

# La. Farmers Pass Rice Referendum

**BATON ROUGE, LA.**

Louisiana rice farmers overwhelmingly agreed to continue paying a nickel for every 100 pounds of rice for research and 3 cents per hundred pounds for promotion for the next five years.

The totals showed 357 producers voting for the research check-off and 65 voting against, or 85 percent in favor of the measure and 15 percent against.

The promotion referendum was approved 321 to 107, or 75 percent for and 25 percent opposed.

Jackie Loewer, a rice farmer from Branch, La., and chairman of the Louisiana Rice Research Board, said the vote shows that an overwhelming majority of farmers approve of check-off funding.

Volunteer farmers serve on the promotion and research boards, and they decide how the money is to be spent.

"As farmers, everyone on both boards knows how difficult farming has become, and we will

continue to carefully weigh how each dollar is spent," Loewer said.

The bulk of the funds for research is earmarked for work at the LSU AgCenter Rice Research Station.

"I can assure farmers that they are getting their money's worth," said Steve Linscombe, Rice Research Station director. "A continuation of these check-off funds means that research can continue to develop new varieties and to improve rice farming practices."

The funds for promoting rice are crucial, said Kevin Berken, of Lake Arthur, La., who is chairman of the promotion board.

"If we can't sell a crop, then it doesn't matter how successful farmers are at growing rice," Berken said. "Approval of these funds means we can carry on with the very successful domestic and international promotion activities that these funds support."

"Bottom line is, without research we couldn't grow it, and without promotion, we can't sell it," Loewer said. Δ



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