

Grain Quality Becomes More Important To Rice Buyers

RAYVILLE, LA.

LSU AgCenter rice breeder Steve Linscombe told north Louisiana rice farmers at their annual meeting on Jan. 26 that grain quality is becoming more important to buyers.

"The mills are starting to look at the quality of these different varieties," he said, adding that farmers with better quality rice may get a premium for their crop.

He said the variety CL 152, released in 2011, has better quality and more lodging resistance than CL 151, and it should yield slightly less. It also has a more slender grain and more uniform grain shape.

Linscombe said the variety Cheniere has set the quality standard, but the Mermentau variety, approved for release this year, has even better quality.

He said work continues on development of hybrid rice at the Rice Research Station, and release of a hybrid could occur as soon as three years.

Dustin Harrell, LSU AgCenter agronomist, advised farmers that soil deficient in phosphorus

could hamper their crop. He said the nutrient should be applied between planting and pre-flood stages.

Natalie Hummel, LSU AgCenter entomologist, said a number of unusual insect pests were found in rice fields in 2011, including billbugs, colaspis beetles, thrips, chinchbugs and armyworms. Several, but not all, of the insects can be controlled with a seed treatment, she said.

Johnny Saichuk, LSU AgCenter rice specialist, said last year's heat caused a number of problems for the Louisiana rice crop, including short plant height, reduced tillering and incomplete grain formation.

Reece Langley, USA Rice Federation vice president for government affairs, said even if approval of a new farm bill is delayed with an extension of the current farm bill, cuts to agriculture programs would still be imposed.

Betsy Ward, USA Rice Federation president, said the rice industry's contributions to waterfowl habitat will be publicized. "I think we've got a great story to tell." Δ



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