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Introduction:
In the early 18th century, rice became an important crop in South Carolina's economy. Its single largest market was Portugal. Literature tends to focus on production, but less is known about the transatlantic rice trade. This research looks at the broader context of stimuli and disruptions in the South Carolina transatlantic rice trade, including market demand, trade regulation, and international conflict. This research seeks to answer the question: what factors affected the Carolina rice trade during the 18th century? By looking at existing research and synthesizing key events of this time, this will provide a relative timeline of key events that caused expansion and disruptions in South Carolina’s rice trade. Research finds that consumer demand, regulatory changes, and conflict meaningfully affected the rice trade.

Cultivation:
- Rice was a foodstuff introduced to the South Carolina colony as early as 1685. In the early 1700s, rice developed a surplus and began to be exported.
- Rice grows in water, which is significant because it required flooding and drying entire fields. Initially, planters used upland swamps and rain water; however, rice harvests were not reliable. Planters then developed a flood system with trunckgates to flood fields at will. This drastically changed the landscape, meaning planters could only plant rice in their fields.
- The decision to grow rice and the necessary changes to fields meant the only thing planters could grow was rice. Should rice fail, their crop options were significantly limited.

Market Demand:
- Portuguese demand was the most important for the South Carolina rice trade, making up between 12% and 34% of total rice exports between 1731-1772. Generally, rice to Portugal made up between 20% to 27%.
- At the time, Portugal was one of England’s strongest allies and, despite having access to their own rice colony of Brazil, they used Carolina rice.
- Orphans, soldiers, and commoners were given rice. Interestingly, it was also consumed by elites as a substitute for other grains.
- Rice had additional markets in Britain, Western Europe, the West Indies, and Barbados, which were facilitated by and through England.
- Rice had a big enough market to continue cultivation, even at the expense of diversifying the crops they cultivated and was important enough to trade to be regulated, both by Britain and the South Carolina colony.

Regulation:
- Britain regulated rice to capture the gains from its growing market.
- The Navigation Acts of 1660 controlled the colony's interactions with international trade because it required specific goods be sent to Britain and re-exported to their final destinations. Rice was added to the list of enumerated goods between 1704-1706.
- The foodstuff was profitable enough to receive an enumeration exemption from the Navigation Acts of 1660 in 1731 to transport rice to Portugal without first stopping in Britain.
- Producers also benefited from regulation. For example, the pendulum engine, used for sorting broken and unbroken rice, received a patent, indicating rice was important enough that people wanted to innovate. Additionally, those innovations were legally protected.
- The regulations on rice tied the foodstuff more directly with conflicts between Britain and other countries.

Conflcts:
- 1715-1717: Yemassee War: Many rice fields were destroyed during this conflict. This made it difficult to grow rice, and total rice exports decreased by 5.6% between 1714 and 1718. This conflict is important because rice fields were developed in a specific way to assist flooding, and it took time to build back the systems that got damaged.
- 1756-1763: Seven Years War: This conflict impacted all Atlantic trade. For rice, this included the European, West Indies, and other colonial markets. Total rice exports decreased by 28.2% between 1755 and 1760.
- 1776-1783: Revolutionary War: This conflict ended South Carolina’s access to the Atlantic economy and Portuguese market. Because Portugal was a British ally, they did not support the newly-formed United States.
- Post-Revolutionary War: Rice never recovered from the loss of these markets after the Revolutionary War. Rice’s prominence ranged from 1700 to around 1783.

References:
James H. Tuten, “Rice: A Common Staple Good, Became a Valuable Export Commodity for Colonial Carolina, growing from 13,623 to 153,729 barrels in the course of decades. Portugal was its single largest market. What factors affected the Carolina rice trade with Portugal during the 18th century?” By looking at existing research and synthesizing key events of this time, this will provide a relative timeline of key events that caused expansion and disruptions in South Carolina’s rice trade. Research finds that consumer demand, regulatory changes, and conflict meaningfully affected the rice trade.

Each of these landmark conflicts and legislation is marked by a corresponding colored line on the figure.

Conflicts
- End of Yemassee War | 1717
- Start of Seven Years War | 1756
- End of Seven Years War | 1763
- Start of Revolutionary War | 1776
- End of Revolutionary War | 1783

Regulations
- Enumeration Exemption for Portugal | 1731