***Lesson: In the Rice Paddy – Examining Rice***

**Purpose:** Using your prior knowledge, what crops are produced the most in the United States? Some of the first crops to come to mind might be corn, soybeans, wheat, or even cotton, tobacco or apples. Yet if you were to leave the United States, you would find many countries that produce an enormous amount of rice, and the rice crop may even be a staple in their citizens’ diets. You already know that different climates are more suited for some crops and less suited for others, but for a crop as important to some countries as rice, is climate the only reason it is not a top production crop in the United States? What qualities of rice affect where it is grown?

**Directions:** Access the commodities and products tab on the AgMRC website (<http://www.agmrc.org>) and find the link to Grains and Oilseeds. Utilize information located here to answer the questions below:

1. For what two reasons does the rice crop remain “a staple commodity for many poor and developing countries?” How do you think these reasons influence poor and developing countries’ agricultural systems?
2. As seen in many recent years, crop acreages have declined yet yields have remained steady or increased. This has been true with the American rice crop as well. What are three reasons why you think such agricultural production has remained efficient? (Hint: Think about workforce and technology)
3. How are long-grained rice varieties utilized in American products? How are medium-grained varieties used? Provide an example of each in your own home.
4. What effects does increased income have on rice consumption in developing countries?
5. What are some issues that U.S.-based rice producers face in regard to entering or exiting the rice production market? How might these issues affect producers currently in the market? What about those who would like to enter the market?

**Reinforcement activity: The popularity of rice**

Although rice is indeed grown in the United States, it is overshadowed by several other commodity crops. For this activity you will need to develop a situation in which rice could become more heavily produced than the other leading United States’ crops. For example, in your situation you could “develop” a new variety or rice that has different growing requirements, or nutritional value, or taste. Or you could go a different route and focus on what climate changes would need to occur, or look at what economic changes would result in a growth in rice’s production in the United States. Be creative, use your imagination and really think about the factors that influence the way rice is currently produced.

Once you (or your small group) have developed your situation, write a report outlining the way things are currently and how your situation would change the current situation. This report may be shared with your class.