



Farm Bill debate continues on Capitol Hill

By The Russell Group, a Washington, D.C. government affairs firm specializing in food, agriculture and trade issues.

Absent of any federal budget, automatic budget cuts and a potential government shut-down continue to handicap prospects for quick legislative consideration of a new farm bill in 2013.

Meanwhile, as House Agriculture Committee Chairman Frank Lucas awaits clearer budget targets, continuation of the current Farm Bill officially commenced as program sign up began on February 19. Looming budget cuts ushered in by sequestration, which are slated to begin on March 1, will not impact farm program eligibility. However, local Farm Service Agency offices may face further staff furloughs.

When the smoke clears from this latest budget skirmish, Lucas will proceed anew with

writing a new farm bill, which we expect will resemble closely the work product approved by the committee in 2012. The parameters will include enhanced crop insurance options and the choice for producers to select price loss or revenue loss coverage. Lucas' efforts to ensure price loss choice will receive an immediate boost from Mississippi Senator Thad Cochran who will lead the Republicans on the Senate Agriculture Committee during this Congressional session.

What changes are in store will largely be driven by new Congressional Budget Office scoring. A revised February CBO baseline

update revealed less money will be available to write a new farm bill, but the spending estimates are not as bleak as early forecasts predicted. The ten-year baseline for the commodity title increased by 2.1 percent to \$64.3 billion. According to the ten-year outlook, among the major field commodities only rice will experience a decline, dropping from \$4.4 billion to \$4.2 billion (5.1 percent). This will add pressure to ensure that the new farm bill architecture works for rice.



Bringing Rice Country to Washington, D.C.

More than 20 California rice farmers and millers attended the USA Rice Federation Government Affairs Conference in early February. Along with jackets and ties, they brought California rice country to the nation's capitol.

The annual conference is an opportunity for members of all six rice states to meet and talk about farm policy, trade and regulations impacting the industry. Most important it is an opportunity to meet face-to-face with the people who make decisions that impact our businesses every day.

As part of the conference, the CRC members and The Russell Group met with 23 legislators including many new members of Congress. Topics discussed included farm bill, trade and the Waterbird Habitat Enhancement Program. In addition, we met with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S. EPA. We also participated in dozens of meetings with the USA Rice Federation on a broad range of topics.

The first highlight of the trip was walking into Congressman Doug LaMalfa's office. It is a great day when you can walk in and see a colleague, friend and fellow rice farmer. We are glad to report that Doug is settling in nicely and that he has not changed one bit!

The second highlight of the week was the California Rice reception on Capitol Hill attended by members of Congress, staff, conservation organizations and agencies.

As Randy Russell said, "The California Rice industry has a great brand on Capitol Hill."

Nearly 100 people turned out for this annual event featuring real rice farmers, great sushi and a slide show of our best images of rice and the Sacramento Valley.



Rice grower Don Bransford reviews an article about Richvale with Congressman LaMalfa.



Rice industry team with Congresswoman Gloria Negrete McLeod.



Industry members visiting with Congresswoman Doris Matsui (photo courtesy of USA Rice Federation).

Select Crop Protection Materials 2013 Update



Planting season is fast approaching and this would be a good time to review the timing and availability of your crop protection materials. Contact your county agricultural commissioners (CACs), and/or Farm Advisors for specific restrictions in the counties you grow rice. Several counties impose additional permit conditions to non-restricted rice pesticides in response to reports of drift. Always read the label for specific conditions, water holding requirements and pre-harvest intervals (PHI).

Note: Please use caution when approached to test new products on your rice. In certain instances, the testing should go through regulatory processes with crop destruct requirements to avoid illegal residues.

Thiobencarb (Bolero/Abolish) – rice specific herbicide

Bolero UltraMax continues to have a maximum 30-day water hold while Abolish has a 19-day water holding requirement, and time limits for early/emergency release of these products. Changes to the Abolish label (Rev 6) provides specific directions for tank mixes with Regiment and allows applications to non-flooded fields at the three to five leaf stage and flooded fields after the five-leaf stage.

The CRC continues to receive a high level of scrutiny on thiobencarb. In 2012, the monitoring results were excellent due to adherence to the management practices.

Propanil – rice specific herbicide

The management plan brochure will be available at www.calrice.org during the use season. Propanil stewardship includes the Propanil Regulations, the seven-day water holding requirement, and maintenance of aerial and ground spray equipment in good condition with nozzle/spray pattern evaluation prior to spraying.

This will be the first year for the new packaging and delivery system specific to the dry formulation. You should check whether you are in compliance if you still have old packaging (bags) in inventory.

Clomazone (Cerano and Bombard) – rice specific herbicide

In 2012, monitoring results under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) were positive during record use of clomazone. The increased use and reports of white weeds in the drains has brought attention to clomazone. Please observe the 14-day water holding requirement and label requirements to

keep applications from drifting outside the fields.

Acetolactate Synthase (ALS) Inhibitors

The herbicides, bensulfuron-methyl (Londax), bispyribac-sodium (Regiment), halosulfuron-methyl (Sanda), penoxsulam (Granite), and orthosulfamuron (Strada) all share a common mode of action, so it is best to use only one ALS inhibitor per year to prevent resistance. The UC Cooperative Extension and UC Davis researchers compiled an herbicide management chart found at:

<http://cecolusa.ucdavis.edu/files/65329.pdf>

or:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/UCRiceProject/Fact_Sheets/

and click on Herbicide resistance stewardship.

The ALS herbicides can cause spotting on non-rice crops. Please adhere to label requirements and permit conditions when using these herbicides.

Cyhalofop-butyl (rice specific) and Bispyribac-sodium

Two non-restricted herbicides, cyhalofop-butyl (Clincher) and bispyribac-sodium (Regiment), continue with permit conditions for mandatory ground applications and buffer zones. Those applying Clincher by ground must attend one of the Dow AgroSciences stewardship meetings for certification, or view the video at the local CAC office.

Additional Regiment permit conditions exist in counties where plantings of young walnuts occur.

Azoxystrobin (Quadris)

Many of the Quadris applications take place late in the season. Please remember the label requirements include a 14-day water holding requirement and 28-day pre-harvest interval (PHI).

Waterbird Habitat Enhancement Program expanding rapidly

The application period for year three of the new Waterbird Habitat Enhancement Program (WHEP) came to a close in February. We had another period of strong demand by growers who have chosen to put these WHEP practices into place on their farms. This is great news for both the waterbirds that benefit from this program and the positive message it sends to the public and public policy leaders in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. The message is loud and clear: with appropriate incentives provided through a program that integrates well with the rice industry's working lands, this industry is serious about using its working lands to enhance and expand habitat for these critical species of waterfowl.

By the end of this year, we expect to have nearly 125,000 acres enrolled—a landscape scale change for the benefit of the millions of waterbirds in the Pacific Flyway that are now reliant upon rice

acres for much of their energy and open space requirements. This is an important example of how our nation's working lands will need to provide more and more benefits as the human population grows and the pressure and limitations to create and maintain quality wildlife habitat builds.

We thank the Natural Resources Conservation Service for their funding and our conservation partners for their valued technical expertise. Audubon California and PRBO Conservation Science have also spent a considerable

amount of time on this particular effort and all of our valued Central Valley Joint Venture partners have supported the creation of WHEP. The California rice industry is pleased to have this opportunity to shine, and we couldn't have done it without the partnership of our conservation friends.

Now we look to the next chapter of this conservation program. We will continue to work with our partners with the goal of expanding enrollment of rice acres into the program. We will keep you posted on this ongoing effort.



Two Californians part of Rice Leadership Development

From left, Steven Schuler and Seth Fiack have been named to the 2013 Rice Leadership Development Program.

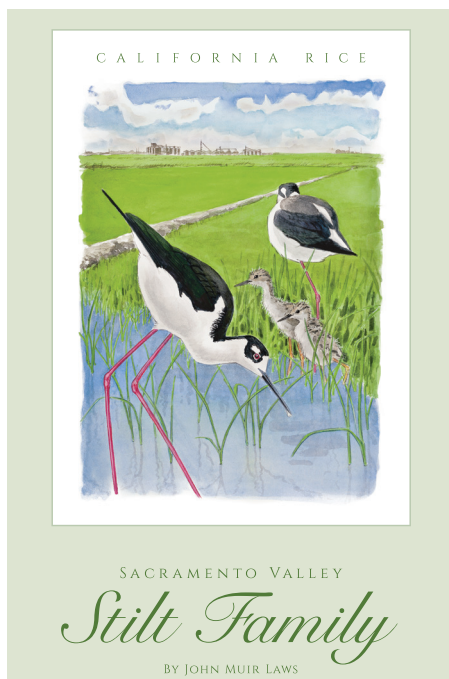
The seven participants in the two-year program will receive personal development, communications training and a comprehensive understanding of the U.S. rice industry.

California Rice fine art program spotlights wildlife



One of the strongest environmental benefits of California rice fields – the habitat provided for shorebirds – is the key link to the newest art projects commissioned on behalf of this industry.

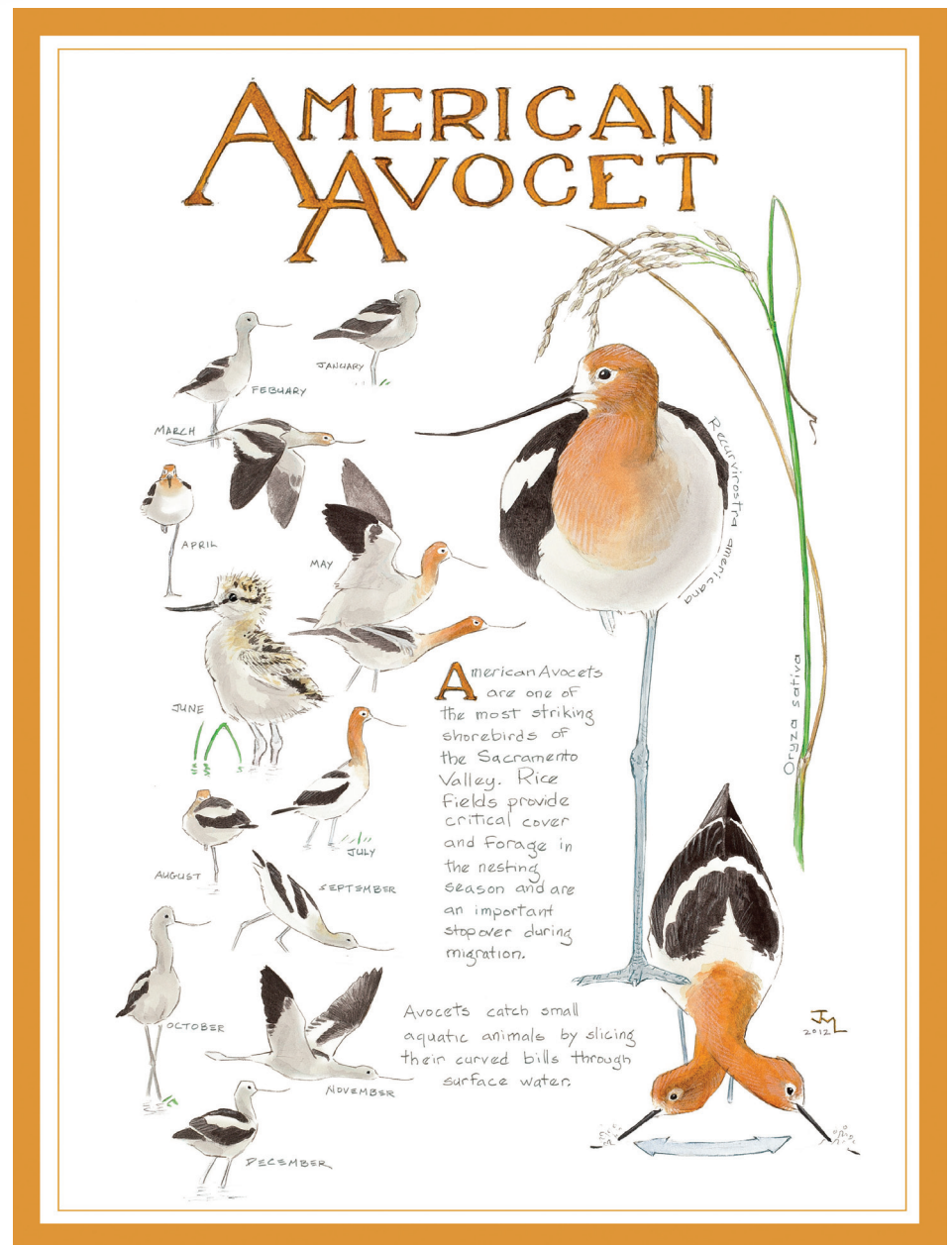
The CRC has been working for months with Naturalist, Artist and Educator John Muir Laws from San Mateo County on a series of projects to promote California Rice. The result are two spectacular paintings, one depicting a Black-necked Stilt family in a rice field and the second showing a year in the life of an American Avocet. Both provide significant visuals and words that acknowledge how rice fields benefit these wildlife species.



"I'm really excited about these projects," Laws said. "This is a chance to celebrate both the biodiversity – the natural heritage of the Sacramento Valley – and also to explore a place where there's an active agricultural landscape that is working together in harmony with the animal species that are here."

A rendition of the stilt painting will be featured on this year's California Rice box, which will be delivered to our key audiences including Legislators, regulators, decision makers, opinion leaders

and media just prior to the CRC's Legislative Day on June 19. The avocet painting has been captured as a limited-edition giclee print and will go inside the boxes. We will seek opportunities to utilize the original paintings to further promote California Rice. We are working with Laws on a third project, a wildlife-themed map of Sacramento Valley rice country. We envision this map as an important piece in communicating the rice story through our conservation contacts, wildlife refuges and other outlets throughout the valley.



Carlos Suarez welcomed back as new NRCS State Conservationist

Here in California we have been fortunate to have a string of very committed and experienced State Conservationists to be assigned the task of running our State Office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The most recent appointment after the retirement of Ed Burton, whom we enjoyed working with so much, is no exception. We welcome Carlos Suarez back to California and look forward to his long tenure as our new California State Conservationist for California NRCS.

Our experience with Carlos stems from his work as Ed Burton's Assistant State Conservationist from 2005 to 2008.



Since then he's been serving as the State Conservationist in Florida. He has much experience with implementing conservation programs at NRCS

having also worked in Nebraska, Wisconsin, Indiana, West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

While we were sorry to see Ed Burton ride off into retirement last year, we are also excited about all the great conservation accomplishments to come with Carlos at the helm. We've done great things with NRCS in recent years, especially with the creation of the new Waterbird Habitat Enhancement Program that we expect will have close to 25 percent of rice acres enrolled by year's end. We are excited to build upon this success by advancing enrollment and refining the program even more.



Congress recognizes a California Rice Milestone

The California Rice Centennial is part of the Congressional Record.

At the encouragement of U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, the 100th anniversary of commercial rice production in our state was entered into the

Congressional Record on December 18.

Senator Boxer's Deputy State Director Stacey Smith presented a copy of the material to CRC President and CEO Tim Johnson and rice grower Michael Boeger during a visit to the California Rice Commission office.

National Coverage for California Rice

The environmental benefits of California rice farming were featured during a recent segment on the nationwide television show America's Heartland.

The segment was filmed at the DeWit farm in Elverta and included interviews with grower Mike DeWit and members of the Central Valley Bird Club.

Producer/Reporter Jason Shoultz described it as "the story of the commitment to wildlife that rice farmers have through their management practices. Our viewers want to know what farmers and ranchers are doing to protect the environment and live in harmony with their neighbors."

The segment can be viewed at AmericasHeartland.org and clicking on Episode 819.

Water quality program development

The CRC continues to work in development of a rice specific waste discharge requirement (WDR) Order under the Long-term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. Our approach is to use science and available data for development of a Groundwater Assessment Report (GAR). The GAR is a WDR requirement, so

the CRC is expending the resources upfront to use the GAR as a tool in program development.

The CRC should be the third coalition through the approval process after the East San Joaquin and the South San Joaquin Coalitions. Our estimate for a timeline is to have a WDR Order ready for approval by October.

Implementation would take place by the rice season of 2014.

We are working with the regional water board staff for concurrence during program development. The CRC is best positioned to move forward with the most comprehensive WDR Order in the region for the ultimate benefit of the rice industry.

California Rice Social Media Grows

Thanks to the powerful and intriguing story of California Rice and a growing number of industry members participating, we continue to set records for social media activity.

The CalRice.org Website had more than 5.1 million hits last year, an increase of nearly 40 percent from the prior year and more than double the 2011 total. The number of unique visitors, individuals that went to the website, reached 68,500 in 2012, up 25 percent.

A key factor for the growth was a threefold increase in interest to the California Rice Blog, with 26 industry members contributing. Additionally, blog hits in January reached a record level, continuing the positive trend.

We are also very active on several other social media channels. Our tweets (posts of information) on Twitter have surpassed 2,000. We have posted more than 3,500 photographs on Facebook. Our YouTube library includes some 430 videos shot in the last three years, which have generated more than

100,000 views. We seek to engage in more two-way conversations, keeping in mind our target audiences of

Legislators, regulators, decision makers, opinion leaders and media as we help convey the California Rice story.

The screenshot shows the California Rice website homepage. At the top is the California Rice logo and a navigation bar with links: Blog, Environment, Economics, Cuisine, Diversity, Industry Info, and Press Room. Below the navigation bar is a large banner image of a rice field at sunset. To the left of the banner is a text box titled "CALIFORNIA RICE" with the text: "As the world's most widely consumed grain, rice sustains about half of our population. It impacts some facet of our lives every day. California Rice plays a vital role in this cycle." Below the banner is a section titled "Check us out on YouTube" with a video player. To the right of the video player is a section titled "Twitter @RiceNews" with three tweets. The first tweet is about a bird's eye view of stomping a Yuba County rice field, taken by Chris Hain. The second tweet is about a video clip from Leslie Morris. The third tweet is about a view at the Port of West Sac showing an arriving team and a Korea-bound ship being loaded with CA Rice. The website also features a "What's New" section with a link to a blog post titled "NEW BLOG- RICE GROWERS AND SCIENTISTS TRACK SHOREBIRDS".

CALIFORNIA RICE COMMISSION

Phone 916/387-2264
Fax 916/387-2265

E-mail calrice@calrice.org
www.calrice.org

1231 I Street, Suite 205
Sacramento, CA 95814 - 2933

Executive Committee:

Charley Mathews, Chairman
Brian Reines, Vice Chairman
Don Bransford, Secretary
Paul Chamlee, Treasurer
Keith Davis • Sean Doherty
Mark Kimmelshue • Rob Paschoal

CRC Staff:

Tim Johnson, President & CEO
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Radio Icons meet an Icon of Rice Country

The partnership of California Rice with radio personalities Armstrong & Getty has paid many dividends. Their testimonials about rice and its many benefits have helped greatly raise awareness of California Rice in the Capitol region. It has also been a major factor in record activity to the CalRice.org Website. The CRC has regularly held meetings with the popular talk radio hosts to ensure rice messaging remains authentic and effective.

Recently Jack and Joe had a chance to visit with this Long-billed Curlew, one of the wood carvings commissioned by the CRC in association with the Pacific Flyway Decoy Association. Their video touting the tremendous connection between ricelands and wildlife can be viewed at: youtube.com/ricenews.

