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# **Hundreds gather for first in-person Rice Field Day in Stuttgart since COVID-19 lockdown**

By John Lovett

U of A System Division of Agriculture

## Fast facts

* Rice Field Day returned to in-person event at Rice Research & Extension Center
* Arkansas Rice Check-off Program funds research for conservation and efficiencies
* University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture works with industry partners

(686 words)

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STUTTGART, Ark. — Hundreds gained new insights into weed control, irrigation technology, precision agriculture and soil health at the 2022 Rice Field Day on Friday, Aug. 5, at the Rice Research & Extension Center.

For veteran rice farmer Chris Isbell of Isbell Farms near Humnoke, it was a refreshing change of pace to have the annual field day return as an in-person event for the first time in three years. Isbell said he gets more in-depth information by attending the event in person rather than viewing the presentations by Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station researchers online. The field day was held virtually during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 and 2021.

“It’s a long gap, and I’m glad we can somewhat resume our normal lives,” Keith Glover, president and CEO of Producers Rice Mill in Stuttgart, said. “It goes without saying that rice research, especially the research that is done through the check-off program, is so vital and important to our farmers and also to our industry.”

The [Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board](https://agcomm.uark.edu/agnews/publications/1003_Benefits_Ark_Rice_Check_Off_Program.pdf) was established in 1985 to improve the profitability of growing rice in Arkansas by distributing funds raised by the Rice Check-off Program for research, extension, and market development.

Division of Agriculture faculty, staff and students offered in-field presentations on rice breeding, fertility, drone usage, pest management, irrigation and agronomy during the annual event. Over 250 people attended the event.

Glover said experiments conducted by the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, the research arm of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, have contributed to conservation and land-use efficiencies.

“Fuel usage is down 34 percent, greenhouse gases are down 41 percent, water usage is down a whopping 52 percent … that’s amazing,” Glover said. “And land-use efficiency is up 39 percent. Those are spectacular numbers and something we can shout about to the general public. That’s not possible without all the people that have been involved over the years in the research, and your check-off dollars are a big part of that.”

Jason Brancel, president and CEO of Riceland Foods, noted that telling the story of advancements in agriculture was important because only about 2 percent of the U.S. population is actively engaged in agriculture.

“If we’re going to feed 9 billion people by the year 2050, we have to make production sustainable,” Brancel said.

Jean-François Meullenet, senior associate vice president for agriculture-research and director of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, said he was very proud of the Rice Research & Extension Center and that the Division of Agriculture prioritizes maintaining and adding to the infrastructure to serve stakeholders.

Deacue Fields, vice president of agriculture for the Division of Agriculture spoke to the importance of partnerships with farmers and industry stakeholders to conduct experiments.

“None of this could happen without the partnerships and collaborations that we have with all of you who are stakeholders,” Deacue Fields, vice president of agriculture for the Division of Agriculture, said. “Whether it’s the farmer’s group, our check-off programs, our USDA partners, and our industry partners, that is the life of what we do.”

Bob Scott, senior associate vice president for agriculture-extension and director of the Cooperative Extension Service, pointed out that extension agents remain engaged with agricultural producers in all 75 counties of the state. The Division of Agriculture continues to develop tools, like the Potash Calculator, to help farmers increase efficiency and profitability.

“Your first stop for any question should be with your county agent,” Scott said.

Fields noted that over the past year, the Division of Agriculture has hired about 20 new faculty members and will hire about 17 more this year. The hirings are being done to fill openings from retirements, resignations and positions that were unfilled before the pandemic.

“We’re looking forward to serving you better through the faculty and staff we hire,” Fields said. “We’re going through a strategic planning process where we look at how we bring ourselves closer together and define what our true core values are that go between research and extension, looking at how we can internally do better and then looking externally to see how we can bring in our industry partners.”

To learn more about Division of Agriculture research, visit the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station website: [https://aaes.uada.edu/](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Faaes.uada.edu%2F&data=04%7C01%7Cfmiller%40uark.edu%7C5cd2aea2b12c4dfceb9c08d942da0e9d%7C79c742c4e61c4fa5be89a3cb566a80d1%7C0%7C0%7C637614326581623988%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=aepGh27NgEgSYv9mb8nggzA%2BaUdOhXMw7e6sspVov8c%3D&reserved=0). Follow us on Twitter at [@ArkAgResearch](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2FArkAgResearch&data=04%7C01%7Cfmiller%40uark.edu%7C5cd2aea2b12c4dfceb9c08d942da0e9d%7C79c742c4e61c4fa5be89a3cb566a80d1%7C0%7C0%7C637614326581633943%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=nH1djoLMIYNT7ERwtQMektp5RVjEjY1B93nJK%2BhyjJE%3D&reserved=0).

To learn about extension programs in Arkansas, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service agent or visit [www.uaex.uada.edu](http://www.uaex.uada.edu/). Follow us on Twitter and Instagram at @AR\_Extension. To learn more about Division of Agriculture research, visit the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station website: <https://aaes.uada.edu>. Follow on Twitter at @ArkAgResearch. To learn more about the Division of Agriculture, visit <https://uada.edu/>. Follow us on Twitter at @AgInArk.

## About the Division of Agriculture

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture’s mission is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture conducts research and extension work within the nation’s historic land grant education system.

The Division of Agriculture is one of 20 entities within the University of Arkansas System. It has offices in all 75 counties in Arkansas and faculty on five system campuses.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

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