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Contact: Elizabeth Horan
Communications Manager
California Rice Commission
Office: 916/387-2264
Cell: 916/205-5395
bhoran@calrice.org

California Rice Commission supports moratorium on GE field testing

SACRAMENTO, CA – Following mounting concern over the discovery of trace levels of genetic material unapproved for commercialization in long grain rice seed outside of California, the California Rice Commission voted this morning to support a moratorium “on the field testing of all genetically modified (GM) rice cultivars in the State of California for the 2007 crop, and for future crops, until such time as research protocol and safeguards are acceptable to the California Rice Commission.”

It is the position of the industry that a moratorium on GM field testing in California would allow for an opportunity to evaluate federal regulations that safeguard the rice industry.

Following the August discovery of GM traits in long grain rice produced in southern rice growing states, the California rice industry undertook a comprehensive review of the impacts on markets and potential impacts on commercially grown rice in the state. The announcement by APHIS within recent weeks that two additional GM traits had been discovered in a variety of long grain rice, the California rice industry voted for a moratorium to evaluate the federal regulations that are the basis for all GM rice research in the state.

“Based on the events of the last few months, it is clear that the federal regulatory process is not working for rice,” commented Frank Rehermann, Chair of the CRC Board and a rice producer in Live Oak, California. “It is imperative that those systems are evaluated and approved.”

California has tested its public seed four times since August, all with non-detect results for Liberty Link varieties LL601, LL62 and LL06. None of the GM events in question are present in California, and commercial production of GM rice is currently not occurring in California or elsewhere in the U.S.

As a precautionary move to further reassure its markets of the integrity of state’s rice, the AB 2622 Advisory Board, as authorized by the California Rice Certification Act, has adopted the requirement that all California rice variety owners submit samples for laboratory testing and confirm a non-detect status to approve those varieties for production in California during the 2007 crop year.



California already has the strongest body of law in the U.S. to address market concerns. Passed in 2000, the California Rice Certification Act provides direction and establishes measures that enable the industry to regulate new rice variety introductions and research within the state.

On August 18, 2006, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that trace amounts of regulated, genetically engineered (GE) rice were found in samples taken from commercially produced long grain rice. The trace amounts in question have only been identified in Southern long grain rice, in a variety that is not present in California.

For more information about the California Rice Commission and the California rice industry, go to www.calrice.org.

The California rice industry is based in the Sacramento Valley. Each year, California rice producers plant and harvest over 500,000 acres of rice, contributing a half-billion dollars to the economy and providing habitat and fodder for 235 species of wildlife along the Pacific Flyway. The California Rice Commission represents the 2,500 growers and handlers who farm and process rice in the state annually.

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