

South Louisiana Rail Facility continues to influence area rice market

LACASSINE - Ten years ago, a group of southwest Louisiana and Texas rice farmers began a grassroots effort that today appears to be a long way from slowing down. Beginning with the construction of a new rail facility to give farmers access to the Mexican market and the formation of the "SLRF," that initiative then led to exporting rough rice by vessel out of the Port of Lake Charles through the IFG terminal.

Always looking for more alternatives in the marketplace, in 2020 they announced a partnership with Agreeta USA for a new rice mill to be built at the rail site near Lacassine, Louisiana. With a groundbreaking event led by Governor John Bel Edwards in November 2021 and area officials, today driving down Interstate 10 you can't ignore seeing the on-going construction of the modern Buhler equipped rice mill, a global leader in milling technology. The Agreeta-SLRF mill is expected to be complete before Christmas and will be milling new crop rice currently under harvest.

But why stop here? The SLRF recently announced the acquisition of the "Turning Basin"

currently under development that will serve as a site for loading barges and ocean vessels to be owned and operated by the SLRF. The Turning Basin is a six-acre site located on the Port of Lake Charles channel near the inter-coastal waterway. A new Brock (Lemar Industries) transport belt conveyor system is already in place with a loading capacity of 25,000 bushels per hour. A grading lab is in place and truck scales will be installed in a few days. Not only have these efforts given rice farmers access to the largest U.S. market in Mexico, but literally to the world with sales made to Honduras, Brazil, and Venezuela to date, while also expanding opportunities in the U.S. domestic market. The relationship building throughout the Western Hemisphere was generated through the farmers' partnership with the US Rice Producers Association and the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service with support



from their Market Access Program. These efforts have had a dramatic impact on the region's rice farmers, influencing and supporting price in Texas, Louisiana, and into the delta region. Plans are in place for a number of new endeavors, so stay tuned! 🌾

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