

September 8, 2006

Dear Rice Industry and Grower Members:

Information on red rice found in California:

Red rice has not been a major issue in California since the introduction of the certified seed program for rice. However, in the past few years, this weed has been found in isolated areas of the state. The Red Rice Work Group was formed to address measures to mitigate the spread of red rice in California. We are currently working on a process that provides longer-term solutions to addressing red rice. Our purpose in sending this letter is twofold: 1) to help you understand the severity of the situation and 2) to provide information on what you can immediately do to prevent spread of this pest. The two most probable modes of red rice dispersal and contamination are the use of non-certified seed and holding back seed from year to year. Certified seed is inspected in the field and lab for red rice and will not be certified if red rice is found.

What can you do as a rice grower to help prevent the spread of red rice?

You can help stop the spread of red rice to new fields by using certified rice seed. Seed fields of varieties that are not eligible for seed certification should be inspected VERY carefully for red rice. Documents are available from the UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) and the University of California at Davis (UCD), Plant Sciences Department to help you inspect and identify red rice plants. Please do not use seed from fields where you have any suspicions about what weeds might be in the field.

California has a seed certification program through the California Crop Improvement

Red rice poses a serious risk to the California rice industry and has the potential to impact rice yield and quality if this weed is allowed to spread and establish populations throughout rice fields in the state. This weed is prevalent in all of the southern U.S. rice producing states and continues to be a major constraint to production.

Red rice is a member of the same species (*Oryza sativa*) as cultivated rice grown in California. The name "red rice" refers to the distinguishing red bran that covers the kernels of red rice grain. Red rice is problematic because of the weedy characteristics it exhibits. This weed has a vigorous growth and tillering habit that makes it a better competitor for resources than cultivated rice varieties. Competition for these resources leads to a reduction in rice yields. In addition, red rice has an asynchronous reproductive cycle in which heading may occur over a prolonged period of time producing seeds that shatter easily at maturity. Seeds that fall to the soil surface may germinate when conditions are favorable or remain dormant for several years before germinating. Dormancy of red rice seeds leads to some challenges in developing an effective management strategy for this weed.

In addition to competition with cultivated rice plants, red rice is a cause of concern at the mill. The presence of red rice can lower the grade of milled rice. For example, there is a maximum limit of 0.5% red rice and damaged kernels (single or combined) for Grade U.S. No. 1.

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Association (CCIA). Many rice growers mistakenly assume that the varieties they grow are from certified seed. In reality, the CCIA has certified the following varieties in the past three years:

A-201, A-301, Calamylow-201, Calhikari-201, Calmati-201, Calmati-202, Calmochi-101, L-204, L-205, L-206, M-103, M-104, M-202, M-204, M-205, M-206, M-207, M-208, M-401, M-402, S-102

WRM-3538, WRM-5661, WRM-5990, NFD-181

Thank you in advance for your help in keeping red rice from becoming a major pest in California. Following the recommendations outlined in this letter will be a tremendous help in assisting the industry to control red rice. The Red Rice Work Group is working with the industry, county agricultural commissioners and the California Department of Food and Agriculture on a longer-term strategy. Additional information on identifying and controlling red rice will be available at the UCCE/UCD Winter Meetings.

Sincerely,

RED RICE WORK GROUP

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