

USA Rice Federation is the national advocate for all segments of the rice industry, conducting activities to influence government programs, developing and initiating programs to increase worldwide demand for U.S. rice, and providing other services to increase profitability for all industry segments.

State News

U.S. Rice Promoted at Rice and Gravy Festival

LAFAYETTE, LA — More than 1,700 people from multiple states and foreign countries gathered here Saturday to celebrate the Cajun cuisine staple, rice and gravy. The sixth annual Louisiana Beef Council “Rice and Gravy Cook-off” was held at Acadian Village, an historic Cajun village near Lafayette.

During the event, 38 teams competed to cook the most delicious beef gravy to serve over Louisiana-grown rice. Falcon Rice Mill of Crowley furnished the rice and the Louisiana Beef Council provided 850 pounds of beef for the contest.



Festival attendees visit the Louisiana Rice Council / USA Rice Federation booth at the Rice and Gravy Cook-off at Acadian Village.

Dane Hebert and Ted Girouard of Vermilion Parish appeared on CBS affiliate KLFY-TV prior to the event to publicize the festival and promote rice. Hebert and Girouard then teamed up to represent Vermilion Parish Farm Bureau in the contest.

The Louisiana Rice Growers Association provided 400 one-pound bags of rice for distribution to festival attendees. Hundreds of those attending stopped by the Louisiana Rice Council display booth, where they learned about the rice industry and were given rice recipes developed by the USA Rice Federation.



From left: Dane Hebert; CBS TV-10 Hosts Bob Moore & Gary Arnold; and Ted Girouard

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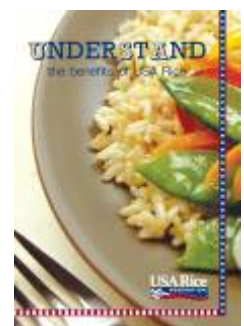
International Promotion

USA Rice Leaflet Distributed at International Food Exhibition

LONDON — The USA Rice Federation distributed its new health leaflet, *Understanding the Benefits of USA Rice*, through the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office booth at the International Food Exhibition here March 13-16.

USA Rice developed the new leaflet as a response to the increasing attention foodservice professionals and consumers are giving the obesity problem and their search for healthy eating choices. The leaflet promotes the nutritional and health benefits of U.S. long-grain rice as part of a healthy diet.

Nearly 24,000 food industry professionals visited the show, with more than 1,300



exhibitors. About 1,000 people visited the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office booth, where the rice benefits leaflet was displayed and distributed in the Exhibition's USA Pavilion during the four-day event.

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USDA News

18 More Watersheds Available for Signup in 2005 Conservation Security Program

WASHINGTON — Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns announced during a National Agriculture Day luncheon Thursday a nationwide sign-up for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) that will be available to approximately 235,000 farmers and ranchers in 220 watersheds.

The 2005 CSP sign-up includes the 202 watersheds announced by USDA on Nov. 2, 2004, and the 18 pioneer watersheds from the fiscal year 2004 sign-up. Producers who have a current CSP contract are not eligible for this sign-up.

Sign-up will be held March 28 to May 27. The sign-up announcement and an amendment to the CSP interim final rule that will detail specific program requirements will be published soon in the *Federal Register*.

Source: <<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome>>

International News

Rice Porridge Ritual Predicts Major Quake in Japan, Priest Says

TOKYO (AFP) — An annual ritual at a 1,200-year-old Shinto shrine predicted a major earthquake in southern Japan five days before the tremor rocked the region, a priest said today.

In the fortune-telling ceremony using rice porridge, the Chiriku Hachimangu shrine in Miyaki town in the Kyushu region warned on March 15 of a quake even though the area is historically less prone to tremors.

The shrine offers a bowl of porridge to the altar every February 26 and takes it back on March 15. A man from a family that has been telling fortunes for generations then examines the surface to make predictions.

“It was good porridge this year with a shiny surface and not much mold ... but I saw a rare crack,” chief priest Masahiro Higashi told AFP.

After receiving the forecast from the fortune-teller, the priest told residents on March 15 the upcoming year would be mild with an average harvest. “But be careful and be prepared for earthquakes,” he added in the televised forecast.

Sunday's quake, which measured 7.0 on the Richter scale, killed one woman, injured hundreds and damaged more than 600 houses in Kyushu.

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