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# California

## Rice harvest proceeds as production, prices rebound

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

WILLOWS, Calif. — California rice production is rebounding after two drought-diminished seasons.

The Golden State's rice crop is expected to come in at 48.6 million hundredweight, a 30 percent jump from last year, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service office in Sacramento.

With spring rains enabling many Northern California growers to get their full allotments of surface water, growers anticipate harvesting 559,000 acres statewide, up from about 370,000 acres in 2015, NASS reports.

Willows-area grower Larry Maben has harvested about 200 of his 800 acres and the going has been smooth, he said.

"It looks like a pretty decent crop," Maben said. "It remains to be seen what the yield is going to be, but it looks like a good crop in the field."

Yields could vary from field to field, suggests Charley Mathews, a Marysville area grower and USA Rice Federation executive



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

A harvester finishes dumping its load into a bankout machine on a rice farm near Willows, Calif., on Sept. 30. The harvest of rice is underway in California.

committee member.

"At first yield was down a little bit, but I'm hearing mixed results from everyone," he said. "It's about average."

NASS expects yields to be 8,700 pounds per acre, down 2 percent from last year. Growers reported a near-normal planting season, and the mostly mild summer temperatures aided the crop.

Rice averaged \$414.22 per metric ton in August, up from \$370.48 in March but

still down significantly from a peak of more than \$600 per metric ton in 2011 and 2012, according to the IndexMundi online data portal.

However, the lower prices could spur increased exports to trading partners in the Middle East and northern Africa, which had bought their rice elsewhere when prices were high, and California could regain a bigger market share for medium-grain rice now that some of its competitors

have decreased production, the California Farm Bureau Federation notes.

Among other field crops in California, according to NASS:

- The corn silage harvest is underway in the San Joaquin Valley. Corn for grain production statewide is forecast at 389,000 tons, up 47 percent from last year, as yields and acreage has rebounded because of last winter's rains.

Growers are set to harvest corn from 75,000 acres and produce 5.18 tons per acre, up 25 percent and 18 percent, respectively, from the 2015 crop year.

- Cotton was past flowering stage and bolls were opening as of the end of September, and cotton defoliation began in some areas.

Growers are expected to produce 484,000 bales of American Pima cotton and 260,000 bales of Upland cotton, up 34 percent and 58 percent, respectively, from last season.

- Hay producers are still irrigating, cutting and baling alfalfa, while winter grains are being planted in the San Joaquin Valley.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Plant breeder Stanley Omar P.B. Samonte points out different rice varieties he's growing during a field day Aug. 31 at the California Rice Research Board's experiment station near Oroville, Calif. Researchers are breeding plants for such traits as disease resistance and yields.

## Rice growers urged to use pesticides wisely to avoid resistance

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

BIGGS, Calif. — Insecticides used by rice growers to combat armyworms and other pests should be used wisely, a University of California entomologist advises.

Registered insecticides such as Intrepid, which was given an emergency exemption by regulators, need to be managed carefully so they will be available and effective in the future, extension entomologist Larry Godfrey told about 350 growers at an Aug. 31 field day here.

The reasons, he said, are the potential development of pest resistance as well as increased regulatory controls on the chemicals. Further, the consolidation of pesticide companies may lead to slower development of new materials to respond to pests' resistance to the old ones, he said.

"The products we have now we'll have to ride into the future," Godfrey said. "Be careful how you use these products so we can keep them around."

Growers can minimize instances of pests becoming tolerant to the materials they're using by limiting applications, which can be done by using biological controls and adjusting cultural practices, Godfrey advises. For instance, since rice water weevil and armyworm infestations tend to be the most concentrated in the outer reaches of a field, growers could limit treatment to within 50 or 75 feet of levees, he suggests.

Another way to minimize resistance is to rotate types of registered pesticides used from year to year — for example, using a pyrethroid like Mustang or Warrior one year, then a neonicotinoid like Belay the next and an insect growth regulator such as Dimilin in the third, he said.

The advice comes as some pest control advisers have reported that pyrethroids, which have been used intensively

over the last 15 years, don't appear to control rice water weevil as well as they once did, although this has not been quantified scientifically, Godfrey noted.

Moreover, armyworms have a naturally occurring level of tolerance to insecticides, and in 2015 no registered insecticide was effective in controlling large populations of armyworms in the heavy rice canopy, Godfrey explained.

Godfrey was one of nearly a dozen scientists who spoke to rotating groups of growers during the field day at the California Rice Experiment Station, which is mainly funded by the industry-supported California Rice Research Board. Other topics included weed control and the station's efforts to develop new rice varieties.

The more than a century-old research facility in the middle Sacramento Valley has long been involved in breeding projects and more recently has intensified breeding for improved overall grain quality, specialty rice and disease resistance, according to its website.

In one project, plant breeder Farman Jodari and others are developing long-grain rice, which is best grown in tropical climates, for production in the more temperate California weather. The scientists are working to maximize cooking quality, yield potential and resistance to cold and diseases.

"I was excited the day I got here and I continue to be excited about the future of long-grains in California with its moderate climate," Jodari said.

Medium-grain varieties take up the lion's share of rice acreage in California — 390,000 of this year's anticipated 427,000 total acres, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The annual field day is sponsored by the UC and the California Cooperative Rice Research Foundation.

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