

Overview of the Australian Rice Industry

Rice is one of the world's most important foods and is the main source of nutrition for more than three-quarters of the world population. In fact, the word for rice is a synonym for 'food' or 'agriculture' in some countries. Archeological evidence suggests rice has been feeding humankind for more than 5,000 years.

■ Did you know?

- Up to **40 million** people across the globe eat Australian rice every day
- Australian rice growers are the most **efficient and productive** in the world and grow rice varieties ideal for the Australian climate and the harsh growing conditions we have in this country
- The Australian rice industry is the **first Australian agricultural industry** to initiate **biodiversity** enhancement and **greenhouse gas reduction strategies**
- Australian rice is exported to over **70 countries**
- Australian rice growers have improved their **water use efficiency** 60% in the last 10 years
- The Australian rice industry is the first industry to initiate a project to return **water to the environment** through the Living Murray initiative

■ Rice grown in Australia has been developed specifically to suit our climate

Australia grows varieties of rice that are grown throughout the world in climates similar to Australia. These climates reach high summer temperatures without the humidity of tropical climates and are well suited to the varieties of rice Australia grows and require substantially less water.

■ If there is no water, there is no rice

The size of the national rice crop each year relates directly to the amount of water available to irrigators. Like all farmers, rice growers are not immune to drought conditions. Each year State governments assess the water resource available in the dams and determine allocations for different users based on a hierarchy. Most rice is grown by general security irrigators who receive their water last in this hierarchy of allocations. They are also the first to have allocations reduced in times of water shortages.

■ Australia is a leader in water use efficiency and environmental improvement

The rice industry was the first Australian agricultural industry to initiate a regional biodiversity plan and a greenhouse reduction strategy. The rice industry has also developed The Rice Environment Policy; a living document which demonstrates the industry's commitment to environmental sustainability and underpins the industry's Environmental Champions Program. The rice industry has developed a number of flagship initiatives to coordinate improved environmental management and stewardship.

Overview of the Australian Rice Industry Continued

■ Rice growers are committed to biodiversity

Rice Farms are a haven for all sorts of plants and animals. Rice bays and irrigation channels are an ideal home for insects and animals including tortoises, water birds and billions of frogs. These artificial wetlands have created a haven for many species, and rice growers are active in the preservation of habitat to secure the region's biodiversity.

■ The Australian rice industry is a leader in agricultural research and development

The Australian rice industry is committed to research as a vital part of industry improvement and to maintain a competitive advantage. The Australian rice industry spends up to \$18 million each year to develop increasingly water efficient varieties of rice, research innovative farming techniques that help conserve our natural resources and improve productivity. Research and development of rice allows for:

- Sustainability of irrigation
- Breeding of new types of rice – allowing for better quality and water efficiency
- Plant protection and nutrition
- Developing best practice technologies for harvesting and processing
- Product development and environmental impact.

■ Rice is a valuable agricultural industry to Australia

The Australian rice industry contributes significantly to the economic well being of regional towns throughout New South Wales and Victoria.

Rice is Australia's third largest cereal grain export, and the ninth largest agricultural export. The industry generates around \$800 million revenue per annum, with around \$500 million of this coming from value-added exports. Australia exports to 70 major international destinations including the Middle East, Japan and Hong Kong.

The Australian rice industry is the most efficient in the world, operating without any production or export subsidies — unlike most of its major competitors. Australian rice competes in international markets, against subsidised products and is prohibited from free entry into many countries because of trade barriers.