History of Rice Check-Off Program

1950s-The Rice Council was founded and funded with voluntary contributions.

1970s-Volunatry research fund was created and collected by Arkansas Farm Bureau.

1985-Arkansas Rice Research & Promotion Board created by Act 725.

1986-Farmers approved the program by referendum and the state assessment began. The assessment of 3¢/bushel, paid by the farmer, was collected at the first point of sale but was refundable.

1995-Act 344 authorized a referendum to eliminate refunds, but to change the assessment of not more than 1.5¢/bushel paid by the farmer for research and levied an assessment of 1.35¢/bushel on the purchaser for promotion and market development.

1996-Referendum passes, eliminating refunds and cutting producer assessment in half.

1999-Act 16 eliminates referendum requirement, levies assessment of 1.35¢/bushel on farmers for research and 1.35¢/bushel on purchasers for promotion, reducing producer assessment for a second time.

Background

The Arkansas rice check-off assessment rate, first set in 1986 with current rate placed in statute in 1999, is 5th among the six rice producing states. The current rate is 1.35 cents/bushel paid by producer and first purchaser—total of 2.7 cents/bushel. California has the highest rate at 20 cents/hundredweight (9.1 cents/bushel). Missouri has the lowest rate at 2 cents/bushel. Louisiana and Texas have a check-off rate of 8 cents/hundredweight (3.64 cents/bushel) and Mississippi has a 3 cents/bushel assessment. NOTE-- It would take $9.34 million in 2022 to equal the $5.16 million collected in 2000. The 2022 collections were $4.84 million – the lowest collections in 11 years.

Average Collections

Over the past 14 years (2009-2022), the average annual check-off collection is just over $5.7 million. Collections in 2022 were $4.84 million, which is 15% less than the 14-year average and the lowest in the past 11 years.

Impact of Decline in Planted Acres

Despite higher yields, average rice check-off collections are down. See 20-year average below.

2002-2011 Annual Average	1.468 million harvested acres	$5,911,361 check-off funds
2012-2021 Annual Average	1.296 million harvested acres	$5,765,940 check-off funds
Difference	(172,000 acres)	($145,421)

Research priorities/needs:

-- Food Science research;
-- Developing uses for rice by-products that are industry problems (e.g., rice hulls, straw, etc)
-- Environmental research (e.g., water conservation, rice straw burning, arsenic issues)
-- Research on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and remote sensing technologies
-- Basic genomic research to address heat tolerance/climate change, poor milling, etc.
-- Consumer research--efforts to pair consumer preferences w/ breeding/variety development
-- Water utilization;
-- Water quality;
-- GHG emissions & other environmental-related issues for research from production standpoint;
-- Basic research on rice genomics to address the viability and productivity of rice cultivars in an era where climate change is stressing the resilience of all row-crop commodities;
-- Quantitative research on the oxidation of crop residues
-- Current funding is primarily for applied "program maintenance" research and is below the requested level with researchers often having to reduce research scope and objectives
-- Longer term issues for the rice industry are currently unable to be addressed; current level of funding is primarily for immediate impacts but does not look at solving emerging issues that will inevitably face the industry;