

Many companies buy from Riceland

# Rice big business in Arkansas

United Press International  
STUTTGART, Ark. —  
Across the shimmering Arkansas delta, a cluster of tall buildings springs from the horizon like the City of Oz, its blue outline easily mistaken for the skyline of a great city.

But travelers are not fooled for long. Nearly every tiny town in these bottomlands has its skyline of grain elevators, dominating the frame houses and service stations scattered beneath them.

Equally familiar in eastern Arkansas are the huge letters painted along the row of grain silos, spelling out R-I-C-E-L-A-N-D.

Arkansas grows about 30 percent of the nation's rice and Riceland is the world's largest rice and soybean cooperative.

The mountains of rice poured into these silos will eventually resurface in Rice Krispies on Canadian breakfast tables, in Budweiser beer bubbling into cans at St. Louis, in bags of "Perfecto" rice on Puerto Rican grocery shelves, in Japanese dinner bowls and in Nigerian food lines.

"About two-thirds of all the rice we receive ends up being sold overseas," said Richard Bell, executive vice president of Riceland. "Our most important market is western Europe. We probably supply 40 percent of the American long-grain rice

that's bought and used in western Europe."

Bell joined Riceland in 1977 after a long career with the U.S. Agriculture Department and is credited with helping the cooperative develop its export system. New markets, he said, are the best hedge against the current oversupply that is depressing rice prices.

"We have a group of agents that are scattered throughout the world that represent us," Bell said in an interview. Three other men are based in Stuttgart but travel the world seeking new markets for the Riceland grain.

Riceland sells half the rice grown in Arkansas and about one-third of the soybean crop—a total of 113 million bushels in 1981.

The single largest customer is Anheuser-Busch, which uses rice to brew its beer. The company has strict quality specifications but does not mind using broken kernels that Riceland cannot package and sell, Bell said.

Kellogg's, another American customer, uses medium-grain Riceland rice for its Rice Krispies, and General Foods uses Riceland rice for Minute Rice.

The rice is grown in flooded fields throughout the Arkansas delta, harvested and hauled to 41 various driers, then transported to one of six mills at

Stuttgart or Jonesboro, Ark. Soybeans are processed at plants in Stuttgart and Helena, Ark.

Milling rice is fairly simple. After cleaning, hulls are removed by passing the kernels through rollers, yielding brown rice. It is shipped overseas in that form and milled later.

For rice staying in this country, the hulled rice is milled again to remove the outer layers of bran and germ. Then it is polished.

Riceland parboils some of the rice, which gelatinizes the starch in the kernel and helps keep it from breaking. The process also prevents germination and kills mold or spores to extend shelf-life, and it keeps the rice from sticking together when it cooks.

Parboiled rice can be packaged for sale and has also been used in the government's Food

for Peace program.

"Markets are constantly changing," Bell said. "Four or five years ago our major market for rice other than western Europe was Iran. When Mr. Khomeini came in, we lost the market overnight. So when we went out to find a deal to replace it, it wasn't long before Iraq replaced Iran as being the No. 1 market for this class of rice. Then Iran and Iraq got in a war and we lost them both. That's when we started using the United Arab Emirates."

The Riceland rice still ends up in Iran and Iraq, "but no one will admit it," he said.

Soybeans are sold closer to home. Much of Riceland's soybean meal is used for poultry and livestock feed in Arkansas and surrounding states.

Soy flour, soy protein and soy

oil also have myriad uses in the food industry. Soybean lecithin can even be used in paint and cosmetics.

Even Riceland's byproducts can be sold. Rice hulls, for example, are used in livestock feed and to crush cranberries and apples for fruit juice. The Japanese use rice hulls in pillows because air can circulate through them.

Riceland was organized as the Arkansas Rice Growers Cooperative Association in 1921. Many Arkansas farmers had turned to rice when boll weevils decimated their cotton crops at the turn of the century. Riceland turned to soybeans when 1955 rice acreage controls left some of its rice growers with unused land.

Overseas, the value of the dollar has dampened demand for American rice.

## Business cited by NRC

United Press International  
KING OF PRUSSIA, Pa. —  
The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has cited a division of Nuclear Energy Services Inc. of Houston for five alleged violations at its Folcroft, Pa., office.

The NRC staff Tuesday said

the most serious allegation accused Conam of allowing "an employee to conduct radiography without training in required subjects and without demonstration of his understanding of this subject."

The office also allegedly failed to watch radiographic

operations "which resulted in a member of the public entering a high radiation area," the staff said.

The NRC staff proposed a \$9,000 fine for the firm. The alleged violations were determined after inspections between July and October.

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