



AB 454 – California Rice Commission

SUMMARY

Year-over-year catastrophic drought conditions and water shortages have severely constrained rice production in the Sacramento Valley, with growers planting less than half of their typical acreage. These impacts may limit representation on the California Rice Commission. AB 454 would provide greater flexibility regarding Commission eligibility during drought periods to maintain representation of all rice farmers and handlers, including those impacted by drought.

BACKGROUND

The Sacramento River Valley is one of the top producing regions for high quality, medium grain rice in the world. In addition to supporting thousands of multigenerational family farms, businesses and agricultural communities, California rice fields serve as critical habitat for 230 wildlife species, including millions of migratory waterbirds traveling the Pacific Flyway, the state and federal species and the state's salmon populations.

However, as farmers confronted a third year of catastrophic drought impacts, in 2022 over half the state's typical 500,000 acres of rice were unplanted. According to a UC Davis estimate, the Sacramento Valley region will experience a \$1.3 billion economic impact and result in over 14,000 job losses in the 2022-23 marketing season. Rice growers may realize some recompense through the Prevented Plantings Program managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The California Rice Commission, established in 1999, functions as a quasi-governmental entity within the Department of Food and Agriculture, providing for the orderly production, milling, and marketing of California rice and the associated environmental benefits. The Commission's board is comprised of rice producers and handlers.

To be eligible to serve on the Commission, producers and handlers must actively produce or handle rice. The number of producer/handler board representatives is dependent upon the total number of acres planted in that district.

PROBLEM

Due to drought circumstances and severely limited rice production, many producers and handlers would no longer be eligible to serve on the board, though they are actively participating in the Prevented Planting program at USDA. Likewise, because of reduced acreage in production, the allocation of Commission board seats by district would be dramatically impacted.

THIS BILL

This bill would amend the CA Rice Commission law to:

- Allow the Commission to annually evaluate state drought conditions, and if warranted issue a drought declaration.
- Under a drought declaration, authorize a handler or producer to serve on the Commission board if they historically produced/handled rice, or if they participated in the Prevented Planting Program at USDA.
- Under a drought declaration, allow the number of handler and producer representatives to be calculated based on both acres of rice produced and acres planted but claimed as prevented plantings, per the Prevented Planting Program at USDA.

SUPPORT

California Rice Commission
California Warehouse Association

CONTACT

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