

# RiceTec Hybrids No Comparison

## Rice After Rice After Rice

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Farming 7,000 acres for three generations Robert O. Pierce III, Bert, says he expects his three-year-old son Robert O. Pierce IV to join the family business in its fourth generation. “It is a 100 percent family business.”

“My grandfather started the operation in 1951. He went into the Navy in 1944. When he got out of the Navy he went to school at Mississippi State University. My father, Bob, went to Mississippi State, my brother and my uncle went to Mississippi State and I went to Mississippi State. We pretty much split on everything we farm. This year we have about 2,000 acres of rice, 2,000 acres of cotton, 1,200 acres of corn and the rest soybean,” said Bert.

Bert says the farm is expanding next year. “We are picking up another 1,500 acres next year. That is going to put us where we want to be. We need to have the acres to more or less feed our family. Every one of our family members is on a combine, a tractor or out here every day. My grandfather is 83 years old; he is out here every day.”

Growing 2,000 acres of rice and adding acreage, Bert has been growing RiceTec hybrids for two years. “Now that we are growing more rice, more rice acres and rice behind rice, we have started using the RiceTec hybrids. RiceTec disease packages and the yield that comes from rice after rice has really been good for us. Back in 1991, dad told me we were cutting in the 130 range. Weed control was a big issue. Overall up until just a few years ago it really wasn’t any different from when we started in 1991 until the RiceTec hybrids started to come about.”

Bert said today, RiceTec yields cannot compare with older varieties. “I have one field that is Wells, which is a public variety. The field is fresh grade, zero grade ground and it should be 160-170 bushels, which is great. But you drive by it and then drive by a field of RiceTec hybrid rice; it makes you sick to your stomach. There’s not any comparison. Even though the yield is there it is the cosmetic look of it. There is no comparison, in the yield there is no comparison.”

Bert has been getting 210 bushel per acre dry weight on RiceTec hybrids and likes to plant early. “Our practice is to try to get the rice crop out as soon as possible, early as possible; that is another reason we like RiceTec hybrids. You can get some really early maturity hybrids and that is what we want.” Burning the straw enables Bert to get rid of the residue and avoid any delays in planting caused by rotting straw.

The Pierce family farm is 75-80 percent irrigated. “That is what we strive to do every year. If it is cost effective to grade a field and put a well down, we will. The return on it is too much

not to do it. The last two years it’s really paid off having irrigation. We have had such strange summers. With the heat and drought plus the floods it definitely pays us back. We are really into the zero grade now and that is primarily dedicated 100 percent rice year after year. We have had some fields that have had rice on them for about nine years in a row. That’s the longest we have gone with any kind of rice on a field and we’re still getting a 200 bushel yield.”



Planning to add more acres of rice to the 2,000 they have now, Bert Pierce says RiceTec disease packages and the yield that comes from rice after rice has really been good for them.

Photo by John LaRose, Jr.

Bert controls red rice by spot spraying. “With the RiceTec hybrids, I think that is what is making it possible to go rice after rice after rice. You lose a lot of your fertility, rice is tough crop. It takes a lot out of your soil. So with a hybrid like that; that can come back year after year after year and still give you 200 bushels. Wells would never do that. A public rice variety would never do that. No question. That is why we use it year after year after year and hope to continue to keep doing that.”

Bert was asked about his hybrid choice. “My main hybrid is RiceTec Clearfield XL745 and Clearfield XL729. We are also using a newer hybrid RiceTec Clearfield XL756. We have some non-Clearfield hybrids; XL 754, XL754, 753. We have more acres in the Clearfield than we do in the non-Clearfield due to the red rice issue. I think the Clearfield technology has a better weed control than conventional myself overall. It is a lot easier on your sprayer operator that you don’t have all the chemicals and concoctions that the rice scouts give you to mix up. It makes it a lot easier.”

Pierce farms currently have approximately a half million bushels of grain storage. Pierce farms built a seed plant in 1978 and cleans and sells soybean and wheat seed. Pierce farms is also in partnership with three other investors in a cotton gin.

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