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## Ventria's pharmaceutical rice fields are flourishing

BY PHYLLIS JACOBS GRIEKSPoor  
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There's at least one crop in Kansas that is benefiting from the prolonged wet spring and the humid, hot early summer.

The Ventria Bioscience pharmaceutical rice fields in Geary County are flourishing. And after record harvests last year in North Carolina and Chile, the production lines at its Junction City processing plant are also expanding.

Construction is complete on an initial expansion for a second production line, said vice president and general manager Greg Unruh.

He said more expansion is planned.

"By December, we should be capable of five times the current production and by next summer, we should be at complete build-out," he said. "For now, we're just trying to keep pace with customer orders."

The demand is for Ventria's primary product -- a protein supplement that when added to oral rehydration solutions reduces the severity and duration of infant and childhood diarrhea.

Unruh said Ventria had a booth at last week's Bio International Symposium in San Diego and that interest in the product was strong.

"A lot of customers came back asking for samples to take back to test in their products and even more asking to order products," he said. "It's catching on and it's making everyone hustle to keep pace with it all."

Unruh said a great deal of work has been done on the Kansas fields to prepare them for optimal rice production. He said this year's crop has emerged and looks good.

"Our Kansas growers have had a lot to learn because it's such a different crop from what we're used to growing," Unruh said. "But we're learning, and it's looking really good."

The processing plant will add 12 employees for the new production line, bringing employment up to the mid-30s by the end of the year, Unruh said.

Acceptance of the biotech crops is growing, he said.

"People are gaining a greater acceptance," he said. "Biotechnology has increased yields, helped plants withstand disease and drought.

"Biotechnology is what is going to keep feeding the world, and I'm just excited to be part of it."

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