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Governor

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## **Ralston Family Farms Makes First Official Arkansas Rice Sale to China**

**LITTLE ROCK, AR** – Governor Hutchinson, along with Tim and Robin Ralston of Ralston Family Farms, announced today that a shipment of rice from Ralston Family Farms is the first rice from Arkansas to be exported to China.

Through a contract with a private importer in China, the first shipment of rice from Ralston Family Farms arrived in China in late July 2021. A second shipment is being scheduled with future shipments planned on regular intervals to meet demand. The rice will be sold on the retail market under the label of Ralston Family Farms.

“The Ralstons’ rice is more than a commodity, and growing rice is more than a job for the family. Rice has been part of their lives for 10 generations, and when they exported their first shipment to China in July, they were shipping a piece of their heart and their heritage. The rice raised in the Arkansas soil will enrich lives in China, and perhaps shrink the distance between our nations and our cultures. Everybody loves rice, and it’s a good development for Arkansas and the Ralstons that the people across the ocean will have our rice to enjoy,” said Governor Hutchinson.

Although China is the world’s largest producer, consumer, and importer of rice, it remained closed to U.S. rice imports until recently. After more than a decade of efforts by the U.S. rice industry to establish a two-way trading relationship with China, the U.S. and China signed a Phase 1 Economic and Trade Agreement in January 2020 that expanded the potential for access to China’s rice market.

“Export markets are vital to Arkansas agriculture, our state’s largest industry,” said Wes Ward, Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture. “We are proud of the Ralston family on this significant accomplishment, and we are optimistic that we will see additional market access for Arkansas agricultural commodities to China in the future.”

The Ralston family has been farming for over 10 generations. Ralston Family Farms, a family owned and operated business located near Atkins in the Arkansas River valley, is vertically integrated, meaning that they control their product from the seed placed in the ground to the package that is placed on the shelf. Because Ralston Family Farms only mills and packages rice they grow, they can offer customers 100% traceability, which sets them apart. Ralston Family Farms launched its unique offerings of specialty rice varieties in January of 2018. The brand has grown to include national distribution across the United States in over 5,000 retail supermarkets.

“We are humbled to be stewards of what we believe to be among the very best rice available while utilizing farming practices that protect our land, our water, and fossil fuels. We practice sustainability in every step of our process.” said Robin Ralston. We are honored to know that the product we at Ralston Family Farms have devoted our lives to will be shared across the world,” said Ralston.

Governor Hutchinson will tour Ralston Family Farms on Wednesday, September 15. Media and local officials are invited to attend and should RSVP [here](#) for more event information.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit [agriculture.arkansas.gov/](http://agriculture.arkansas.gov/). The Arkansas Department of Agriculture offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.