

WHOLE GRAIN



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Finishing the Year in The Golden State

BY KIRK SATTERFIELD

BENOIT, MS — Many of you are reading these words at the USA Rice Outlook Conference in Indian Wells, California, and for that I say, “thank you for joining us!” If you weren’t able to make the trip, or you are reading this sometime in 2024 after picking this paper up at a state meeting or at the local dryer or mill office, mark your calendar for December 2024 to join us for what will be one of the biggest Outlook Conferences ever in Little Rock, Arkansas.

As for what’s happening here in California at the 2023 Conference, we have got a great program with exciting speakers. We’ll hear from experts on the next Farm Bill that has unfortunately slipped into 2024, and ag labor policy analysis. Speaking of analysis, we’ve got a lot of programming focusing on the alarming downward trend in some of our important export markets.

The fourth annual Rice Quality Symposium will bring breeders and importers together again to get themselves on the same page – something we really need to happen. Also, we have guests from Europe and South America speaking about global trends, grain quality, and more. I will be taking notes, and you’d be advised to do the same! Also, Daniel Whitley, Administrator of the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service, will be a keynote speaker and he will no doubt talk about our great partnership.

Closer to home, we have sessions on U.S. consumer trends and e-commerce platforms that connect farmers directly to customers – both individual and foodservice chains. In a first for us, we have guests from NASA, yes, the space agency, who are going to be talking about the exciting work they are doing in the new NASA Acres project, designed to “bring Earth Observation technology down to the ground to strengthen agriculture.”

And of course, there’s no Outlook Conference that doesn’t feature the smart men and women for whom the conference is actually named: the scientists at the land grant universities who will share their state’s outlook and research reports.

The bottom line is, this is going to be a great week of meetings, fellowship, and learning. I look forward to seeing you in the hallways, the audiences, and the Exhibit Hall. I also hope you will take advantage of our fantastic location here in southern California to join us for the first ever Rice Foundation Golf Tournament.

Again, thank you to the attendees and exhibitors and sponsors of the 2023 Conference, and if you missed it, see you in Little Rock!

Wishing you and your family a happy and prosperous 2024!



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

USA Rice is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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BETSY WARD RETIRING AS USA RICE CEO; PETER BACHMANN NAMED SUCCESSOR

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

ARLINGTON, VA — Earlier this year, USA Rice President & CEO Betsy Ward announced she would retire after 18 years at USA Rice, 16 of them in her current role, and almost four decades advocating for U.S. agriculture and forestry in Washington, DC, and around the world. Peter Bachmann, USA Rice vice president of policy & government affairs since 2019, was named her successor by the Board of Directors.

Prior to joining USA Rice, Ward spent 20 years directing forest and wood industry trade policy and the global forestry agenda, including through the tumultuous Third Ministerial of the World Trade Organization that largely targeted that industry. She is past chair of the U.S. Agricultural Export Development Council that represents the interests of more than 80 commodity organizations who grow and export U.S. agricultural products; she is a past vice chair of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, an independent non-governmental organization working to ensure healthy marine and aquatic ecosystems, and a thriving, responsible seafood economy; and is a member of the CEO Agriculture Council that coordinates alignment on issues impacting production agriculture.

“I have a deep passion to serve people I know are the true stewards of our planet,” Ward said. “From forests to farms and fisheries, it has been my great honor to spend my professional life promoting and defending the producers’ way of life. I have traveled all over this country and the world advocating for the rice industry and I am so very grateful for the partnership and collaboration I have had with farmers, millers, merchants, and our many end users and rice customers. I am extremely proud of our work to advance the sustainability profile of the rice industry and at the same time ensure a viable safety net for future generations of rice farmers.”

Bachmann, a native of Maryland and graduate of Virginia Tech, worked at USA Rice on domestic farm policy issues from 2015 to 2017 when he joined the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a senior advisor to Secretary Sonny



Power couple: Betsy Ward and Peter Bachmann.

Perdue. There he helped shepherd USDA through the 2018 Farm Bill process, played a crucial role in the development and implementation of the 2018 and 2019 trade mitigation packages, and was a strong advocate for U.S. ag exports. When he first returned to USA Rice, he directed trade policy and joined Ward’s leadership team.

“I speak for the entire industry when I say we are eternally grateful for the guidance, leadership, and dedication of Betsy Ward,” said Kirk Satterfield, a Mississippi rice farmer and chair of the USA Rice Board of Directors. “Her accomplishments are too many to list, but one of the most important things Betsy did for us was to build a strong organization with skilled and smart leaders outside and in, who could take the reins from her when she decided it was time to retire. We have full confidence that Peter will continue to build on Betsy’s legacy.”

Bachmann officially took over the role on November 15 and Ward will remain on as an advisor through mid-December. A retirement celebration is planned for December 8, at the end of the USA Rice Outlook Conference in Indian Wells, California. [W3](#)

Deborah Willenborg, USA rice director of marketing & communications, is impressed with this leadership baton pass and USA Rice not missing a beat.

“I speak for the entire industry when I say we are eternally grateful for the guidance, leadership, and dedication of Betsy Ward ... Her accomplishments are too many to list, but one of the most important things Betsy did for us was to build a strong organization with skilled and smart leaders outside and in...”

— KIRK SATTERFIELD, MISSISSIPPI RICE FARMER AND CHAIR OF THE USA RICE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FAREWELL: GONE FISHIN'

BY BETSY WARD

ARLINGTON, VA — My official retirement is just days away, and I am certainly excited to start this next chapter in my life; however walking away from my rice family is one of the hardest things I've had to do.

I didn't grow up in the rice business like most of you, but every day for the past 18 years I have woken up and thought about rice. I don't think a day has gone by that I haven't talked about rice. And that is because I am so fortunate to have represented and learned from all of you. I have seen the unbelievable dedication of rice farmers and the infrastructure that supports them. You are true American heroes and I just tried to make sure you could keep doing what you are doing, and support your families and rural communities in the process.

It has been a joy and an honor to represent you all these years. From the halls of power in Washington, DC, to suburban farmers markets, and with world leaders, the media, and random waiters who weren't aware they were supposed to know where their rice came from, I've never stopped advocating for you. We've stood together to fight for what we believe in, and we've had some amazing successes. We've




In central Maine, this constitutes a quorum.

faced setbacks as well, but we did it together. And we dusted ourselves off and went back to work.

I've made wonderful friends in this industry, and it's been heartbreaking to have to say goodbye to so many remarkable people. All will have a special place in my heart for the rest of my days.

I hope I have made a difference in your lives; you all have in mine. So, thank you for that. Thank you for letting me represent you. And thank you for being so generous with your time and knowledge to teach a history buff from Pennsylvania all about rice.

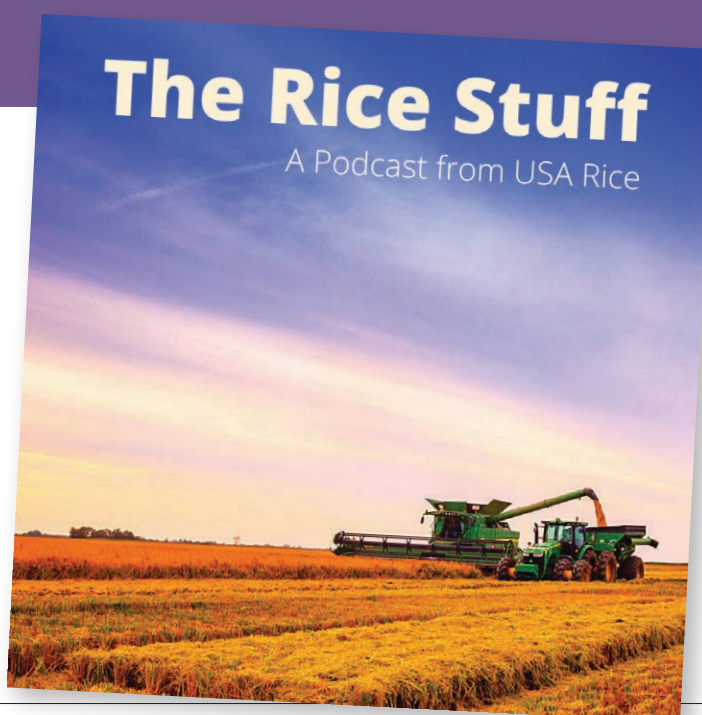
Not a moment of the time we spent together was wasted, and as my husband and I spend more time at our camp in Maine, you can bet we're going to be teaching the Down Easters an awful lot about rice.

Have a wonderful and safe holiday season, and thank you for everything. 

LISTEN UP!

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TEXAS AND CALIFORNIA TAKE CHAIRS ON RICE BOARDS

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

LITTLE ROCK, AR — When their two-year terms ended on July 31, the chairs of two USA Rice governing boards handed their gavels to colleagues from other rice growing states. LG Raun, a Texas rice farmer in Wharton County, was unanimously elected to serve as the new chair of the USA Rice Farmers Board of Directors, taking over from Mississippi's Curtis Berry, and Louisiana rice farmer Eric Unkel handed the reins of the USA Rice Council Board of Directors to California's Josh Sheppard who farms in Butte County.

Raun stepped into the top spot on the Farmers Board in the middle of negotiations on the new Farm Bill, but as the vice chair for the last two years and with many years of experience going back and forth from El Campo to Capitol Hill, the transition was seamless.

"This board exists specifically for the industry's farmers to iron out any potential policy differences and to unite behind a single strategy," Raun said. "Curtis did a great job shepherding us here and I'll see to it we get a new Farm Bill that works for agriculture, particularly rice."

The USA Rice Council oversees and authorizes funding for promotion and education efforts for the U.S. rice industry, annually directing upwards of \$5 million domestically, in addition to overseeing the roughly \$6 million contract with USDA-FAS for international rice promotion. Sheppard, who has been the vice chair representing California since 2017 took over as rice acreage throughout the U.S. was rebounding, meaning additional resources should flow into the Council over the next year at least.

"Eric did an outstanding job of steering us through some lean times, but he always was clear-eyed about the mission and he left our organization in strong financial shape and well-positioned to continue the fight for U.S.-grown rice," Sheppard said during the Board meeting in July.

The USA Rice Farmers Board also elected Louisiana rice farmer Fred Zaunbrecher as vice chair and California appointed rice farmer Tom Butler to Sheppard's vacated vice chair seat. Each new appointee will serve a two-year term that began August 1, 2023. [WR](#)

Michael Klein is USA Rice vice president of communications & domestic promotion and though he chaired the student council in college for three years, he was never entrusted with a gavel.



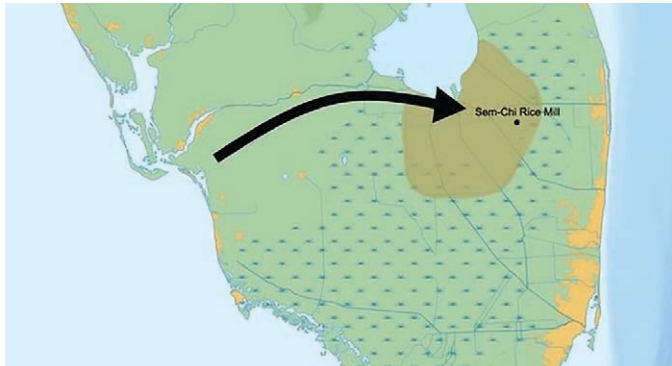
"This board exists specifically for the industry's farmers to iron out any potential policy differences and to unite behind a single strategy."

— LG RAUN, USA RICE FARMERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHAIR

Eric Unkel (left) passes the Rice Council gavel on to new chair, Josh Sheppard.

FLORIDA JOINS USA RICE FARMERS

BY JAMISON CRUCE



Rice production region in Florida, south of Lake Okeechobee.

ARLINGTON, VA — Florida rice farmers have officially joined the USA Rice Farmers, the leading national organization representing all U.S. rice farmers.

During the 2022 USA Rice Outlook Conference, the USA Rice Farmers Board of Directors approved the Sunshine State's admittance as an associate member state, the first step in the process of joining the organization. At the annual July business meetings, the USA Rice Farmers approved changes that would allow for four non-voting seats on the Board and the ability for Florida farmers to serve on the organization's committees. Florida is the first associate member to join the USA Rice Farmers.

"We are excited to bring Florida into the fold and we welcome them to the USA Rice Farmers organization," said Curtis Berry, a Mississippi rice farmer and past chair of the USA Rice Farmers. "With the addition of Florida, we continue to expand our reach to ensure American rice farmers' policy priorities are heard in Washington, DC, and across the country from a single voice."

Florida produces approximately 25,000 acres of rice each year near Belle Glade, south of Lake Okeechobee. This rice is processed by Sem-Chi Rice Mill, a longstanding member of the USA Rice Millers' Association.

"Florida rice farmers are thrilled to become an associate member of the USA Rice Farmers and we look forward to working with the organization on all fronts," said Daniel Cavazos, a member of the 2022-24 Rice Leadership Development Class who serves as the director of rice and organic farming for Florida Crystals Corporation. "As a part of this leading group, we know that much good work will continue to be done supporting the U.S. rice farmer."

USA Rice Farmers is one of three charter members of the USA Rice Federation, and is composed entirely of rice farmers from Arkansas, California, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas. This representative body ensures a forum for policy development on issues that affect rice farmers, and a voice for rice farmers to advance and implement activities to address those issues. [w](#)

Jamison Cruce is USA Rice senior director of government affairs.

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USA RICE OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

Rice Foundation Benefit Golf Tournament

Friday, Dec 8, 2023
10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Indian Wells Golf Resort
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Price Includes:
• Golf Cart
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LIFESTYLES OF THE RICE & FAMOUS

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — Every year, the judges panel for the National Rice Month Scholarship Video Contest sifts through a huge number of video submissions from some of the most talented, driven, and creative high school seniors in the six rice-growing states. It's a tough competition, and often a difficult decision to choose the video entry that tells the most compelling, informative, and entertaining story about U.S. rice. This year, the grand prize winner stood out with an ensemble cast of siblings, a delightful sense of humor, and a unique concept: what if rice was a famous celebrity?

In her video, "Rice: a Worldwide Celebrity," Kaylee Snell, a senior at Bentonville High School in northwest Arkansas, concocts an entire persona for U.S. rice, using a pair of sunglasses, a great script, and some innovative editing skills. The video traces the long and storied history of rice, from its humble beginnings of domestication in Asia thousands of years ago, through its early cultivation in the Carolinas in the 1700s, to the modern U.S. rice industry in her home state.

I was able to catch up with Kaylee after she received the news that she won first place in the NRM Scholarship Contest, and she gave me some behind-the-scenes insight on her creative process.

Kaylee, your filming and editing skills led us to believe this isn't the first time you've made a video, and your co-stars (Carson, 13, and Emily, 15), who are also your siblings, have wonderful onscreen chemistry. Is filmmaking a hobby of yours?

I've always loved film, video, and making little skits; me and my siblings all love to do that. They actually wanted to be in it because it's something we love to do, so I thought, why not?

We love it when a video submission has a sense of humor. I especially loved the bag of rice wearing sunglasses, which you managed to make into a real character with a whole personality. What's your inspiration?

I get a lot of inspiration from YouTube videos, and I'd say that's where I got the humor from. I didn't want it to feel clunky, and I think the short cuts and smooth transitions, and the fast cutaways between jokes, adds to the humor. In general, I wanted to create an educational video that was also entertaining and fun to watch. I didn't want to just read



Rice has a red carpet moment!

facts off a sheet of paper. It's kind of a play on the celebrity idea, because everybody knows rice, so I thought it would be perfect to make rice a celebrity since it's already famous worldwide. And I just thought adding the sunglasses would be funny!

Your video has some great costumes in it. You and your siblings do a kind of "breaking news" TV interview with a South Carolina colonial farmer, with a white powdered wig and everything. How did you come up with the costumes?

I just had that image in my mind for the South Carolina character, and I knew I needed to get that wig. A lot of the rest of the costume we already had, and I was able to throw it together, but I just had a picture of that wig in my head, and I thought it would be so funny to do an interview from back in the day. So I ordered the wig online. Me and my brother and sister figured we'll be able to use the wig for future skits, too.

It's a useful wig to have around! So tell me, did you learn anything about rice you didn't already know throughout the process of making this video?

I had known that Arkansas was a producer of rice, but I had no idea it was the number one producer in the United States. I don't have any connections to people in the rice industry, but I am majoring in Supply Chain Management at the University of Arkansas next year, so I was already interested in this. A big thing I wanted to show in my video is that a lot of people know rice, but they don't really



Kaylee Snell, a high school senior from Bentonville, Arkansas, is getting the celebrity treatment at Outlook as this year's National Rice Month Scholarship grand prize winner.

know where it comes from or all the people who dedicate themselves to that field, and all the work that goes into it. I was very drawn to that idea.

Okay, last question: what's your favorite rice dish?

Before this project, I didn't realize how much rice I eat, but I eat it almost daily. Usually chicken and rice, that's our go-to—just any kind of grilled or fried chicken with rice. But whether it's a burrito or a Rice Krispies Treat, I feel like I've been eating rice so much lately. It really is a staple food for me.

Congratulations to Kaylee Snell, and we know we'll be seeing great things from her in the future! 

Lesley Dixon is a writer and editor in Austin, Texas, where sunglasses are needed year-round.



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RICE STEWARDSHIP PARTNERSHIP LOOKS TO THE FUTURE, BUILDING ON TEN YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BY JOSH HANKINS



LITTLE ROCK, AR — The USA Rice-Ducks Unlimited Rice Stewardship Partnership (RSP) turned 10 this year and to celebrate, more than 100 partners gathered here for a three-day summit. Supply chain contributors, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) leadership from all six rice growing states, state agencies, rice producers, and friends came together to recognize accomplishments, but more importantly, to collaborate on the continuation of the RSP mission since its inception, to conserve three of the nation’s most important natural resources: working ricelands, water, and wildlife.

The summit agenda included reports on the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Inflation Reduction Act funds, status of the new farm bill negotiations, and conservation tax credits. The National Black Growers Council (NBGC) along with 11 supply chain partners provided updates on their progress, and attendees had the chance to tour Brantley Farms, the Marion Berry Pumping Station, Delta Plastics, and Cypress Creek Saké Mill.

Over the last decade, RSP has built a rice field team of 25+ professionals from USA Rice, Ducks Unlimited, and Delta Wildlife who possess great expertise and experience with on-farm conservation. Rice-targeted conservation programs have surpassed 1000+ unique and individual rice farms covering more than 800,000 acres. Twenty-five supply chain financial sponsors have contributed more than \$10 million to leverage conservation impact and USDA investments in conservation. Eleven RCPP awards have been delivered, two of which

received renewals, all totaling more than \$110 million in financial assistance to rice producers.

The RSP enters its second decade with the announcement that the \$80 million Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities project agreement was signed last week. Now that the ink has dried, partners will be able to move forward on project deployment providing an additional \$63 million of financial assistance to rice producers across all six rice-growing states. The RSP is once again in a lead position to navigate this brand new conservation program, helping bring innovation and opportunity to the farm.

“What a great opportunity to gather all of our rice conservation leaders in one place,” said Louisiana rice farmer Jeff Durand who co-chairs the RSP. “Since our partnership was officially formalized 10 years ago, we have maintained that our two organizations, Ducks Unlimited and USA Rice, are stronger working together, and that is at the core of every opportunity we pursue. Looking back, we have much to celebrate, and looking forward, we have much more to accomplish. We thank the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, our supply chain financial sponsors, and many other in-kind supporters, for the solid foundation upon which we stand. Let us continue the momentum, the economic and environmental impact, through tomorrow and beyond.” [wca](#)

Josh Hankins is USA Rice director of Grower Relations and the Rice Stewardship Partnership.

“Since our partnership was officially formalized 10 years ago, we have maintained that our two organizations, Ducks Unlimited and USA Rice, are stronger working together, and that is at the core of every opportunity we pursue.”

— JEFF DURAND, LOUISIANA RICE FARMER AND CO-CHAIR OF THE RSP

SAY “HELLO” TO JOE.

HE’S A RICE FARMER, AND HE KNOWS THESE FIELDS LIKE THE BACK OF HIS HAND. WHICH MAKES SENSE, BECAUSE THOSE HANDS WORK HARD OUT THERE NEARLY EVERY SINGLE DAY. THIS FARM IS HIS PRIDE, AND HAVING IT FLOURISH GIVES HIS HANDS THE FREEDOM TO DO OTHER THINGS... LIKE CASTING FISHING RODS WITH HIS SON OR CHEERING ON HIS DAUGHTER’S EQUESTRIAN FEATS. AT RICETEC, WE SUPPORT WHAT MATTERS TO JOE, WHICH IS WHY WE NEVER STOP DEVELOPING SEED THAT PRODUCES HIGHER YIELDS AND HIGHER PROFITS. WE’VE GOT TO HAND IT TO YOU, JOE. YOUR FIELDS SURE DO MAKE US PROUD.



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MISSOURI RICE FARMER TESTIFIES TO DIETARY GUIDELINES COMMITTEE

BY LESLEY DIXON

WASHINGTON, DC — In mid-September, Missouri rice farmer and miller, Sam Schneider of Inland Cape Rice Company, provided testimony on the development of the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines to members of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC). Schneider's remarks highlighted the important role both enriched and whole grains play in supporting a healthy diet that helps Americans adhere to eating patterns consistent with federal recommendations.

Schneider spoke on behalf of the Grain Chain, an advocacy coalition representing the grain industry, and touted the critical nutritional benefits associated with whole grain and refined grain consumption across all life spans, including many nutrients deemed “under consumed” in the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines.

“Sam’s testimony really raised the profile of USA Rice and the greater grain industry as his role as chair of the USA Rice Nutrition Subcommittee, along with his bonafides as a farmer and miller, made him the perfect candidate to deliver these remarks. The DGAC obviously agreed because they selected Sam out of thousands who applied to testify,” said Michael Klein, USA Rice vice president of communications & domestic promotion. “He did a great job promoting the nutritional benefits of rice and making a connection between members of the scientific community with someone actually responsible for growing our country’s food.”

Schneider urged the DGAC to carefully consider how they address foods as “ultra-processed” given there is no consistent,



Rice farmer Sam Schneider connects to the DGAC session via Zoom.

science-based definition of the term and that any recommendation to eliminate or reduce ultra-processed foods may adversely affect consumption of key nutrients and food groups, like grains. He also advocated to continue to recommend consumption of nutrient-dense carbohydrate foods like whole and enriched rice, and applauded the efforts of the DGAC to explore “staple carbohydrates” as a means of achieving health equity, highlighting the diverse range of nutrient-rich grains that different cultures consume to meet their nutritional needs.

“It was an honor to testify in front of the DGAC and speak about the importance of grains as part of a healthy diet,” said Schneider. “I believe my perspective as a grower helped establish a better understanding and connection between those in the nutrition policy sector and American farmers, and why our industry feels so strongly that the dietary recommendations include and support the consumption of key grains, like U.S.-grown rice.” [WS](#)

REIMAGINING RICE FOR THE SCHOOL LUNCH CROWD

BY CAMERON JACOBS

ARLINGTON, VA — Everyone’s favorite school subject – lunch – just got more popular with the debut of *Reimagined Rice Meals for Schools*, a cookbook and guide featuring rice recipes created by the USA Rice K-12 Chef Advisory Board. The downloadable school foodservice resources showcase twelve new K-12 rice recipes across all meal parts and different cultures that were developed and photographed by the members of the Chef Advisory Board.

In addition to the recipes, the cookbook includes an introduction to USA Rice, profiles of each member of the

K-12 Advisory Board, background information on rice’s role in school nutrition programs, promotion of the U.S.-grown difference, rice storage information, and a rice cooking guide for a range of foodservice cooking methods. The cookbook is available both in-print and digitally, and was distributed to various school foodservice audiences through the *Schools Think Rice* newsletter and by members of the Advisory Board across their respective professional networks.

The featured recipes include a Culinary Farm-Fried Rice, Citrus Rice, Asian Rice Salad, Caribbean Rice and Beans,

USA RICE AND ZOJIRUSHI – A PERFECT PARTNERSHIP FOR NATIONAL RICE MONTH

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

ARLINGTON, VA — USA Rice partnered with Zojirushi America, the domestic branch of the high-end appliance manufacturer, to celebrate National Rice Month (NRM) and promote increased grain consumption through a high-profile social media campaign.

“Sixteen influencers, with a combined following of more than 3.5 million consumers, took part in the NRM promotion with content that included recipe development and giveaways,” said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice senior director of domestic promotion. “They also reviewed Zojirushi’s new Induction Heating Rice Cooker as well as different varieties of U.S.-grown rice.”

There also was a charitable component to the promotion: for each rice cooker sold during September, a donation was made to Table For Two, a non-profit organization whose mission is to eliminate global hunger and reduce health issues related to unhealthy eating.

“Every National Rice Month presents a great opportunity to promote consumption of rice



When collaboration is a win-win for rice and elimination of global hunger.

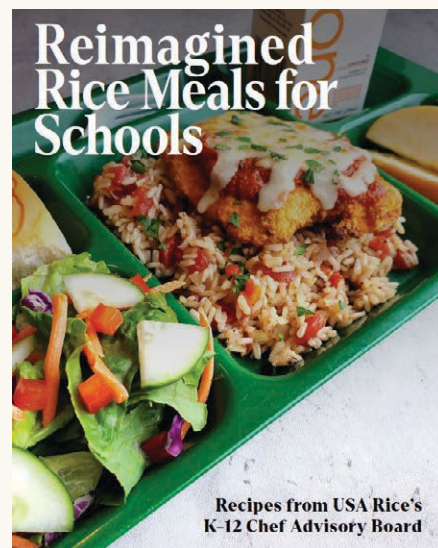
and highlight the benefits of having a rice cooker to more and more consumers,” said Zojirushi spokesperson Krista Erickson. “By teaming up with USA Rice to promote NRM and spotlight the newest rice cooking technology, we hope to chip away at any lingering concerns around cooking rice, and encourage and inspire more ways to ‘rice’ and greater usage of U.S.-grown rice.”

Broccoli and Rice Casserole, Peachy Breakfast Rice, Warm Autumn Rice, and a Mexican Red Rice.

“This is a tremendous addition to our school foodservice resources as these rice recipes were created specifically for school operators, by school operators so should prove to be popular among school foodservice teams,” said Sam Schneider, chair of the USA Rice Nutrition Subcommittee. “At a time where K-12 nutrition officials are still dealing with budget and accessibility challenges as well as new school standards, domestic rice remains a steadfast solution for delivering healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant meals that meet students’ preferences.”

The K-12 Chef Advisory Board was assembled to gain insights, inform policy discussions, remain on the cutting edge of school foodservice trends, and create new tools that extend USA Rice’s reach into school kitchens.

Cameron Jacobs is USA Rice senior director of domestic promotion, and adamant supporter of rice for every meal, the Iowa Hawkeyes, and rice-based beer.



SURVEY SHOWS GROWING CONSUMER INTEREST AND CONSUMPTION OF WHOLE GRAINS

BY LESLEY DIXON

ARLINGTON, VA — The 2023 *Whole Grains Consumer Insights Survey*, conducted by the Oldways Whole Grains Council, showed that consumption, consumer interest, and awareness of whole grains significantly increased in 2023 with 61 percent of consumers choosing whole grains at least half the time and 57 percent of respondents increasing their whole grain intake.

Specific to rice, survey respondents identified brown rice in the top three of the most well-known whole grains, and more than half of those surveyed consider whole grain rice as well as wild rice as their “favorite whole grain” after trying it for the first time.


The report showed major progress around consumer acceptance of whole grains, especially among younger generations, with 77 percent of all respondents indicating they think they should eat more whole grains and relaying a range of motivations outside of just health for consuming and purchasing whole grains. Millennials, parents with kids at home, plant-based eaters, health-conscious consumers, and those following low-carb diets were identified as the largest demographic groups to consume whole grains.

The survey also focused on how sustainability and environmental considerations influence food choices and diet

with 17 percent of respondents and 24 percent of millennials reporting sustainability as an important factor in purchasing whole grains.

“The U.S. rice industry is well positioned to capitalize on demonstrated consumer desire to increase whole grain consumption,” said Cameron Jacobs, USA Rice senior director of domestic promotion. “The diverse supply of whole grain rice offerings plus the industry’s environmentally friendly growing practices have huge marketing appeal, especially as younger generations continue to increase their purchasing power.”

Another takeaway from the 2023 report was that cost, availability, and preparation are the biggest barriers to eating more whole grains. The report also showed a direct link between third-party packaging symbols, like the Whole Grain Stamp, with 85 percent of consumers saying they trust, recognize, and understand the Whole Grain Stamp label on retail packaging.

As a founding member of the Whole Grains Council, USA Rice was a sponsor of the survey which was compiled between May and June this year. Data was collected from 1,500 Americans, ages 18 to 89, and was nationally census-representative for age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, and income. Seventy-three percent of respondents were the primary household food purchasers and 27 percent reported making half of household purchases. 



“The diverse supply of whole grain rice offerings plus the industry’s environmentally friendly growing practices have huge marketing appeal, especially as younger generations continue to increase their purchasing power.”

— CAMERON JACOBS, USA RICE SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DOMESTIC PROMOTION



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RICE DISTRICT REP CHAIRS HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

BY JAMISON CRUCE

WASHINGTON, DC — At the opening of the 118th Congress last January, Representative Jason Smith (R-MO) was tapped to lead the powerful House Committee on Ways and Means.

The Committee is the oldest in the U.S. Congress and is the principal tax-writing body in the House of Representatives. The Committee oversees not only taxes and revenue generation, but also tariffs and reciprocal trade agreements for the United States.

“Congressman Smith has long been a friend of Missouri agriculture and especially Missouri rice as the Bootheel’s direct line of communication and representation to Congress,” said Zach Worrell, a Pemiscot County, Missouri, rice farmer and member of the USA Rice International Trade Policy Committee. “We are fortunate to have a rice industry ally lead this Committee to advocate for U.S. rice on a global scale on the many trade issues we face.”

Smith is a farmer, businessman, and former state legislator, and is currently serving his sixth term representing Missouri’s 8th Congressional District. [w3](#)



Rep. Jason Smith (far right) meets with USA Rice members during the fly-in last May.

LOUISIANA RICE DISTRICT REP. MIKE JOHNSON ELECTED HOUSE SPEAKER

BY DEBORAH WILLENBORG

WASHINGTON, DC — In a fortuitous turn of events for the rice industry, Congressman Mike Johnson (R-LA) was elected as the 56th Speaker of the United States House of Representatives.

The fourth-term congressman from Shreveport had been serving as the vice chair of the House Republican Conference since January 2021 prior to ascending the highest post in the House in October.

Speaker Mike Johnson represents the northwest and western region across 16 parishes of the Pelican State in a largely rural district, including a portion of the rice-producing region of the state. Speaker Johnson is the first Speaker to represent a significant rice production area in well over three decades.

“Speaker Mike Johnson has been a tremendous supporter of the U.S. rice industry,” said Jamison Cruce, USA Rice senior director of government affairs. “We look forward to working with him and his colleagues in Congress toward the successful passage of an effective Farm Bill and other positive outcomes for our industry.”

Already within his short tenure, Speaker Johnson was able to

successfully dodge a government shutdown in November and implement a deal to extend the 2018 Farm Bill through the end of fiscal year 2024. [w3](#)





USA Rice

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Representative Mike Johnson
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RICE FARMERS TRAVEL TO DC TO TALK FARM BILL WITH LAWMAKERS

BY SHELBY YOUNG

WASHINGTON, DC — This past spring and again last month, USA Rice members representing all six major rice-producing states came here to meet with lawmakers, key Congressional staff, and Administration officials to share industry priorities and concerns for the 2023 Farm Bill, labor, and trade issues.

USA Rice members emphasized the rice industry's economic impact and sustainability achievements, as well as the need for a strong farm safety net, maintaining working lands conservation programs, increasing funding for international market development, and the continuation of in-kind, commodity-based international food aid.

Other issues were discussed including the significant labor issues challenging farmers and rural America, the shortcomings of the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program, and the severe global market distortion thanks to predatory trade practices of foreign countries, like India.

"We always appreciate the opportunity to meet with Members of Congress on rice industry priorities, but most especially during a very consequential Farm Bill year,"

said Kirk Satterfield, a Mississippi rice farmer and chair of USA Rice. "On two separate fly-ins, we met with more than 50 Congressional offices, the majority from non-rice producing areas, to ensure a broader spectrum of lawmakers understand our priorities and the many positive impacts of the U.S. rice industry domestically and internationally, as well as environmentally."

U.S. rice acres in 2022 were the lowest in 40 years and the impact of the decline is significant as the average U.S. rice farm contributes \$1 million to its local economy, and the industry provides more than 125,000 jobs and \$3.5 billion in critical wildlife wetland habitat in the off-season.

The 2018 Farm Bill's five-year authorization expired on October 1, 2023. Both chambers of Congress continued to work on drafting their respective 2023 Farm Bill language without being able to reach consensus before critical programs began feeling the impacts of the expiration. All four corners of the House and Senate Committees on Agriculture were able to work together to reach agreement to extend the 2018 Farm Bill through the end of the 2024 fiscal year to provide some






USA Rice fly-ins are always action-packed as members fan out across Capitol Hill, meeting with legislators and federal officials, including Secretary Tom Vilsack, Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, Representatives GT Thompson, Julia Letlow, Bennie Thompson, and Tracey Mann.



level of certainty to producers for the 2024 crop year while legislation continues to be drafted. Congress hopes to pass a full five-year reauthorization within the first half of next year ahead of a key campaign season.

USA Rice cautions that any full reauthorization of the Farm Bill should include meaningful updates to the farm safety net, particularly through an increase in the PLC reference price for rice. Earlier this year, Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, John Boozman (R-AR), said in a hearing: “The 2023 Farm Bill must provide our producers with the risk management tools required to farm and ranch in this new reality ... The current safety net is frayed and is in dire need of meaningful reinforcement ... a newly reinforced safety net is essential if the United States would like our farmers and ranchers to continue to produce the most abundant, the most affordable, and the safest food supply in the world.” 

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

USA RICE MEMBERS TESTIFY AT CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

BY JAMISON CRUCE

WASHINGTON, DC — This past April, three USA Rice members testified at Congressional hearings on the 2023 Farm Bill with two hearings focused on farm safety and another on conservation programs.

House Farm Bill Hearing

Mississippi rice farmer and USA Rice Chair Kirk Satterfield testified on behalf of the rice industry at a hearing by the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities, Risk Management, and Credit on “Producer Perspectives on the 2023 Farm Bill.”

Satterfield began his testimony with an overview of U.S.-grown rice, including the industry’s economic impact and sustainability achievements, and then went on to explain the global rice market issues caused by bad trade actors like India, as well as the pressures rice farmers face from massive input cost increases.

“As a high-cost input crop subject to severe global market distortion thanks to predatory trade practices of foreign countries, U.S. rice farmers are more vulnerable to the impacts of inflation and other global events that have caused increases to the cost of fuel, fertilizer, and labor, as well as facing the highest interest rates many farmers today have ever experienced,” said Satterfield.

The take home message is USA Rice’s top Farm Bill priority: increasing the rice reference prices for the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program.

“We need a permanent fix to the rice farm safety net in the 2023 Farm Bill to ensure the long-term viability of the U.S. rice industry,” Satterfield said. “The PLC program has traditionally been our true safety net. It’s allowed us to better compete on a lopsided global playing field impacted by foreign subsidies, tariffs, and non-tariff trade barriers. USA Rice strongly believes reference prices under PLC need to be meaningfully increased and indexed in order to provide a safety net that remains relevant over the long haul.”

Regarding other Farm Bill Commodity Title components, Satterfield discussed the need to update woefully outdated payment limitation, adjusted gross income (AGI), and actively engaged rules, and underscored that USA Rice believes any updates or reallocations to base acres should be voluntary.

Senate Farm Bill Hearing

The Senate also held hearings on the Farm Bill, and Rich Hillman, an Arkansas rice farmer and member of the USA Rice Farmers Board of Directors, testified before that body’s Agriculture Commodities, Credit, and Trade Subcommittee



Arkansas rice farmer Rich Hillman (left) and USA Rice Chair Kirk Satterfield (right) stand out for their eloquence when testifying on Capitol Hill.

on Farm Bill commodity programs.

Hillman’s testimony focused on the need to increase and index the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program rice reference prices. He homed in on the rice financial situation over the past several years, but particularly the dire situation rice farmers faced in 2022, and thanked the Committee, particularly Senator John Boozman (R-AR), for providing targeted assistance to rice farmers in the fiscal year 2023 omnibus appropriations package.

“Rice was not as fortunate as many other commodities that saw large run ups in market prices in 2020 and 2021 all while contending with an unprecedented increase in costs of production,” said Hillman. “A Texas A&M University study in 2022 predicted two-thirds of rice farms would have negative net cash farm income for the 2022 crop year. USDA also reports a more than 30 percent increase in operating costs for 2022. On our farm that was even higher.”

Hillman also noted that rice is one of the most government-manipulated commodities in the world, and the egregious actions of countries like India that put U.S. rice farmers at a disadvantage.

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— RICH HILLMAN, ARKANSAS RICE FARMER AND MEMBER OF THE USA RICE FARMERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS



PLC need to be meaningfully increased and indexed to provide a safety net that remains relevant over the long haul to ensure the long-term viability of the U.S. rice industry.”

Conservation Programs

“As a farmer, I’m proud to live, sustainably manage, and earn my living from land at the nexus of production agriculture and conservation,” Arkansas rice farmer Jeff Rutledge told the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee’s Subcommittee on Conservation, Climate, Forestry, and Natural Resources at a hearing last April. “In addition to rice and the other crops I produce, we are proud to provide critical habitat to hundreds of species of wildlife, particularly migratory waterfowl, namely ducks.”

Rutledge spoke about the importance of prioritizing working lands conservation programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), as Congress deliberates the 2023 Farm Bill. He reminded members that “working lands programs like EQIP and CSP serve as economic drivers.”

Rutledge also highlighted that Farm Bill conservation programs should remain voluntary, incentive-based, and locally-led, which has offered great success for rice farmers getting conservation on the ground on their farms.



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“Because rice is a unique cropping system and a 100 percent irrigated crop, conservation programs should not provide one-size-fits-all solutions,” he said. “For instance, focusing solely on a practice like cover cropping that most rice farmers cannot utilize would be inequitable for rice farmers. That’s why solutions should be locally led and support local priorities.”

When asked by Subcommittee Chair Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) for the one Farm Bill “need to have,” Rutledge responded, “A farm safety net that works is the most critical to keep farmers in business so they can continue to be good stewards of the land and leave a lasting legacy for the next generation of farmers.” [w3](#)

AUGUST RECESS IS A TIME TO TOUCH BASE

BY SHELBY YOUNG

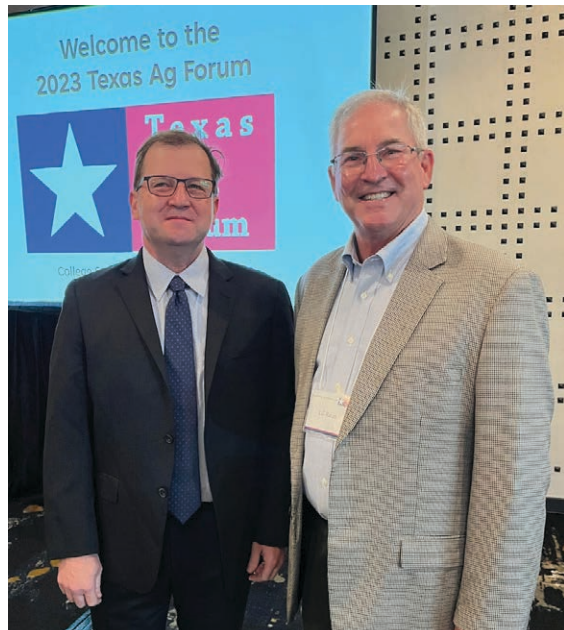
WASHINGTON, DC — During the annual legislative August recess, Members of Congress return to their respective home states and districts and hold community events, town halls, and listening sessions to hear what’s on the minds of their constituents.

“This is always a golden opportunity for USA Rice members to visit with their representatives about the issues and needs facing the U.S. rice industry so that lawmakers can bring that insight back to Washington when they return in September,” said Jamison Cruce, USA Rice senior director of government affairs.

Events that had an impact on rice farmers, millers, and merchants across the country were stressed when communicating with elected officials, including the importance of the timely passage of the 2023 Farm Bill.

Another major issue is the implications of India’s recent rice export ban, and how this action only further supports the need to initiate a case against India at the World Trade Organization.

“August recess is a perfect time to invite legislators and their staff to farms and businesses to showcase operations in action, while explaining firsthand the issues the industry faces each day,” said Cruce. [W-3](#)



Telling it like it is to legislators and officials on tour around the country during August recess.

Above: USA Rice Chair Kirk Satterfield welcomes Senators Roger Wicker (R-MS) and John Boozman (R-AR) to a listening session in his home state of Mississippi. (photo by Fitz Elder)

Far Left: LG Raun (right), chair of the USA Rice Farmers, and USDA Chief Economist Seth Meyer attend the 2023 Texas Ag Forum.

Left: Arkansas rice farmer Eric Vaught (left) walks his fields with Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-TX) and explains how the crop lets him know when it’s time to harvest.

RICE PRODUCTION PROGRAM OFFERED RELIEF TO RICE FARMERS AND THEIR RURAL COMMUNITIES

BY JAMISON CRUCE

WASHINGTON, DC — In May, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced details of the Rice Production Program (RPP), assistance provided to rice farmers who experienced stagnant rice prices and record-high input costs during the 2022 crop year.

Funding for the \$250 million rice farmer assistance program was championed by Senator John Boozman (R-AR) and included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, the end of year Federal government spending measure.

“Last year was a difficult one for rice farmers. Soaring input costs took a toll on family farms across the nation, and as documented by two separate studies out of Texas A&M University, hit rice producers extremely hard. That is why we included relief in the form of a one-time payment to rice producers for the 2022 crop year in the omnibus bill last December,” said Boozman. “This program provided much-needed relief from record-high rice production costs in 2022. Despite the economic headwinds, rice producers worked to ensure consumers continue

to have access to healthy, domestically grown food.”

The RPP offered relief through an initial payment to rice farmers at a reduced payment rate of 1-cent per pound. If funds remain at the end of the application period, a second payment, not to exceed 1-cent per pound, will be made at a later date, likely by early fall at the latest.

“USA Rice thanks USDA for the work and diligence to efficiently rollout the Rice Production Program, which is so critical to rice farmers who endured a dire situation last year,” said L.G. Raun, a Texas rice farmer and chair of the USA Rice Farmers. “This program helped to ensure economic viability of not only rice farmers, but the rural communities across the country our industry supports.”

Raun added: “I would also add our sincere and profound appreciation to Senator Boozman who led this charge and advocated strongly for this vital assistance that had a positive impact across the rice-producing states. It really made a difference for so many rice farmers.” [w](#)



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USA RICE APPLAUDS CONGRESSIONAL ACTION TO FORCE INDIA INTO TRADE COMPLIANCE

BY PETER BACHMANN

WASHINGTON, DC — In September, the Prioritizing Offensive Agricultural Disputes and Enforcement Act was introduced in both the House and Senate establishing a joint task force on agricultural trade enforcement between the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and signaling more engagement with Congress and the private sector on the development of agricultural dispute priorities.

The bill also emphasizes the need for an agricultural dispute settlement case at the World Trade Organization (WTO) against India's trade distorting farm subsidies, which could include rice, wheat, pulses, peanuts, cotton, and other commodities.

The bill was introduced in the Senate by Senators Bill Cassidy (R-LA), John Boozman (R-AR), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Tommy Tuberville (R-AL), and Roger Wicker (R-MS); and in the House by Reps. Rick Crawford (R-AR), Clay Higgins (R-LA), Mark Alford (R-MO), Troy Carter (D-LA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Randy Feenstra (R-IA), Brad Finstad (R-MN), Garret Graves (R-LA), Michael Guest (R-MS), Trent Kelly (R-MS), Doug LaMalfa (R-CA), Julia Letlow (R-LA), Frank Lucas (R-OK), Tracey Mann (R-KS), David Rouzer (R-NC), Austin Scott (R-GA), David Valadao (R-CA), and Bruce Westerman (R-AR).

Rice is among the most government-manipulated crops in the world, leading to over-subsidization in a number of key export markets and forcing U.S. rice farmers to compete at a disadvantage. USA Rice has repeatedly called on the U.S. government to address this issue, particularly with regard to India as the world's largest rice exporter, at the WTO through a dispute settlement case.


"We appreciate Senator Cassidy, Congressman Higgins, and their colleagues for leading in Congress on this critical issue for the U.S. rice industry," said Bobby Hanks, CEO of Supreme Rice in Crowley, Louisiana, and chair of the USA Rice International Trade Policy Committee. "A WTO case against India's rice subsidies is long overdue and long-term policy changes in India would help to make rice farmers from the U.S. and other origins that play by the rules, more competitive on the world market."

"It is a relief to see Congressman Crawford, Senator Boozman, and others introduce this bill. As a farmer I spend a lot of time frustrated with the lack of enforcement in these markets that are clearly violating the rules," said Dow Brantley, who farms rice, soybean, corn, and cotton near England, Arkansas, and is vice chair of the USA Rice International

Trade Policy Committee. "We work hard to keep our cost of production as low as possible yet get beat out in the marketplace by commodities that are produced inefficiently because of the staggering levels of subsidies provided by their governments."

"When you eat seafood gumbo, you expect the shrimp and rice to be grown in Louisiana with our health standards," said Senator Cassidy. "Americans' health should not be harmed because some countries have chosen not to play by the rules. Bringing China and India into compliance will level the playing field."

"This bill helps get us to a point where our government is going to coordinate and strategize to get more wins for agriculture on the board, and there's no better place to start than with India. This bill is a win for all of U.S. agriculture because what our trading partners and our export competition are doing has an effect on us, so we need to use all of our tools available to resolve the tipping of the scales we're seeing," said Rep. Crawford.

"This legislation aligns with our commitment to provide critically needed financial, trade, and workforce development to our farmers, fishermen, and producers," said Congressman Higgins. "It is imperative that we ensure an even playing field for American exports and strengthen fair trading relationships with foreign countries." 

Prior to his appointment as USA Rice President & CEO on November 15, Peter Bachmann was the USA Rice vice president of policy & government affairs.

Foot-in-the-door-technique
Asking a small request first and then following
up with a larger request



USA RICE MEMBERS TO SERVE ON TRADE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BY JESICA KINCAID

WASHINGTON, DC — In August, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai appointed Arkansas rice miller Mark Holt and California rice farmer Michael Rue to the Agricultural Technical Advisory Committees (ATAC) for Trade in Grains, Feed, Oilseeds and Planting Seeds.

The ATACs provide technical advice and guidance from the perspective of their specific product sectors to the government on the administration of trade policy, including enforcement of existing trade agreements and negotiating objectives for new trade agreements.

“With new executive agreements underway, such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and the Taiwan 21st Century Trade Initiative, along with potential for renewed engagement with the United Kingdom and Kenya after 2024, industry representation on this important trade advisory committee is critical,” said USA Rice President & CEO Peter Bachmann.

He continued: “We also thank Dow Brantley for serving two four-year terms on the Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) before deciding to step down earlier this year. He played an important role in advising the U.S. government during the TPP and USMCA negotiations.”

Holt serves as the vice president of sales at Riceland Foods, a farmer-owned cooperative in Stuttgart, Arkansas, where he oversees both domestic and export shipments for the company. Additionally, Holt serves as chair of the USA Rice Europe, Africa, Middle East Trade Policy and Trade Promotion Subcommittees



New ag trade advisees Mark Holt (left) and Michael Rue.

and often represents the industry at international promotional events.

Rue owns and operates Catlett Warehouse in Pleasant Grove, California, and serves as chair of the USA Rice Asia Trade Policy Subcommittee and vice chair of the USA Rice International Trade Policy Committee. He was formerly a member of the ATAC and has been actively engaged in trade policy for the U.S. rice industry for decades.

Holt and Rue will serve in their current appointments until summer of 2027. [WS](#)

Jesica Kincaid is the USA Rice senior manager for international trade policy.

COMMERCIAL RICE SALES TO CUBA FOLLOWING APRIL BUSINESS CONFERENCE

BY PETER BACHMANN

HAVANA, CUBA — Over the summer, a small shipment of U.S. rice was exported and unloaded here by a private importer, marking one of the first commercial sales to Cuba in many years. In recent years, sporadic shipments of U.S. rice have made it into the country, but primarily on a charitable basis.

The last meaningful commercial sales of U.S. rice to Cuba were in 2008, prior to a shift to sourcing from other origins, namely Vietnam. Current U.S. laws and regulations require payment of cash up-front which limit Cuban buyers' ability to source from the U.S. and they often seek imports from other origins that can offer generous credit terms.

The sale was made by Supreme Rice through a Miami-based exporter, following a USA Rice visit to Cuba in early April for the U.S.-Cuba Agriculture Business Conference. Following that successful test shipment, more than 10 additional containers of U.S. milled rice have been shipped to Cuba through similar intermediaries.

“We understand that the buyers in Cuba really enjoyed the rice we shipped, and we hope that the demand continues to grow,” said Bobby Hanks, CEO



of Supreme Rice Mill in Crowley, Louisiana. “If we’re successful in demonstrating demand in this market right in our backyard, maybe it will help Congress realize that it’s time for legislative changes that make doing business there easier.” [WS](#)

TRADE DOMINATES USA RICE MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON


BY PETER BACHMANN

WASHINGTON, DC—In May, industry leaders representing rice grower, merchant, and milling sectors traveled here to meet with Washington trade experts and advocate for leveling the global playing field on trade.

The two-day fly-in focused on the Biden Administration’s trade agenda; challenges with domestic rail transportation; the current state of the World Trade Organization (WTO); food aid during a time of war; the geopolitical and rice tendering situation in Iraq; and advocacy for USDA trade promotion and market development programs.

In addition to the trade-focused presentations with the private sector and Administration officials, USA Rice also held several targeted meetings with staff from the Senate Finance and Agriculture Committees, House Agriculture Committees, and a number of Congressional offices with seats on the Finance, Ways and Means, and Agriculture Committees.

“We were encouraged by our visits with Senate and House trade and agriculture experts that are zeroed in on improving agricultural trade promotion and food aid programs in the Farm Bill and helping to further our efforts to engage India regarding their WTO violating subsidies,” said Bobby Hanks, rice miller and chair of the USA Rice International Trade Policy Committee. The group plans to reconvene again in 2024 for a similar set of meetings to continue to advocate for USA Rice trade priorities.

The group plans to reconvene again in 2024 for a similar set of meetings to continue to advocate for USA Rice trade priorities. 



Congressmen Bruce Westerman (1) and Garret Graves (4), USDA’s Jason Hafemeister (2), and the Surface Transportation Board’s Robert Primus (3) were among the officials talking trade with USA Rice.



“We were encouraged by our visits with Senate and House trade and agriculture experts that are zeroed in on improving agricultural trade promotion and food aid programs in the Farm Bill and helping to further our efforts to engage India regarding their WTO violating subsidies.”

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

USA RICE DELEGATION IN BRUSSELS FOR REGULATORY TALKS

BY PETER BACHMANN

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM — In June, a delegation of USA Rice members and staff traveled here for a series of educational meetings around Europe’s regulatory system, focusing primarily on how they set and enforce maximum residue levels (MRLs) for imported and domestically grown food.

The group met with U.S. Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service staff based in Brussels, the European Commission’s Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), Canadian Embassy staff, the Federation of European Rice Millers, CropLife Europe, CropLife International, and the European farmers’ organization, COPA-COGECA.

Many discussions revolved around the European agriculture sector’s impression of the Farm to Fork initiative which outlined the European Commission’s goals to curb climate change by taking drastic agronomic steps to meet unrealistic goals by 2030. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine created Europe’s first food security crisis in decade, many EU-27 member states protested the regulatory ideology in Farm to Fork which led to a number of provisions being walked back.

“U.S. farmers and exporters deserve certainty around the destination’s regulatory system when shipping products abroad,” said Michael Rue,

a California rice producer and vice chair of the USA Rice International Trade Policy Committee.

For example, the EU’s complex system in setting MRLs often seems based more on emotion than science, and has a real impact on U.S. exporters and their ability to reliably supply customers.

“It was refreshing to hear that the European agricultural industry is not standing by and is instead advocating in their member states against some of the EU’s precedent setting policies which further restrict the ability of European farmers to produce a crop,” said Rue.

The USA Rice delegation also pressed EU officials on the implementation of the U.S. tariff rate quota for milled rice and spent time reiterating the U.S. rice sustainability story.

“Often our longstanding commitment to preserving our land for future generations is not as visible outside our industry as we may think so it’s worth adding to our talking points especially when we’re meeting with folks overseas,” Rue remarked.

Following the trip, USA Rice worked with other U.S. and Canadian commodity groups to intervene this fall in a precedent-setting EU court case following the banning of two chemicals on the basis of pollinator health concerns rather than human health. [WFS](#)



USA RICE CELEBRATES CARNIVAL SEASON IN THE UK

BY SARAH MORAN

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM — Carnival is one of the longest running street parties in the world, started by London's Caribbean communities in 1966 as a celebration of freedom and Caribbean culture. The party goes from mid-August to early September, around the time of the iconic Notting Hill Carnival, the most chaotic and colorful event to take place in London, with a parade attended by more than two million people every year.

"People celebrate the carnival season by spending time outdoors with family and friends, enjoying barbecue and Afro-Caribbean dishes, for which U.S. long grain parboiled rice is a key ingredient," said Eszter Somogyi, USA Rice director Europe, Middle East and Africa.

This year USA Rice got in the carnival spirit with a promotion, co-sponsored by two local U.S. rice importers here, utilizing outdoor and print media as well as radio and TV advertising to deliver key messaging to consumers, highlighting the high quality of U.S. rice and its suitability for Caribbean cuisine.

Point of sale materials were placed in ASDA, one of Britain's leading retailers, to spur sales of the local U.S. parboiled rice brand that's stocked in the World Food Segment of these stores. In addition to traditional



media, USA Rice worked with two local social media influencers popular in the Afro-Caribbean community, who developed authentic recipes featuring U.S. rice: Jollof rice with plantains, and Jamaican rice and peas. [w3](#)

Sarah Moran, USA Rice vice president international, loves using Caribbean spices when cooking up rice dishes.

ECUADOR — NEW MARKET FOR U.S. ROUGH RICE EXPORTS

BY SARAH MORAN

QUITO, ECUADOR — Ecuador recently finalized market access for rough rice exports from the United States, in time to supply the country from our new harvest and to offset their massive shortfall in rice production.

Ecuador plants two rice crops per year; typically, their summer crop is around 371,000 acres but less than half of that was planted this year due to El Niño causing a harsh winter and excessive rains. Ecuador's rice crop this year is expected to be

short about 200,000 tons.

Additionally, Ecuador's strategic reserves of rice are veritably empty and so this past summer, they looked to expand imports to help with this deficit, bringing in rice from Colombia and other MERCOSUR countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay).

"USA Rice wanted to make sure the U.S. could also supply Ecuador, so in July they immediately got to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to get an approved phytosanitary protocol," said Todd Burich, chair of the USA Rice Western Hemisphere Trade Policy Subcommittee. "While these importation requirements are interim until final requirements are made, it shows the strong interest Ecuador has in importing U.S. rice."

The U.S. already had access to Ecuador for milled rice and annually has been shipping 100-200 tons of mostly medium grain. The last substantial shipment of rough rice was 123,000 tons in 1998. [w3](#)

Pescado encocado is a traditional Ecuadorian dish made with fish seasoned with lime juice, orange juice, and spices, and then cooked in a sauce with onions, bell peppers, coconut milk, and cilantro. Pescado encocado is traditionally served with white rice and fried plantains.



TIMELY PROMOTIONS IN HAITI'S SECOND LARGEST CITY COINCIDE WITH ANNUAL CELEBRATION

BY SARAH MORAN

CAP-HAITIEN, HAITI — Haiti's second-largest city, located on the country's northern coast, embodies a vibrant fusion of history and progress, and is considered the cultural capital of Haiti. Located 125 miles north of Port-au-Prince, the city is not experiencing turmoil like that in Haiti's capital. Recent USA Rice promotions there were timed to coincide with Cap-Haitien's annual patron saint celebration that attracts thousands of visitors to the city.

"USA Rice partnered with Bongu Rice, one of the largest brands of U.S. rice, in a promotion strategy that combines a one-year billboard campaign with active participation in the Okap Flavors Food Festival," said Asiha Grigsby, USA Rice director of international promotion for the Western Hemisphere. "Bongu supported the promotion with a thirty percent contribution, ensuring that their brand of U.S.-origin rice received prominent exposure in the community."

Thirteen billboards have been placed in high traffic areas around Cap-Haitien where an estimated one million people will see them throughout the next year until August 2024.

Okap Flavors Food Festival, which took place in mid-August, is a fusion of music, dance, and culinary culture. Renowned social

media influencer @RosieCookArt was there representing Bongu Rice and sharing her acclaimed "Rice and Lalo" dish, a specialty from the Gonaives area that garnered enthusiastic feedback.

@RosieCookArt also engaged in direct distribution of branded materials at the street level. This hands-on approach enabled USA Rice to support the local community and gain valuable insights into the pivotal role rice plays in the daily activities of "machann manje kwit," the local street vendors.

The Okap event was featured on the social media pages of @USARICEHaiti, @SakapFetOkap, and @RosieCookart. Consumer engagement on the USA Rice social media platform saw a 70 percent increase during the campaign period, compared to the previous month, and resulted in a total of 600 new followers on Instagram and Facebook.

"The USA Rice partnership with Bongu propelled American rice into the spotlight during a big, local celebration that attracts a diverse audience," said Grigsby. "Through direct engagement with consumers and local merchants, a genuine connection was established with the community, making U.S. rice part of the Cap-Haitien culinary culture." 



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— ASIHA GRIGSBY, USA RICE
DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL
PROMOTION FOR THE
WESTERN HEMISPHERE
.....

The American flag and Bongo's motto, "bon pour la santé" or "good for health," reinforce the positive connection with U.S.-origin rice.

U.S. RICE GOES NATIONWIDE AT COSTCO TAIWAN

BY SARAH MORAN

TAIPEI — Costco Taiwan is now selling a new package of U.S. long grain as its Kirkland Signature house brand at all 14 warehouses nationwide.

“Taiwan has historically purchased medium grain from the U.S. but USA Rice started encouraging importers here to try U.S.-origin long grain back in 2020,” said Jim Guinn, USA Rice director of Asia promotion programs. “After that initial positive market reaction, U.S. long grain became a regular purchase by importers.”

In 2022, USA Rice developed consumer communications including press articles, social media influencer campaigns, in-store promotions, and educational events for professional chefs that promoted U.S. long grain to different consumption sectors.

“Our USA Rice team in Taiwan is currently in negotiations with Costco to schedule a retail



Good to know that no matter the location, free food samples are a universal Costco shopping experience.



promotion to spur demand for the newly introduced rice,” said Guinn.

The Taiwan market for U.S. rice is the most diverse in Asia, featuring imports of southern medium grain, long grain, long grain parboiled, long grain jasmine, short grain glutinous rice, and Calrose. Taiwan imports a four-year annual average of 59,000 MT of U.S. rice valued at more than \$38 million. [WSR](#)

STORAGE TRAINING ENSURES QUALITY CONTROL FOR U.S. RICE SHIPMENTS TO IRAQ

BY ESZTER SOMOGYI

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES — In June, USA Rice hosted five officials from Iraq’s Foodstuffs Division to learn about rice storage protocols and fumigation best practices. Iraq’s Foodstuffs Division handles port logistics including storage, bagging, and transporting rice.

An expert in the field, Rolando Brenes Morales, conducted an all-day training session with the attendees with practical ways to prevent, control, and manage pest risks.

“The group had spirited questions throughout the presentation from wondering why certain pests are more prevalent from some countries, to understanding the cycle of certain insects and how mitigation strategies are different for the adult, eggs, and larvae stages,” said USA Rice Vice President International Sarah Moran

who attended the training.

The day concluded with Valerie Brown, the counselor for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service in Dubai, UAE, providing certificates of completion to the attendees.

“This training will help to improve storage practices so that U.S. rice shipped to Iraq will remain high quality until it reaches the consumer,” said Moran.

Iraq is a top ten market for U.S. rice and the second largest export market for U.S. long grain milled rice. [WSR](#)

Eszter Somogyi is USA Rice director for Europe, Middle East, and Africa, based in Hamburg, Germany. She has been proudly working for the U.S. rice industry for nearly two decades.

“This training will help to improve storage practices so that U.S. rice shipped to Iraq will remain high quality until it reaches the consumer.”

— SARAH MORAN, USA RICE VICE PRESIDENT INTERNATIONAL



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a small bunch of rice stalks. The background is a lush green rice field with many more stalks visible, slightly out of focus. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting a sunny day.

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