

Arkansas rice farmers file a lawsuit

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A group of Arkansas rice farmers has filed a state lawsuit against Bayer CropScience and Riceland Foods Inc., concerning genetically modified rice.

The 20 farmers, who contend genetically modified rice contaminated the state's long-grain rice, are seeking damages as compensation for falling prices, The Arkansas News Bureau reported.

Riceland Foods, which has headquarters in Stuttgart, Ark., is the nation's top-producing rice company and the world's leading miller and marketer of rice.

Two similar class action lawsuits were filed Monday in federal court.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced earlier this month trace amounts of genetically modified rice have been found in Arkansas long grain rice. That prompted Japan to suspend imports of U.S. long grain rice, which caused prices to drop, the ANB reported. The European Union says it will accept only U.S. long grain rice that's been specially inspected to be free of genetically modified material.

The lawsuit says Bayer CropScience modified the rice to be resistant to a herbicide it developed. The Department of Agriculture has not approved the genetically modified rice for commercial distribution.

Riceland is accused of becoming aware of the contamination in January and failing to tell rice farmers.

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