

Judge Rejects Farmer's Claim Over Rice Quality

PARAGOULD, Ark. (AP) — An Arkansas farmer who claimed a supplier sold him inferior rice seed in 2009 was ordered Tuesday to pay for it anyway, according to the company that sued him.

RiceTec Inc. of Houston had sued Scott Meredith of Delaplaine, saying he hadn't paid for rice seed he planted three years ago. Meredith filed a counterclaim, saying the company owed him money because his yields were low and that millers had trouble processing his rice, resulting in lower prices.

Greene County Judge David Laser ruled against Meredith, RiceTec said.

The judge couldn't be reached. A secretary at a San Antonio, Texas, law firm that represented Meredith said some lawyers were out of town and others had already left for the holidays.

Meredith and other farmers who temporarily joined his lawsuit claimed they had to replant entire sections of their fields and that rice they were able to harvest was difficult to mill.

According to Meredith's complaint, RiceTec charged a higher price for its seed than other companies, saying the price was justified because of higher yields. He spent \$60,468 to plant two strains of rice on about 700 acres in eastern Arkansas and said that, midway through the 2009 growing season, rice from other suppliers was faring better.

At harvest, a RiceTec field was yielding 70-95 bushels per acre, compared to 150 bushels per acre in non-RiceTec fields, Meredith said.

After Meredith countersued, company president John Nelsen said RiceTec supplies strong products.

"RiceTec Inc. has been developing hybrid rice seed for commercial production for more than 20 years. We are a company built on innovation and grounded in scientific research and fact. Because of this, RiceTec has earned its position as the leading supplier of rice seed to American farmers," Nelsen said.

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