



## ON-FARM RICE DRYING GAINING WIDER ACCEPTANCE\*



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Up to 20 percent of rice farmers are now operating on-farm dryers to process their grain with more time and cost efficiency – a number that has been on a steady increase since the 1970s.

Commercial drying of rice in the Delta has historically been the way producers managed their crop – due to lack of time, manpower and storage space. However, with advancements in drying technology and farm management practices, producers are realizing the advantages of on-farm drying.

"On-farm drying and storing gives the producer the option to market their product by selling at a later time – as opposed to turning the grain over to a commercial operation right away," says Terry Siebenmorgen, University of Arkansas food processing engineer. "It just gives the producer a little more control of their product."

Overall, on-farm drying is a more economical approach to drying grain because storage and drying costs are often less than a commercial dryer. This is especially true if the cost of the equipment is justified by other crops.

For example, Loyd Dahlem, manager of Hollybrook Gin Association in Lake Providence, LA, purchased their Mathews Company 1075 continuous flow dryer because of the quality reputation associated with the brand name and because it will perform double duty for them.

### **Versatility**

"We got the dryer initially for drying our corn but realized it works great for drying rice too. The dryer pays for itself by drying both," says Dahlem.

Although on-farm drying may require extra management, it can significantly reduce hauling and waiting times during the harvest season.

Drying rice on farm makes it economically feasible to cut the crop earlier and at a higher moisture content than the maximum moisture level allowed at a commercial dryer. Also, by cutting and drying it earlier, farmers can move on to the next crop and prevent a bottleneck during harvest.

### **Convenience**

"Before we began on-farm drying, the rice harvest would interfere with the cotton harvest," says Dahlem. "Now we get the rice out of the fields and start drying it, as opposed to waiting for the fields to dry before we can harvest. Plus, I know the rice will be dried to my satisfaction because it's going into our Mathews dryer that performs dependably and trouble-free," says Dahlem.

Drying on-farm also prevents having to wait in line to unload grain when the commercial dryer is busy. With an on-farm facility, producers unload and begin drying the grain immediately and there is considerably less wear and tear on hauling and loading equipment. *Continued on next page*



### **Consistency**

"Rice dried on-farm in a continuous flow dryer can result in the same or better quality rice as that processed by a commercial dryer," says Dennis Gardisser, Arkansas extension agricultural engineer. However, Gardisser recommends carefully following proper management practices so there is no risk of ending up with rice that is either too wet or too dry.

Richard Zinke, general sales manager for Mathews Company says, "Continuous flow dryers are key in preventing over-drying. This type of dryer is especially important for sensitive crops like rice because it has the ability to rapidly heat and cool grain to any specification without causing damage."

If rice is dried too fast, the kernel cracks and later falls apart during the milling process. On the flip side, if dried too slowly or at too high of a temperature, the rice will discolor. Both of these negatively affect the rice milling quality, which in turn negatively affects the farmer because he will receive a lower sale price. ■

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