL

**MISSISSIPPI RIVER VALLEY, USA** — Driving through Tallahassee County, Mississippi, in winter, you are most definitely in rice country. But if you look closer, there's another world nestled among the paddies—ducks and other migratory waterfowl who make their winter homes among the flooded rice fields.

“Rice and ducks get along swimmingly,” explains Rice Stewardship participating farmer Mike Wagner of Sumner, Mississippi. “They love an aquatic environment, and we inevitably farm an aquatic environment. We're able to supply a lot of the protein and carbohydrates they need to sustain their cycles of life. They fertilize our land, they do our tillage for us. It's a perfect rice production system as I see it.”

This symbiotic relationship between waterfowl and working ricelands is at the heart of the Rice Stewardship Partnership, a collaboration formed by USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited in 2013 with a mission to conserve three interrelated critical natural resources: ricelands, water, and wetland wildlife.

### Unparalleled Collaboration for the U.S. Rice Industry

“One of the remarkable things about the Rice Stewardship Partnership is the fact that we operate in all six of the major rice producing states—Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas,” explains Lydia Holmes, sustainability manager with USA Rice. “It's been really important for the Rice Stewardship Partnership to have collaborators from across the supply chain—from farmers to inputs to retailers and end users. Having those different perspectives has helped us to build a strong program that's beneficial to farmers and the environment.”

“It combines Ducks Unlimited, USA Rice, NRCS, rice producers, and supply chain partners to do awesome things on the ground for conservation,” says Dr. Scott Manley, director of conservation innovation at Ducks Unlimited.

The Rice Stewardship Partnership relies on collaborative funding mechanisms to support farmers in the adoption of critical conservation practices to meet their mission. “Leveraging both private and public funds allows us to achieve a much larger impact on the landscape,” says Dr. Ellen Herbert, ecosystems services scientist at Ducks Unlimited. “These funds support both the adoption of practices and changes in infrastructure that make farmers' operations more sustainable. And, they fund our staff on the ground, which is perhaps the most important part of this partnership.”

One of the critical partners in the Rice Stewardship Partnership is the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The Partnership leverages funds through the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), in addition to partnering USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited's networks of ground staff with local NRCS offices. This creates a powerful network of boots-on-the-ground advisers which allows participating growers to navigate practice adoption and data collection with the appropriate support.

“The goal of the program is to promote the producers to try something new,” says Steve Crisel, NRCS area resource conservationist in Missouri. “These partnerships provide financial assistance for the producers in order to provide waterfowl habitat. It's a win-win situation.”

The Partnership prioritizes farmer livelihoods by providing financial assistance in addition to conservation planning and technical assistance. This helps growers adopt practices, like innovative irrigation techniques, that significantly reduce water use and improve water quality, soil conservation, and more. In total, the project's financial assistance is set to scale to impact more than 1,000 farms and more than 800,000 acres before 2024.

“It's like this three-legged stool,” says participating farmer Al Montna of Yuba City, California. “You have to be responsible to people, your community, and your neighbors.



TOP RIGHT: Rice farmer Mike Sullivan (second from left) points out the measurable results of sustainability efforts on his operation.

ABOVE: The Wagner family farms for the future.

You have to be responsible for the planet, you have to leave this better than you found it. Finally, you have to be able to make a profit. Because profit is what drives us being able to do conservation on these lands.”

### Uniting the Rice Supply Chain for Lasting Value

In addition to NRCS, supply chain collaborators in the partnership provide both technical assistance to the project and work to multiply and leverage NRCS dollars to scale the Partnership's impact. “Through participation in programs like the Rice Stewardship Partnership, we're able to drive forward the message of some of the conservation practices that are taking place,” says Jack Scott, vice president, sustainability and responsible sourcing at Nestlé and Nestlé Purina. “We need to have ongoing stewardship of the land. These are things that cannot only benefit individual farmers but can long term benefit the entire community of rice farming as well.”

The Partnership has harnessed the impact of ten Field to Market members and nearly twenty-four financial sponsors in total, scaling sustainable outcomes for the rice industry by harnessing a multi-stakeholder partnership and implementing locally-led solutions. To date, the Partnership has completed approximately 250,000 acres of conservation projects which support conservation of ricelands, water, and wildlife—and partners involved only have plans to grow their impact.

“Agriculture has to leave its gates open and conservationists have to come in to work with us to keep this land better for my family and my grandchildren than when I found it,” says Montna. “And it's going to be their responsibility to do that and pass it on to the next generation.” 

*Carter Purcell is the communications and membership manager for Field to Market.*



## HONORED FOR COLLABORATION ON CONSERVATION

The recipients of Field to Market's 2019 Collaboration of the Year Award have harmonized the needs of mankind and nature by bringing together the rice industry to support waterfowl habitat, protect and conserve water, and create lasting value for stakeholders across the rice value chain. This year's award honors the USA Rice—Ducks Unlimited Rice Stewardship Partnership that unites ten Field to Market members including USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Walmart.org, The Mosaic Company and the Mosaic Foundation, Nestlé Purina PetCare Company, RiceTec, BASF, Corteva Agriscience, and Riceland Foods, Inc, to deliver sustainable outcomes for the U.S. rice industry.

The Partnership has relied closely on Field to Market's Fieldprint® Platform to measure and deliver on continuous improvement in these areas since 2014, using the tool to support rice growers in better understanding the relationships between their management practices and their ability to improve environmental outcomes in these areas. To date, the Partnership has analyzed more than 42,000 acres of rice fields using the Fieldprint Platform, working side-by-side with producers to engage them on continuous improvement in water quality and quantity.

"Since each producer and each landscape has a variety of natural resource concerns, we have to work with each operation individually to maximize conservation outcomes," explains Dr. Ellen Herbert, ecosystems services scientist at Ducks Unlimited. "The Fieldprint Platform allows farmers to understand how sustainability practices directly impact their operations, their yields, and their use of natural resources."

"The data is key," explains participating farmer Mike Sullivan of Burdette, Arkansas. "By collecting data in the Fieldprint Platform, you feel more comfortable trying something new on a single field instead of your whole farm. You try it one year, a few more fields the next, without committing to the whole ball of wax before you know its worth."

Beyond supporting growers with tools to understand and improve the sustainability of their own operations, the Partnership's use of the Fieldprint Platform has also provided a powerful tool to tell the sustainability story of the U.S. rice industry. "Using the Fieldprint Platform, we've been able to demonstrate that changing irrigation strategies have saved substantial ground water in eastern Arkansas, for example" says Dr. Herbert. "The Platform can help us document and demonstrate that agriculture is successfully addressing some of the most pressing natural resource concerns, including declines in biodiversity, decreasing water quality, and declines in availability of fresh water."

# CONGRESSIONAL RICE CAUCUS LAUNCHES WITH SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE

BY LESLEY DIXON

WASHINGTON, DC — In the middle of September, National Rice Month, the Congressional Rice Caucus convened for its inaugural meeting of the 116th Congress in the United States House of Representatives. The Rice Caucus is co-chaired by Congressman Bennie Thompson (D-MS) and Congressman Rick Crawford (R-AR) and comprised of 24 like-minded legislators from both sides of the aisle all who agree that the mission of the Caucus is to provide a platform to discuss the role of government in addressing current and future challenges facing the U.S. rice industry.

More than 50 attendees were present at the initial meeting, including Reps. Doug LaMalfa (R-CA) and Bruce Westerman (R-AR), to hear industry updates from Riceland Foods in Crawford's district and Mars Food in Thompson's district, and an overview of the U.S. rice industry's many sustainability initiatives, including the Rice Stewardship Partnership between USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited, which works with over 40 organizations and corporate partners to bring more than \$80 million to rice farmers for the implementation of conservation practices through 2023.

Jennifer James, a rice farmer from Newport, Arkansas, and chair of the USA Rice Sustainability Committee, was on hand to talk about the importance of sustainability on her fourth-generation farm, which she hopes to be a fifth-generation operation when her son joins the family business. "Not only are we working to conserve the natural resources that provide for our livelihood, but we're helping our communities by providing jobs and injecting money into the rural economy," said James. "Because of these outstanding achievements in sustainability from U.S. rice, we in the industry want to showcase these efforts."

"American-grown rice is known throughout the world for its high quality, and is a major U.S. export, even to other rice-producing nations," said Thompson. "Rice is also an important part of Mississippi's economy."

"The American rice industry contributes more than \$34 billion to the U.S. economy annually and supports more than 125,000 jobs. The First District Arkansas district is also the leading rice producing district in the country and produces roughly half of the U.S. rice crop," said Crawford. "Rice is an economic powerhouse and the backbone of many rural communities – we must strive to maintain sustainability in both the field and market. This coalition of Representatives will ensure the lasting viability and economic sustainability of rice growing in this country." 

*Lesley Dixon is the USA Rice staff writer.*



BELOW: Rice farmer Jennifer James tells the rice sustainability story to a packed house of Rice Caucus Representatives.



**"Rice is an economic powerhouse and the backbone of many rural communities...this coalition will ensure the lasting viability and economic sustainability of rice growing in this country."**

— REPRESENTATIVE RICK CRAWFORD (R-AR), Rice Caucus Co-chair

## RICE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CLASS GETS FIRSTHAND EXPOSURE TO THE ITALIAN RICE INDUSTRY

BY STEVE LINSCOMBE

**MOUNTAIN HOME, TX** — Each year in the fall, the Rice Leadership Development Program has a session in an important rice production area somewhere in the world. All alumni of the domestic program can apply to participate. This year's trip in late October was to the rice area of northern Italy.

Class members Sunny Bottoms (Gould, AR), Jonathan Hobbs (River Ridge, LA), David Martin (Bernie, MO), Kirk Satterfield (Benoit, MS), and Jim Whitaker (McGehee, AR) spent six days in the history-rich region of the Italian Piedmont. Our host for the week was Massimo Biloni, who is a longtime friend and a fellow rice breeder. Massimo did an outstanding job planning and executing the visit.

The first day of the session, the group met at the Associazione Strada del Riso office, for a detailed introduction to the Italian and European rice industries. Rice is grown on approximately 570,000 acres in Italy each year, most of it in the Piedmont region. This rice is produced by 4,700 growers, so most operations are considerably smaller than typical U.S. rice farms.

The rice types produced are very diverse and are typically 70-75 percent japonica and 25-30 percent indica. The Italians have a very large number of varieties in production, but unlike the U.S., they are carefully distinguished and classified into categories based on kernel geometry and end use. One of the biggest production challenges faced there is controlling weeds (including weedy rice), and Clearfield technology has been used for several years while Provisia technology is being introduced.

The group visited four rice mills including a large mill with outdated technology, a medium-sized mill with state of the art equipment, and an ancient mill still making great products with antiquated equipment. They also toured the Borsa Merci Rice Exchange, the biggest rice exchange in Europe, where rice is bought and sold each Tuesday. It was interesting to note that the farmers selling their rice remained outside, while their broker was inside making a deal for them.

The group visited a rice farm where 100 acres had been converted to permanent wetlands for waterfowl and water bird habitat. This project has some similarities to our RCPP projects. They also learned that most Italian rice farms, while small, are typically using the latest technology such as autosteer equipment. We visited a major irrigation project that provides rice irrigation water to much of the region. The main canal system was constructed over 150 years ago. Some of the early planning for these irrigation systems was actually done by Leonardo da Vinci.

Research stops included the Ente Nazionale Risi, Rice Research Center, the largest public rice research

station in Europe, as well as the Italian Rice Experiment Station, which is the private research center of our host, Massimo.

The last day of the session was a survey of local cuisine with stops at the Guffanti Cheese Refinery, a fifth-generation cheese refiner, and the vineyards and winery of Castello Conti, a small family operation that produces some of the finest Italian wines. One recurring topic of conversation was the excellence of the region's food. From risotto to white truffles to Sicilian-style pizza, it was difficult to select a favorite.

This was a very educational trip for the participants, and will certainly enhance their ability to serve as leaders in the U.S. rice industry. The Rice Leadership Development Program is sponsored by American Commodity Company, John Deere, and RiceTec, Inc. through The Rice Foundation. [WC](#)

*Steve Linscombe is the director of The Rice Foundation. For 39 years prior, Steve was the director of the Louisiana State University Rice Research Station.*

Class members spent the week experiencing "azienda agricola a forchetta" or farm-to-fork, Italian style.



Rice is grown on approximately 570,000 acres in Italy each year.

# 83RD INTERNATIONAL RICE FESTIVAL DRAWS TENS OF THOUSANDS AND CELEBRATES OUR MIGHTY GRAIN

BY KANE WEBB



ABOVE: Outgoing Rice Queen Victoria Callahan and Rice Farmer of the Year Alan Lawson.

BELOW: Party time in Crowley.

**CROWLEY, LA** — For four days in mid-October, all things rice were celebrated at the International Rice Festival here in the “Rice Capital of the World.” And if you’ve never experienced it, you need to. You don’t have to be a rice farmer, rice miller, or work in the rice industry, but if you love rice, music, and having a great time, you’ll be right at home.

Each October since 1937, people from all walks of life, young and old, from across the nation and around the world, descend on Crowley to enjoy the festivities and local hospitality dedicated to celebrating the rice industry. Senator John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jackie, attended the Rice Festival in 1959, with their sights set on the White House. (That year the Farmer of the Year was Mr. Paul Loewer, father of our own Jackie Loewer who was a senior in high school at the time!) The point is, you never know who you might see at the Rice Festival.

This year, USA Rice Vice President of Domestic Promotion and Communications Michael Klein made his first visit to the festival, and I’m sure it won’t be his last.

In addition to all the festivities, there are some outstanding events that highlight the true reason for celebrating this industry for so many years. The annual Chef de Riz (Rice Chef) cooking contest is a coveted title for the top rice dish across all categories. Once a Chef de Riz, always a Chef de Riz, and that distinction now belongs to Laurie Bellard of Lafayette.

The same holds true for the Festival honorees such as Junior Farmer of the Year, Jake Reiners; Farmer of the Year, Alan Lawson; Rice Festival Honoree, the Thibodeaux Ag Group including Randy, Dale, Steve, Ross, and Eric Thibodeaux; and of course, the 83rd International Rice Festival Queen, Jimi Madison Joubert.

In passing on the crown to the new queen, 82nd International Rice festival Queen Victoria Marie Callahan recalled highlights from her reign, and gave special thanks to her “USA Rice family” and the Rice Millers’ Association for their support and the opportunity to represent the rice industry throughout the year at 108 events and festivals!

“I’ve seen pictures of the International Rice Festival and heard reports, but actually

being there was an experience like no other,” said USA Rice’s Klein. “Rice and rice culture was honored at every turn - from the recipe contest that had more than 150 entries, to the multiple parades that featured floats made of rice; and from visiting with old rice friends and making new ones to the always blockbuster hospitality of Louisiana, there is no place I would have rather been and I’ve marked my calendar for next year already!” 

*Kane Webb is the USA Rice director for field services.*



## AHOY, MATEYS!

BY LESLEY DIXON

**CROWLEY, LA** — This sea-worthy vessel was the crown jewel of this year’s International Rice Festival here. Every year, first grade classes from all around Acadia Parish decorate floats that celebrate rice. This year, the theme was “Rice... an International Treasure,” and the hardworking parents of Acadia’s first-graders went all out.

The rules are simple: the float must be covered top to bottom in rice, rice products, or rice packaging.

Grand prize winner St. Michael used paint mixed with rice to color their float, rice bags donated by Falcon and Supreme rice mills for the billowing sails, and rice shocks given by the LSU AgCenter Rice Research Station to fashion the angry seas on which the ship was tossed.

Julie Richard, Louisiana rice farmer and proud parent of one of the ship’s buccaneers, reckons that it took about 600 pounds of rice from their bins to create the float.

“Every float was amazing,” said Richard. “There’s so many hands that go into this, and some incredibly creative

moms who come up with the designs.”

The 52 first graders from St. Michael manned the ship on its journey through the parade, wearing pirate hats, head scarves, and eyepatches. “They thought it was just the greatest thing ever,” said Richard.

Leading up to the festival, the participating first graders are given tours of area farms and rice facilities, to teach them about the importance of rice in their community and to the world.

“We take them to the farm and at the end of the week they ride on the float, and participate in a festival that truly celebrates what our livelihood is based upon. It’s pretty cool to see it come full circle,” said Richard. “It’s not just a carnival—there’s a lot more behind the reason why we celebrate rice.” 

**“We take them to the farm and at the end of the week they ride on the float, and participate in a festival that truly celebrates what our livelihood is based upon.”**

# FOR FARM FAMILY, BLOOD IS THICKER THAN MUD

BY LESLEY DIXON

**CARLISLE, AR** — For rice farmers, business is a family affair.

Take the Schafer family, who have been growing rice for five generations in this area since 1914. “My great-grandfather brought four of his sons from Illinois, and one of those sons was my grandfather, Benjamin Schafer,” says Cliff Schafer, owner of Schafer Farm. The family stayed on in the Carlisle area, and over the years subsequent generations branched off into their own rice operations. “My father’s first crop was in 1949, and my first crop was in 1987.”

Farming was a way of life for Cliff, but for his wife Rachel, who hailed from Little Rock, it was quite the learning experience.

“I knew I was marrying a farmer, but I didn’t really know anything about farming at the time,” says Rachel. “I thought we were going to have a little garden in our backyard, some good vegetables, that kind of thing. I had no idea we were feeding the world.”

“It was quite an adjustment for her,” Cliff agreed. “She didn’t know the first thing about rice farming, but she learned to drive a tractor, do things around the farm, and took care of us.”

She even put on some waders and tried her hand at duck hunting, a pastime her husband and two children adore. “They didn’t tell me how to walk in these waders. There’s suction in the mud, so you have to kind of twist your foot as you go. I don’t know how many times I fell down!” These days, she leaves the duck hunting to Cliff, her daughter Savannah, and her son Nicholas. “Rice fields make good duck land. I just decided it wasn’t my game,” she reflects, laughing.

Growing up on the farm made a big impact on Nicholas

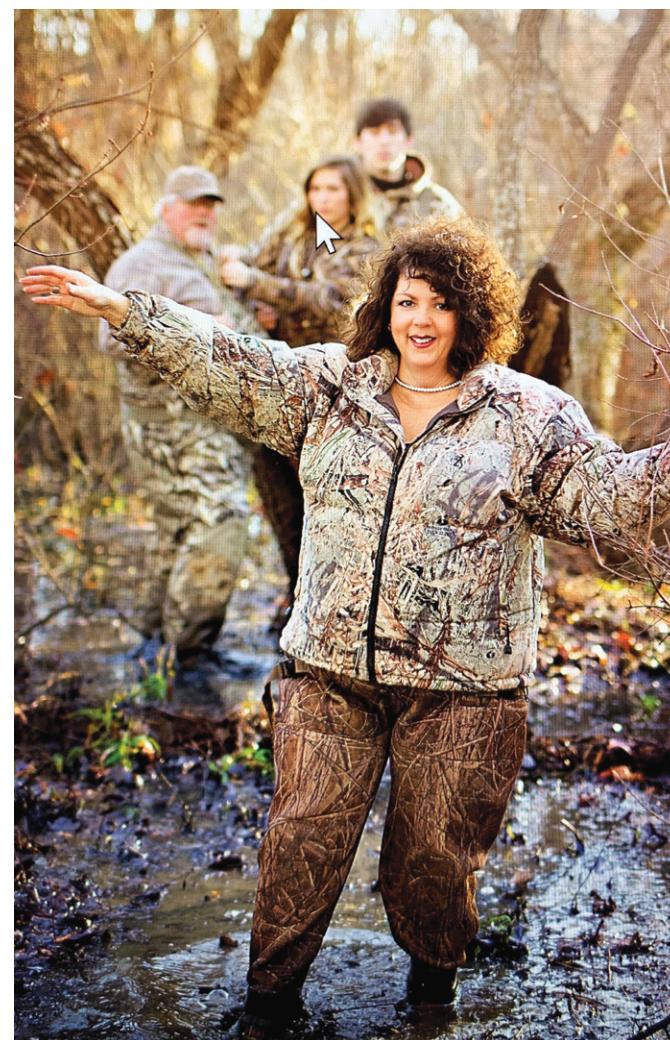
and Savannah. Twenty-two-year-old Nicholas is a past winner of the National Rice Month Scholarship, and was awarded the grand prize in 2014 with a project that educated children from the Carlisle community about the origin of their food and the business of farming. Savannah, 17, is a senior at Carlisle high school and participated in Arkansas’s Rice Rep program in 2019, representing Arkansas rice through volunteer work, charity, and education over the course of the summer.

“I think raising kids on a rice farm teaches them responsibility,” Cliff says proudly. “I’m not saying the farming lifestyle is better than any other lifestyle, but I think it’s more down to earth.”

Cliff himself came back to farming after getting his degree in ag business at Arkansas State University. Though he was accepted into law school, when he had the opportunity to come back to the family business and farm rice, he accepted. “I went to college for four years and got a degree but I’ve been here ever since. I never left. I guess it’s in your blood.”

Rice is a central part of Arkansas identity and the Carlisle community, with most of its farms being family-run businesses, some of which have been around just as long as the Schafers. Cliff says, “We’ve got a great agriculture program at the high school, which means a lot. It’s really taken off in the last three or four years. There’s a lot of opportunities for young people in ag. Agriculture isn’t dead, is what I’m saying.”

Far from it. Agriculture—and rice—is the lifeblood of Carlisle, as it is for many rural communities throughout the country. Multi-generation farms and families like the Schafers are living proof. 



“There’s suction in the mud, so you have to kind of twist your foot as you go.”

## THE RICE MERCHANT



Chuck Pappageorge

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Rachel Schafer waltzes in her waders (top) while son Nicholas brings home the 2014 NRM grand prize.

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# DOMESTIC PROMOTION

## RICE RIDES AGAIN!

BY MIKE HUSKE

**POINTS THROUGHOUT THE MID-ATLANTIC** — This year, the Think Rice Road Trip traveled around the Mid-Atlantic, conducting consumer events to educate the public about U.S.-grown rice and handing out thousands of Aroma rice cookers and tons of donated U.S.-grown rice to consumers.

In all, the Rice Truck and her crew conducted more than 20 consumer events across Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The team made charitable donations at Wilmington’s Ministry of Caring and the Cape Henlopen Food Pantry in Delaware, The Armed Services Retirement Home in Washington, DC, the Shepherdstown Lions Club & Shepherd’s Pantry in West Virginia, and the Patriot Pantry, the official food bank of George Mason University in northern Virginia.

Consumers trade their email address and answers to survey questions for an Aroma rice cooker and one or two pound bags of rice, recipes, information, and Think Rice swag. But at its core, the program is about educating consumers, who are becoming ever more interested in where their food comes from, that when it comes to rice they can and should eat American!

“Of course we are armed with great information about U.S.-grown rice for consumers, from sustainable growing practices and food safety standards to nutrition facts and cooking qualities and tips, but the one that seems to be resonating above all others this year is simply that we grow rice in the U.S.,” said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice director of domestic promotion, who was responsible for plotting the truck’s route this year.

“People love hearing that we grow rice here and they tell us that they desperately want to support our growers,” said Deborah Willenborg, USA Rice director of communications, who wrote one of the

team’s most effective messages. “We tell them it was America’s rice farmers and millers who bought this rice cooker for them and are giving them some rice, and they can say thank you by only filling it with U.S. rice in the future.”

Willenborg says they all promise to do just that and carefully study the Grown in the USA label the team points out to them.

Jacobs adds that consumers are grateful for the new knowledge and the valuable appliance, but that they also say they look forward to hearing from USA Rice again with recipes, coupons, and farmer profiles via the Think Rice Newsletter that they are promised.

While farmers markets, traditional markets, restaurants, and breweries are popular spots for the team, two of the most unique stops this year were at a food and music festival in Delaware that merged with USA Rice’s foodservice outreach, and when the team took over a store in historic Shepherdstown, West Virginia, to create the first ever “All Things U.S. Rice Pop-Up Shop.” Both events paid huge dividends for the team and the industry they are representing.

On September 28, at the Fifth Annual Southern Delaware Wine, Food, and Music Festival, the team joined dozens of area restaurants to compete for the attention of the more than 600 attendees. But the food and wine samples were no match for the free household appliance and the USA Rice booth was “The Hot Spot” of the festival with the team going through more than 300 cookers and collecting consumer information from more than 400 attendees who were happy to sign up for the Think Rice Newsletter even after the cooker supply had run out. The event also nicely dovetailed with USA Rice’s foodservice outreach program.

2019 Foodservice Farm & Mill Tour (see story



“... the pop-up store was different. People spent a lot of time with us. They came in and really browsed, comparing varieties, and asking us all kinds of questions – including which was our favorite kind of rice.”



on page 16) participant Chef Hari Cameron was the director of culinary competition for the event and he saw to it that U.S.-grown rice was the secret ingredient for the competition. He also made a delicious horchata for the Road Trip team to hand out along with all those cookers that kept bringing people back to the booth.

“This was definitely a very affluent crowd and we weren’t sure how we would be received,” said Jacobs, who had negotiated a prime location for the USA Rice booth and claimed a prominent spot for the Rice Truck. “It was really nice to see how positively they reacted to us and how grateful they were to learn U.S. rice farmers were out there working hard to feed them.”

The “All Things U.S. Rice Pop-Up Shop” was the talk of historic Shepherdstown, West Virginia, with the team taking possession of the storefront at 106 W. German Street on Friday, November 1, and working into the night to create a U.S. rice consumer experience like no other.

“Even staff was impressed to see all our industry sponsors showcased in one spot,” said Jacobs. “We could not have done this promotion without the generous support of Aroma Housewares, Falcon Rice Mill, Farmers’ Rice Cooperative, KenChaux Rice, Producers Rice Mill, Ralston Family Farms, Riceland Foods, Riviana Foods, The Sun Valley Rice Company, and Windmill Rice Company.”

“It’s a small town, and people had been watching us all evening moving about 500 cookers and 1,000 pounds of rice inside and setting everything up,” said Sean Mullen, USA Rice accounting manager, who volunteered to give up his weekend for the cause. “They were talking about us all night and there was a line out front when we opened the next morning at 10. People couldn’t wait to get inside!”

And when they did, they were rewarded, wandering past giant towers of Aroma rice cookers, to displays of rice from all six major rice producing states, each variety with a story that the USA Rice staff was happy to share.

“We had long grain brown and white, sprouted brown, Calrose, jasmine, purple, and red rice,” explained Lesley Dixon, USA Rice staff writer, who helped staff the store. “People had loads of questions and were really interested to hear what we had to tell them about each variety. They always had trouble choosing, but that was the deal – one bag per person!”



Time was a luxury at the pop-up shop where consumers browsed the racks, got rice advice from staff, and, finally, made the rice choice to fill their free Aroma Housewares rice cooker.



“One of the hallmarks of the Road Trip is how efficiently we are able to visit with the consumers we interact with – we could generally get them to complete our survey, pitch the U.S.-grown message, and answer their questions in five minutes or less,” said Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of domestic promotion. “But the pop-up store was different. People spent a lot of time with us. They came in and really browsed, comparing varieties, and asking us all kinds of questions – including which was our favorite kind of rice.”

Klein said the answer was always the same: “any rice grown in the U.S.!”

One civic leader who visited the All Things U.S. Rice store wrote to USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward saying, “Thank you so much for bringing awareness (and rice cookers) to our grateful town! I recently visited your USA rice pop-up shop here in Shepherdstown and came away very impressed with your marketing work to get the word out on U.S.-grown rice.”

Now that this year’s road trip is over there’s only one thing left to give away: the Think Rice Road Trip truck itself! The truck is being raffled off at the USA Rice Outlook Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, on December 10. A maximum of 2,000 tickets will be sold and the winner doesn’t need to be present to win. If you’re at the conference, stop by the registration booth to purchase tickets, and if you didn’t make it to the conference, you may buy tickets online, before the 10th, at <https://my.usarice.com/Truck-Raffle-Tickets>. 

Mike Huske spent a lot of time at farmers markets with the crew where he learned the vendors are keeping the barter system alive and well (one rice cooker = 1 rum cake and a bottle of ginger vinegar).



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# ACCLAIMED CHEFS TOUR MISSISSIPPI RICE COUNTRY

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

**GREENWOOD, ARCOLA, & GREENVILLE, MS** — This September, USA Rice brought seven foodservice chefs, nutritionists, and award-winning individual chefs to Mississippi rice country for the fourth iteration of the Foodservice Farm & Mill tour to learn and experience first-hand the whole story of U.S.-grown rice from the field to their kitchens.

The tour kicked off with a U.S.-grown rice presentation that covered the history, plant anatomy, and nutritional profile of rice, and the latest in rice uses, applications across all foodservice meal components, and foodservice trends for rice. Following the presentation, the group visited the Delta Seed and Service Center where Mississippi rice farmer Carter Murrell provided an informative walk through of the planting and harvest cycles, as well as the drying, milling, and grading processes. He also spoke about sustainable farming practices utilized in the state and shared his experiences with alternate wetting and drying on his own family farm.

It was then a short ride down MS-438 to Marvin Cochran's farm and fields where harvest was in full swing. Cochran welcomed the group and explained the proud history of rice farming in Mississippi.

"There aren't many places in the United States where you can say we're growing the seed, planting the rice, harvesting it, drying it, and milling it all in the same county or parish, but we can say that here in Washington County where you are standing right now," Cochran told the group. "That's pretty special and we're proud of that."

Cochran then saw to it that all the attendees got to ride in one of the two combines running that morning, which was a highlight for all.

"Getting these chefs out into the field to actually experience harvest is a vital part of the tour that gets them thinking about our rice differently," said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice domestic promotion manager. "In the field you can really see it click with our attendees. Rice goes from just something that's in their pantry to a locally-grown crop being nurtured and prepared by family farmers. This year's attendees were from Chicago, New York City, Tampa, Nashville, Roanoke, Washington, DC, and the Philadelphia area - this visit to the farm made an impact!"

After a rice-centric lunch, attendees were ready to suit up for their tour of the Mars' Food U.S. facility in Greenville that is home to the ready-to-heat process for Uncle Ben's quick cook bags. At the facility, attendees learned about the process, where rice is sourced, how quality of products are ensured, and Mars' sustainability goals.

"It was great to learn more about American-grown rice from seed, to harvest, to mill, to polish, to bag. I took away a lot from this tour," said 3x James Beard nominee Chef Hari Cameron.

**"Restaurants have tremendous influence on consumers, and the proper promotion and plating of U.S.-grown rice can have a trickle-down effect to your everyday consumer."**



After an all-day, hands-on learning experience in the Mississippi rice fields and mill, the chefs put their newfound respect for rice to the test.

"I now know how unique the U.S. rice industry is in its ability to produce all types of rice - long, medium, and short grain, as well as aromatic and specialty varieties," added 2018 Rising Star winning Chef Jerome Grant.

New to the foodservice tour program this year was a reality show-style cooking competition that took place following the mill tour at the Viking Cooking School Test Kitchen in Greenwood. Attendees were put into teams of two and had to answer rice trivia questions to earn market baskets of different ingredients including shrimp, catfish, chicken thighs, and pork tenderloin.

Chefs then had one hour and their choice of Uncle Ben's quick cook rice varieties to produce a dish that would be judged for a chance to win a commercial Zojirushi rice cooker.

Jacobs noted while these tours are educational opportunities, it's also about establishing and maintaining relationships with tour attendees.

"Restaurants have tremendous influence on consumers, and the proper promotion and plating of U.S.-grown rice can have a trickle-down effect to your everyday consumer," he said. "The more restaurants we get using U.S. rice - and calling it out - the broader we can spread our messages and awareness of our industry, and potentially impact consumer purchasing habits."

Tour participants represented more than 1,600 restaurants from Bloomin' Brands (parent company for Outback, Fleming's, Bonefish Grill, and Carrabba's Italian Grill), Logan's Road House, Virginia Tech's dining services, the Restaurant Associates group, a(muse) coastal cuisine, and the Smithsonian's African American History and Culture Museum. [we](#)

*Deborah Willenborg is the USA Rice director of marketing and communications.*



# A SUP-RICE-ING WINNER IN THIS YEAR'S VIDEO CONTEST

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — Rice is one of Mississippi's top exports, a driving force in the region's economy and the backbone of its culinary culture and history. Kyle Voong, a senior at Brandon High School in Brandon, Mississippi, breaks down a comprehensive overview of rice's role in both his home state and country in his National Rice Month scholarship video, "A Sup-Rice-Ing Presentation."

Using clever puns and wordplay, Voong composed and recorded a catchy hip hop track that explores what kinds of rice are grown in the U.S., its nutritional benefits, its economic impact, and even a step-by-step recipe for omurice, a kind of Japanese omelette.

While Voong is no stranger to video production, having produced and edited several videos for other school projects, this is his first foray into music composition.

"Combining these two things, one that I'm really familiar with and the other that I've always liked but never dipped my toe into, was a really interesting challenge for me," said Voong.

He also values the knowledge he gained about U.S. rice during his research, especially concerning the nutritional benefits of brown rice.

Award-winning  
composer and  
videographer  
Kyle Voong



Voong is in the middle of college applications, but his top choice at the moment is Rice University in Texas—a decision due, in small part, to his scholarship video. "The inclusion of Rice University in the song was just tongue in cheek, but once I started delving more into my college search, I'm really attracted to all the opportunities they have there."

The grand prize of \$4,000, sponsored by Corteva Agriscience, will go a long way toward achieving that goal, and Voong wants to express how grateful he is to everyone at USA Rice and Corteva who made the scholarship possible. "I also want to thank the wonderful people in the Brandon High School offices, because without them I don't think I would have known about this really fun and enjoyable competition."

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## EXPANDING THE U.S. RICE FOOTPRINT

BY SARAH MORAN

ARLINGTON, VA — USA Rice's International Promotion program recently received an infusion of additional marketing funds through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Trade Promotion (ATP) program. The ATP program is one of three programs President Trump authorized in 2018 to assist agricultural producers who have been affected by retaliatory tariffs in many overseas markets.

USA Rice received more than \$5.5 million to promote U.S. rice internationally over the next three years, and in this first year of the ATP program, USA Rice is already getting results with new promotion programs in the West Bank, Ghana, and Singapore.

In the West Bank, USA Rice is conducting promotional activities with importers of four U.S. rice brands with the importers paying 30 percent of the promotional costs. Billboards and LED screens have been installed in several major cities, including Ramallah, Hebron, and Jericho. Radio spots airing on selected radio channels tout the benefits of U.S. rice. These promotions have increased awareness of U.S. rice and as of September 2019, U.S. rice exports to the region are up 90 percent over the same time period last year.

"The strong interest and willingness of local importers to participate in our program and contribute in cash to the promotional costs is a huge success and we look forward to further developing the program in the West Bank in the coming years," said Eszter Somogyi, USA Rice director for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

Ghana had been a strong market for U.S. rice, importing nearly \$70 million worth, until 2014 when cheap rice from Vietnam and Thailand flooded the market. USA Rice has created a marketing program this year to combat this competition and exports are already up 13 percent as of September 2019 compared with a year earlier. Initial activities have included a tasting event with traders, wholesalers, and retailers, and a foodservice seminar targeting artisanal foodservice providers in the greater Accra area.

USA Rice's new program in Singapore has targeted gourmet chefs and foodservice providers in this high value market. Singapore is a country that is concerned about the growing rate of obesity and diabetes so in an effort to provide information to consumers, USA Rice is conducting research into determining the glycemic index of U.S. rice.

The ATP funds are also being used to expand activities in other top markets such as



Different promotional efforts – in-store marketing (left), trade shows (below), and gourmet dinner events (bottom left) – all with the same goal.

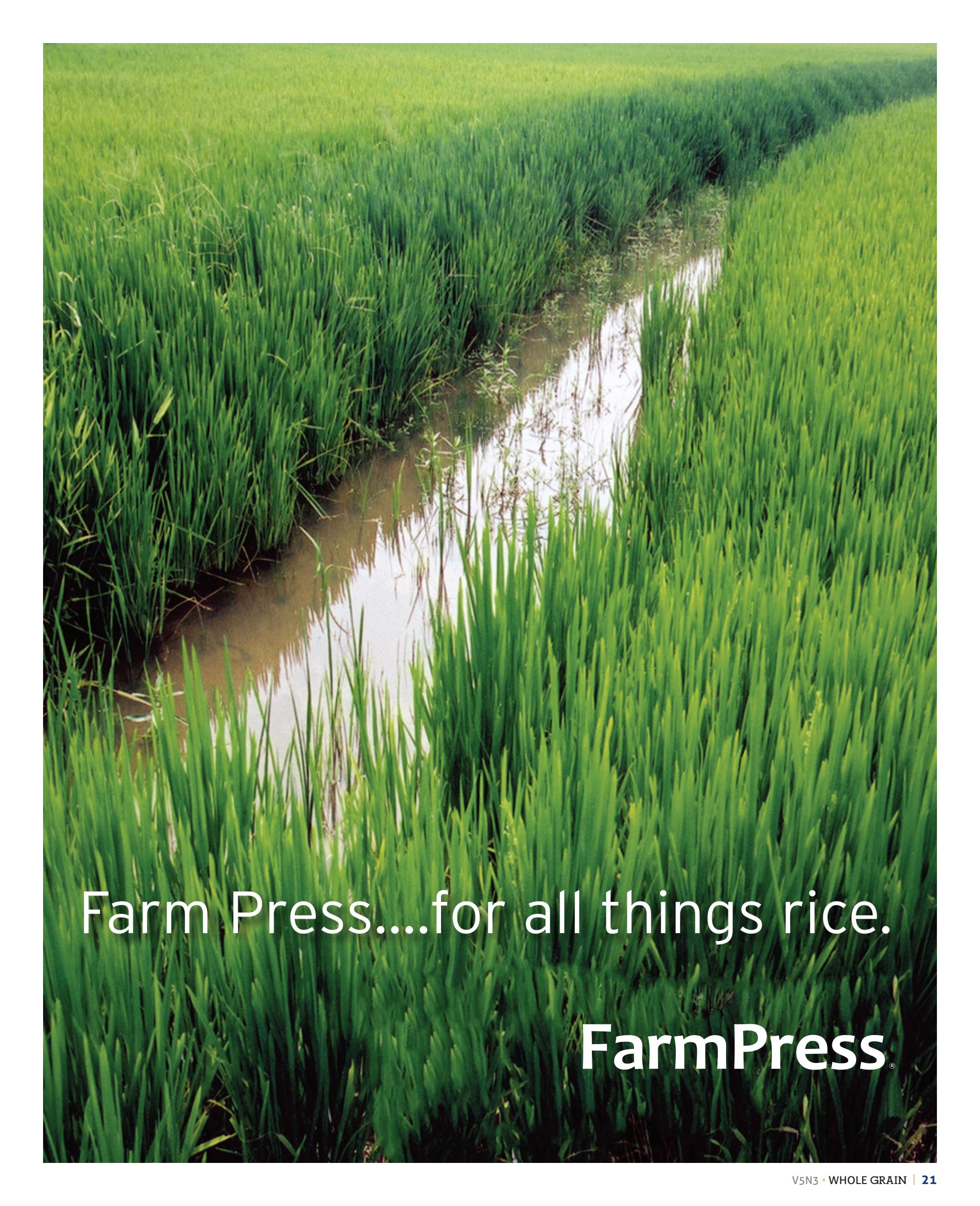
The fact that local importers participate with cash shows the programs are on the right path.



Central America, Saudi Arabia, China, the UK, Turkey, Mexico, and Jordan. For the first time, USA Rice launched a social media program in Central America where recipes, tips on how to cook rice, and fun facts were shown on social media including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. More than four million people saw our posts on Facebook and interacted 166,000 times. In China, USA Rice has hosted three seminars with more than 100 Chinese traders who learned about U.S. rice and met with several U.S. rice exporters; during one of these seminars, the first private sale of U.S. rice occurred. In Saudi Arabia and Jordan, where importers also financially contribute to our promotions, USA Rice expanded activities beyond Riyadh and Amman to several cities outside of the two capitals.

"Rice exports create jobs, fuel rural economies and contribute to important multilateral commercial relationships," said USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward. "These additional ATP marketing funds demonstrate the recognition of these important contributions and will go a long way to augment our already successful international promotion programs." [WE](#)

Sarah Moran, USA Rice vice president international, oversees USA Rice's numerous international promotion programs.



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## TARIFF FREE ACCESS TO KEY MARKET ON THE HORIZON?

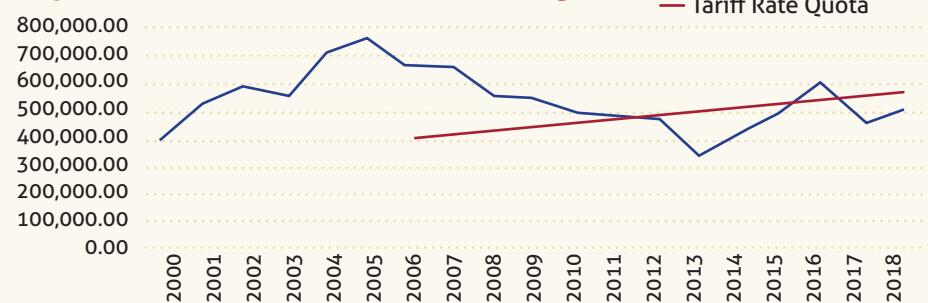
BY SARAH MORAN

ARLINGTON, VA — For decades, Central America has been a strong and natural export market for U.S. rice because of the proximity and the variety of rice those countries consume. In 2006, the U.S. signed the U.S. – Central America – Dominican Republic free trade agreement (CAFTA-DR) that included significant duty-free access for U.S.-grown rice, with tariffs phased out over 17 years. The phase-out of the tariffs provided what is called a tariff rate quota (TRQ) for rice, allowing a certain amount in duty-free, and anything beyond that required a tariff, so that the domestic industries could prepare for eventual free trade. The amount of U.S. rice exports that enter without a tariff increases incrementally each year, and in 2019, it allowed a total of 569,015 MT of U.S. rice to enter duty-free. About 84 percent of that overall quota is allocated to U.S. rough rice.

In the 14th year of the agreement, this year, the CAFTA-DR countries, including the U.S., are tasked with establishing an Agriculture Review Commission to review the implementation and operation of CAFTA-DR. The Commission was established in November 2019, and in 2020 they will evaluate agricultural trade between the various countries.

FECARROZ, the Central America Rice Federation, is requesting that the Commission use this opportunity to make changes to the TRQ. Rather than allowing U.S. rice to get into

**Exports to CAFTA-DR & TRQ Tonnage**



Central America duty-free in 2023 like the trade deal calls for, they are proposing that U.S. rice sales remain constrained by TRQs that cap the exports we can send duty-free.

Additionally, they want U.S. rice exported beyond the cap to face tariff levels as high as 99 percent. In return, FECARROZ has promised exclusivity for U.S. rice and continued imports.

USA Rice has met with FECARROZ several times, given that Central America is the United States' second largest export destination, to discuss the merits of their proposal including how exclusivity can be guaranteed.

"The spirit of any free trade agreement is that there will be free and fair trade," said Bobby Hanks, chair of the USA Rice International Trade Policy Committee. "That's what we and the U.S. government envisioned with CAFTA-DR and that's the road we are on. Any proposed changes to the agreement must demonstrate not only a strong benefit to our industry in order to be considered, but a benefit for trade in all goods and services between our countries." 

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