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## Riceland Foods receives \$136.9M verdict from jury Friday

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Stuttgart, Ark. — The circuit court jury awarded \$16.9 million in total damages Friday — laying blame at 70 percent for Bayer Crop Science and 30 percent for Riceland Foods — resulting in \$11.9 million for Riceland Foods. Riceland also received \$125 million in punitive damages.

The jury deliberated from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Friday in the 19–day lawsuit that began Feb. 22 in the Arkansas County Circuit Courtroom in Stuttgart.

The jury returned stating Bayer Crop Science was negligent in its handling of genetically-modified rice, but not of fraud or a deceptive act by a company. The jury also stated that there was no negligence on the part of Riceland toward the three farming operations consisting of 29 plaintiffs in the case, which left Bayer 100 percent responsible to the farmers.

“We are pleased that the jury’s award recognizes the tremendous harm caused to Riceland and the entire rice industry when Bayer contaminated the U.S. rice supply with its Liberty Link rice,” Bill Reed, vice president of corporate communications and public affairs at Riceland, said.

According to Reed, Riceland feels vindicated that the jury also found that Bayer was solely responsible for the farmers’ damages resulting from the loss of the European Union market.

Although Riceland sought more in compensatory damages — \$379,930,000 — they respect the jury’s verdict, Reed said.

According to Bayer Crop Science, the company is disappointed and is considering its legal options at this time.

Bayer said the \$125 million in punitive damages exceeds what is permitted by Arkansas law and will be limited to the statutory cap of \$1 million.

“According to Arkansas law, punitive damages may be awarded to plaintiffs in addition to compensatory damages if the defendant has acted in reckless disregard of the consequences. The company believes to infer a malicious act by Bayer Crop Science in this case is unjustified. Bayer Crop Science always has maintained that it acted responsibly and appropriately at all times in the handling of its biotech rice,” Greg Coffey, spokesman for Bayer stated in a company press release.

The company is also considering its legal options in regard to the jury’s additional determination that Riceland is not liable for paying a portion of the pre-trial settlement involving the farmers who filed claims against both Bayer Crop Science and Riceland in this case.

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