



MISSOURI SENATE

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Everyone Benefits from Missouri's Rice Production

JEFFERSON CITY — There's a children's book entitled *Everyone Cooks Rice* that tells the story of a young girl combing her diverse city neighborhood looking for her younger brother, stopping at several neighbors' homes, only to find he has just left — but not before he cleverly sampled an assortment of culturally-inspired rice dinners served at each home. By the time the girl retrieves her precocious brother and they return home, he "isn't too full" to eat some of his own mother's rice dish. The book's characters conclude that "everybody eats rice."

Rice is the world's food of choice, a staple of immeasurable importance. Here in southeastern Missouri, we are fortunate to have the right growing conditions for this valuable commodity, are well-known for producing high-quality rice, and are ranked fifth nationally for value of rice production — all things that can be attributed to our state's hard-working and dedicated rice growers.

Rice farming is a precise science, and a costly one. I have been working with Bill Foster, director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Soil and Water Conservation Program, to help provide more cost-saving measures and profitability for our rice growers. I am happy to announce we are close to securing a three-year research project with the Soil and Water Districts Commission that would study sprinkler-irrigated rice as a means to reduce water usage, energy costs, and nitrogen fertilizer. Research would be conducted at the University of Missouri Delta Research Center in Portageville. Similar research experiments with sprinkler irrigation in Brazil have shown that farmers reduced water usage by 50 percent and slightly increased yields compared to flood-irrigated rice.

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In addition, I recently filed a Senate resolution intended to also help our state's rice growers remain profitable. My resolution urges the U.S. Department of Agriculture to add June 1 and September 1 as additional rice reporting dates on the Agricultural Statistics Board Calendar. If endorsed in Missouri and Washington, this will help the USDA capture more accurate pricing that reflects current market prices and rice stocks.

The financial risks for getting in — and staying in — the rice business are greater than ever. I hope legislators in Washington, D.C. working on the Farm Bill will be progressive — not regressive — as they consider an adequate safety net to ensure the viability of U.S. rice growers, who provide a substantial portion of the world's dinner plate.

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*Senator Rob Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid,
Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.*