

Rice Center All About Putting Money Into Farmers’ Pockets

STUTTGART, ARK. Ronnie Bauman, who raises rice and soybeans near Stuttgart, picked up some ideas at the U of A Rice Research and Extension Center’s annual field day in 2008 that he thinks will put money in his pocket.

tors and university personnel. It’s all part of a rich tradition that has been going on longer than anyone can remember. “We mainly use it to showcase rice and soybean research at the center,” says Deren. “A wide variety of research projects that impact



“We went to see what we were spending our money on,” he says. He wasn’t disappointed. “I enjoyed looking at the experiments and new technology. The new varieties coming out, the weed research and fertility experiments were real interesting. With the high price of fertilizers, I wanted to learn more about it.”

every rice farmer are underway.” Station research helps the Cooperative Extension Service fine-tune recommendations that help farmers reduce costs and increase yields. But a major reason the center is critical to Arkansas rice farmers is the development of new, high-yielding, disease-resistant varieties



Based on what he saw and heard at the field day, “I think we overfertilized this year.” He learned ways to save money in 2009 and get maximum yields. Bauman saw new varieties at the center that will fit into his program. He’d rather grow Arkansas-developed varieties rather than those developed at LSU. Stephen Hoskyn, another Arkansas County farmer, went to see the latest technologies and “try to find an edge in production. If I can pick up a bushel per acre or save a dollar, it was worth my time.” Hoskyn has been going to field days since he was a college. His dad, Jerry Hoskyn, also attends field days and is chairman of the Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board, which funds many experiments at the center. The rice field day may well be the most popular event the U of A’s Division of Agriculture sponsors all year. The big draw is a chance to see the latest U of A research in one place. A traditional lunch of the tastiest catfish this side of the Mississippi River doesn’t hurt, admits Dr. Chris Deren, center director. Nearly 600 people showed up in 2008. They toured the 1,000-acre facility in buses and on hay bale-laden trailers pulled by pickups and tractors. Every tour was filled. Tours were followed by talks updating farmers on important issues and a traditional catfish lunch, which the Yoder Ruritan served to hungry farmers, farm consultants, foreign visi-

adapted to Arkansas conditions. “The breeding program has been a very strong focus of this center since it opened in 1927. Farmers always want to know what variety is coming out next. “We know farmers get their information from many different sources, including the Internet and private consultants, as well as extension specialists and county agents who make unbiased recommendations based on university research,” says Deren. In 2008, the center expanded the audience to young people by offering wildlife and ATV safety courses. A new feature in 2008, Deren said, was a presentation showing farmers how they could create their own biofuel on the farm. “Some of the interesting visitors we get every year include a group or two from foreign destinations, including South America and China. We also get visitors from the rice research locations in other states,” says Deren. The center gets a lot of requests from scientists for space. In 2007 the center had about two dozen scientists working on more than 200 separate tests. The center is in the midst of a major expansion. The older facilities are getting a major upgrade with an infusion of about \$11.5 million to create new offices, an auditorium and research space for faculty now scattered in several small buildings. Bauman says he’s glad to see the center update its “antique facilities.” Δ



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