

# Rice Farming on the Texas Coastal Plains: *More than Rice*

## Benefits of the Rice Industry

### ➤ **Economic**

- Texas is the 5th-largest rice-producing state in the United States
- Rice farmers contribute more than \$1 billion annually to the state economy
- Rice farming directly contributes \$374.3 million and more than 3,300 jobs annually in Colorado, Wharton and Matagorda counties
- Rice farming indirectly contributes substantial revenue and jobs in the form of waterfowl hunting and other outdoor recreation in the state.
- Waterfowl hunting alone contributes \$204 million to the Texas economy each year.
- U.S.-grown rice provides a secure source of safe and reliable food



### ➤ **Environmental**



- **Waterfowl:** rice ecosystem supports 2 million over waterfowl and 100 species of birds
- **Environmental flows:** rice water runoff increases environmental flows to the Colorado, Bernard and Lavaca rivers and Matagorda Bay
- **Wetlands Purification:**
  - Rice fields are man-made wetlands that replace natural wetlands lost each year to development and natural and man-made disasters
  - Rice fields purify water from the Colorado as it runs over the rice fields (the “lagooning effect” )

➤ **Cultural**

- The rice industry has created a farming tradition and rural landscape on the Texas Coastal Plains for 5 generations

**Rice Farmers use water efficiently**

- Rice farmers in Texas are among the most water efficient in the world/US – **they constantly look for more crop from every drop.**
- Rice needs water to control weeds and avoid the need for chemicals
- Texas rice farmers have invested \$75 million over 15 years to cut water usage by nearly 20%
- Texas rice farmers have cut water usage by half in the past 40 years
- LCRA supplies about 60% of the water used by farmers in Colorado, Wharton and Matagorda counties
- Water for agriculture is supplied on an interruptible basis – it can be curtailed during times of drought
- Adequate water supplies for rice = adequate supplies for economy, environment and rural heritage



**Costs of LCRA cut-off of irrigation water for 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row**

- LCRA's cutoff of irrigation water last year cost rice farmers in Colorado, Wharton and Matagorda more than \$83 million in lost revenue from crop sales.
- Cutting off water for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year will cost the industry badly because of two kinds of losses - loss to the agriculture infrastructure and loss to related businesses.

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