

# More North Louisiana Farmers Switch To Rice

**TALLULAH, LA.** More north Louisiana farmers are switching to rice instead of corn, soybeans and cotton. Garrett Marsh of Tallulah grew his first rice crop last year. “I was here to get a refresher,” he said of a rice growing clinic here on March 4 sponsored by the LSU AgCenter. He also farms corn and soybeans, but he has eliminated cotton, replacing it with rice. Marsh said he was satisfied with his first rice crop that yielded 181 bushels to 200 bushels an acre. He said the soil on his farm is heavy clay, more suited for rice than cotton. Because rice doesn’t suffer through droughts, it is a more dependable crop because water is

weather,” Saichuk said. Herbicides function better in wet conditions, he said. Water management is the key to a successful rice crop, Saichuk said. “If there is any single factor, it’s water management – when to get the water on and when to get it off.” Dr. Bill Williams, LSU AgCenter weed specialist, reviewed options for controlling weeds. “There’s not a herbicide out there that you can use against every weed,” he said. Farmers should aim to keep weeds under control two weeks after planting and to keep fields clean of weeds for eight weeks to retain 90 percent of their yield. He said the most common problem is that



**Donna Lee, LSU AgCenter county agent in East Carroll Parish, at far right, advises farmers on the upcoming rice planting season during a meeting held in Tallulah recently (March 4).**

Photo by Bruce Schultz

pumped onto the crop. Marsh’s father, Jim Marsh of Tallulah, said hot summers often create quality problems for soybeans. “You can’t sell rotten soybeans,” he said. Garrett Marsh said he is eager to plant his rice crop this spring, although drill seeding will be a problem if some of the ground moisture doesn’t evaporate. “If it will just give us a week of dry weather, it will dry up.” Don Taves of Tallulah has planted rice previously, but, he said, he always learns something from the clinics. “It was a good refresher course,” he said. Dr. Johnny Saichuk, LSU AgCenter rice specialist, said he expects more acreage will be water-planted this year because of wet weather keeping the ground saturated. “I expect we’re going to see some water-seeded rice that wasn’t intended to be because of the

farmers allow weeds to get too large before trying to control them. Williams also urged farmers to evaluate potential varieties. “I still think unless you have a red rice problem, you don’t want to use Clearfield to control run-of-the-mill rice weeds.” R.L. Frazier, LSU AgCenter county agent in Madison Parish, said the idea for a clinic for new rice farmers originated from talking with Donna Lee, LSU AgCenter county agent in East Carroll Parish, and Dennis Burns, LSU AgCenter county agent in Tensas Parish. Most of the rice produced in Louisiana is grown in the southwest part of the state, Saichuk said. Traditionally, about 20 percent of the rice crop is grown in the northeast part of the state. “But that percentage is going up this year,” Saichuk. Δ



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