

Rice



Rice is an edible cereal grain and a grass plant. Each year the United States produces around 20 billion pounds of rice. In the U.S. rice is grown on over 2.8 million acres. While rice grows in Illinois, it is not very common. The top rice producing states are

Arkansas, Louisiana, and California. In fact, Arkansas is responsible for about 40% of U.S. production. Rice is grown differently than other grains in the United States. This is because it is a semi-aquatic plant. Rice needs consistent irrigation all season long to grow.



Once the husk is removed, rice can be cooked by boiling it or even grinding it into flour.

Rice is believed to have been cultivated since 7000–5000 B.C.

The long history of rice has put it in the center of many different cultural dishes.



Farmers use technology to plant the rice seed by airplane or grain drill. A rice plant will grow three to four feet tall about 120 days after planting. During this time, farmers are also irrigating their crop. Roughly six months after being planted, the rice is harvested. Farmers use a combine to cut the rice and separate the grain from the stalk



Meet the Gerard Family

Cahokia Rice Farm | McClure, IL

Tell us about your farm.

Gerard farms is a 4th generation family farm operating in Alexander and Union Counties in Illinois. These are two of the southernmost counties in the state of Illinois. We grow rice on about half of our acres and soybeans on the other half. We are operating in the river bottoms along the Mississippi river and have a tremendous supply of water which makes this is an ideal area for rice production. This upcoming season will be our 25th rice crop and hopefully our best crop yet!

How do you grow rice? Can it be grown anywhere?

Our farm is unique to the state of Illinois as we are one of about three producers in the state. We plant rice in April with a grain drill directly into the soil or sometimes we seed with an airplane, dropping seed into the water. We typically flood our drill-seeded rice with 4" of water about 30 days after emergence. Our water seed rice is flooded at planting and stays flooded all season. We flood our rice to control weeds and provide optimum growing conditions for the rice. We drain water off the fields in mid-August and begin harvest in mid-September. My farm is the northern-most rice farm in the U.S. It would be difficult to raise rice much further north than we are located since the length of growing season gets shorter as you move north.

How do you harvest the rice?

We harvest our rice with a typical combine used for other crops. We begin harvest when the moisture content of the rice reaches 20%. The unique thing to rice is that we use a stripper header that strips the grain off the plant without removing much plant material. Most of our equipment that goes into the field is on tracks to minimize making ruts since the fields can be soft from holding water all summer. We utilize auger wagons to take the rice from the combine to the trucks that stay on the field borders.

What happens to the rice once its harvested?

When the rice is harvested, the trucks take the rice to our grain bins and dump into a conveyor that puts the rice in the bins. We use very large fans to push air through the rice to dry it down to 13% moisture content so it will store for a long time without concern of spoilage. All throughout the year as needed, we pull rice out of the bins to be milled and packaged. We then store the rice in a climate-controlled warehouse and as orders are placed, we ship it to our customers for them to use as table rice. All of the rice we are milling and shipping is going direct from the farm to the consumer's table.