

2011 – Very Important Year For Rice Farmers

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Happy New Year and yes we will take all the best wishes for a prosperous 2011. This year rice farmers are wishing for normal weather, a normal crop year and a good normal price.... What does normal mean? It's hard to say but rice farmers know that 2010 was anything but normal for them. 2010 went down as not only an unforgettable year for many rice farmers but a year like never before seen. If you are an active rice farmer today then you are the best of the best worldwide. A crop year where sneaky weather conditions gave milling yields a real beating resulting in a no win situation for both rice farmers and millers in many areas of the delta and the gulf coast regions. It is what it is and it's going to take until close to September 1, 2011 before we can dig our way out of the trashy chalky broken rice. No doubt this is a year of two markets, one for good rice and one for poor quality rice. It's hard to imagine values for high quality rice dropping. Between the struggle to deal with crop failure and the real need for quality long grain in the domestic marketplace along with an expected reduction in acreage, it is hard to see how prices can trickle back down. Those farmers who are stuck with low milling quality rice though have a disaster on their hands. As a result 2011 rice acreage is expected to take a reduction particularly in light of corn and soybean prices. Keep your eye on that normal weather again because any indica-

tion of a drought in the Mid-West and grain prices may go through the roof. Another twist to the New Year is the new congress on Capitol Hill. What will a new House Ag Committee bring to farmers? What is in store for the next farm bill debate in the face of a time bomb in the form of the country's deficit? These are not normal times. It is hard to know how many members of Congress really know the importance of agriculture to the U.S. national security. Hopefully a serious recession and crisis in rural America will not be the wakeup call to get the attention of Congress as we all try and defend farm safety net programs. Never before has it been so important for rice farmers to have the very best representation in both the marketplace and in Washington D.C. At the same time we continue to hear that the world is running out of water, available farmland and we face a population growth that is to add one billion people to the planet over the next ten years. Remember 2008 when the world was running out of food? Known as the year of the world food crisis, 2008 is going down as another unforgettable year too. What have we learned from these last few years? Expect the unexpected and hope for a normal 2011. Δ

(The US Rice Producers Association, representing rice producers in Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Texas, is the only national rice producers' organization comprised by producers, elected by producers and representing producers in all six rice-producing states.)



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