

In Tune *With* Industry

RiceTec Stays Abreast Of Changing Rice Industry

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RiceTec continually keeps a finger on the pulse of the rice industry, according to Jim Thompson, Director of Marketing for RiceTec.

"We're always trying to project what's coming in the industry. In fact, recently we had rice industry leaders from across the country into our Alvin, Texas, headquarters for a summit meeting just to get some of the best minds in the rice industry together to give us a feel for where we need to be going, where the industry may be going," he said.

Those present included millers, producers, and researchers, people from the consumer goods industry, extension representatives as well as selected service partners and customers.

"It was literally across the board from producer all the way through to the folks who package the goods for the end user," Thompson added.

Rice consumption is still a good split between domestic use and export. Rice gained in stature with the governmental food pyramid placing brown rice as a food element in the nutrition program.

"There's a lot of good things happening in rice domestically with consumption, and we expect that to continue to grow on a per capita basis," he said. "Of course, worldwide things are looking very positive also for the United States from the standpoint that world supplies are still at some of their lowest point in several years. Although production is high, consumption is also high, so ending stocks are expected to stay moderate. So for the long haul things are still looking pretty bullish for the rice industry."

RiceTec does have a separate business in South America, a sister company to the U.S. efforts, but the South American chain is in a different place on the growth curve than RiceTec in the United States.

"We're farther along," he explained. "They started two to three years after we did; but we do a lot of collaborative research work

with them and we stay in close contact. It looks like things are going well for them.

"They're basically on the same pattern down there as we are here as far as growth, but just two or three years in arrears of us," he continued. "From an overall company standpoint and direction, obviously we continue to monitor very closely worldwide the acceptance or not so of additional traits and what may be available coming down through the pipeline from companies who may not be directly involved with rice but may be trait



RiceTec Director of Marketing, Jim Thompson reported on the summit meeting of rice industry leaders from across the country held recently at Alvin, Texas. Photo by John LaRose

providers. So we're keeping a close eye on where it looks like the industry might go down the road. You can't get to a fork in the road and have to stop and wait to decide which direction to go; you need to be thinking about it well in advance. We're in that kind of position, monitoring closely, watching and seeing what the industry may be headed toward in the future.

"Obviously we have some things going on, some non GMO things that look very promising from a standpoint of more immediate future," he said. "We have some collaborative efforts with some third parties on yield enhancements, drought situations and different things, so we're very optimistic about the future and what that holds.

"We are doing a lot of trial work like we're seeing on the site here," Thompson continued. "We have the trials with water usage and some things that are going to be absolutely critical for this industry as we move forward. Some of this work, like water and nutrient management, will become even more important over the next decade or two than it is now, especially since energy costs and long term availability has become such a critical issue." △