

Expense Justified

Despite The Cost, Farmer Finds Hybrid Rice Worth The Price

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Rice farming has reached a new status since Will Hunter of Sikeston, Mo., has switched to RiceTec hybrids. Hunter used the hybrids on a few acres in 2006 and 2007, then increased his RiceTec acres in 2009 and 2010. Near harvest time last fall, he was proud to show the results.

"I've seen a considerable difference in 2009," he said. "Thus far, we've only cut a hybrid blend but we're getting ready to move over to the

ogy and efforts that have gone into rice farming yield and quality improvement from 1970 to 2010 would make him very happy and excited."

Yields in 2009 were at 186 to 195 bushels, and this year the hybrids were running way over that.

"I haven't cut a field yet under 200, so I'm really pleased this morning," Hunter said.

He couldn't praise RiceTec or its representatives more for his success.

"The service is great, the field reps have been very helpful checking our stand counts, checking for fungicide applications whether or not we

need them

which we

haven't needed

them with the

hybrid rice," he

said. "Every-

thing beginning

with the seed

selection to de-

livery all the

way down to

setting the com-

bine yield moni-

tors at harvest,

they're right

there the whole

growing season.

They give you

the technical

knowledge if

you have a

q u e s t i o n ,

they're like a

huge resource

library. They've

been really good

to us."

Hunter said



Taking time to talk about the rice harvest is left to right, Barry Barnett, Technical Representative for RiceTec, Will Hunter a grower from Sikeston, Mo., and Aaron Scott Farm Manager for Will Hunter.

Photo by John LaRose, Jr.

XL745 and if it keeps up then I'll be sold completely; we also have some CL151 and I'll have a good comparison this year."

As the harvest got underway, Hunter could see that the hybrid rice crop far outshined the conventional rice fields.

"It looks exceptionally good," he said. "It looks like it has a lot of yield potential. It has tillered out really well as it did in 2009, and if this harvest proceeds like in 2009 we stand to make more rice than we did last year. I think the newer varieties RiceTec is working on and presenting to the growers are really making some good strides to increase our yields."

Hunter's operation consists of rice primarily, corn and cotton secondly and beans in rotation with the rice. With about 1,800 acres of rice in 2010, he was looking forward to the harvest with anticipation.

His grandfather, W.P. Hunter, who started the farm, grew some rice back in 1970, but he was primarily a landowner with a rather extensive cattle operation.

"I think he used the row crop operation to fund his cattle habit," he mused.

Today Hunter farms over 4,500 acres in a partnership with his sister, Laura Collins. She, and Will's father, Dr. Sam Hunter, manage the office while Will takes care of everything outside.

"We've added to and fine tuned the operation my grandfather started, but the bulk of the ground we farm now is family ground," he added.

"I think he would be very pleased to see our rice crop today," Will continued. "The technol-

he has seen close to a 10 percent yield increase with the RiceTec hybrids

"My yields have increased to the point where I can definitely justify the extra expense of the hybrid rice," he said.

Also present at the harvest was Hunter's RiceTec representative, Barry Barnett.

"This is actually a standard blend that we came out with of non-Clearfield rice," he said. "It's cutting really good, making over 200 bushels dry. He's had really good luck with this crop. It's looked good all year."

Barnett has known Hunter since he started tech service in January, helping him with some of the seeds that he bought in the spring and working with him throughout the summer.

"Will is pretty sharp on managing the crop," Barnett said. "He's really knowledgeable and didn't need a lot of help, but I was there when he needed me."

Hunter had some challenges getting a stand on some late planted rice. He asked Barnett to look the crop over, and together they decided to keep the rice and go with it.

"We had some nitrogen loss on some other farms later on and he thought his pre-flood nitrogen wasn't working for him so we went ahead and put some mid-season on some of it. I think we made a good decision there, it looks really good. This particular field here looked good all year long and it looks like some of his better rice. I think overall his crop is going to be really good." △

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