

Family to invest \$10 million in rice mill

Jindal joins Kennedy in Mer Rouge for announcement

Photos



Meryl Kennedy, with her father Elton standing behind her and Gov. Bobby Jindal to his left, announces the family's plan to invest \$10 million in construction of a rice mill in Mer Rouge.

BASTROP —

Elton Kennedy's laugh seemed anxious when Louisiana Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Dr. Mike Strain talked about Kennedy's willingness to reach into his pocket and pull out \$10 million to invest in a rice mill.

Lincoln Builders of Ruston will begin construction soon in Mer Rouge on what Gov. Bobby Jindal said will be the only rice mill between central Arkansas and Interstate 10 in south Louisiana.

Strain's and Jindal's comments came as the announcement of the mill was made at Goldman Equipment at noon Tuesday.

Jindal said the mill is another example of an investment made to add value to commodities produced in Louisiana.

"Projects like this reduce costs for our growers, creating more money that stays in our communities," Jindal said.

Elton Kennedy thanked Jindal, Rep. Rodney Alexander, the governor's staff, Louisiana Economic Development and area legislators for working to create the deal that will see the state pitch in just over \$2 million in inducements for the project.

His daughter, Meryl, said the mill would help reduce costs for area rice growers who, for years, had to transport their rough rice to mills miles away from Morehouse Parish.

“We thank the farmers of our area who have supported us for years and for their support throughout this project,” Meryl Kennedy said.

The mill will be build adjacent to Kennedy Rice Dryers on U.S. 165 in Mer Rouge. Elton Kennedy said the mill would use some of the existing structures at the site.

The family has been part owners of Planters Rice Mill in Abbeville for many years.

“We’ll borrow from the expertise of the people there to help us get started,” Elton Kennedy said.

Typically, there are about 60,000 acres of rice planted each year in Morehouse Parish. With higher prices this year for soybeans and corn, coupled with a recent slump for rice prices, LSU AgCenter crop specialist Terry Erwin said he expects around 35,000 acres this year.

“But that will probably change next year in a big way once the mill is running,” Erwin said.

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