Illegal aliens can work in rice, cotton fields

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BATON ROUGE—Illegal aliens can work in cotton and rice fields, but they are prohibited from working in cotton gins or rice mills, according to a recent opinion from the state attorney general’s office.

The opinion was drafted by Kenneth C. DeJean, chief counsel for the attorney general’s office, in response to a question raised by Cecil R. Formby, labor executive officer with the state Department of Labor.

Specifically, Formby asked if illegal aliens could work in rice mills or cotton gins.

In his opinion, DeJean said that the legislature exempted from the law those illegal aliens who are employed in “the production of raw agricultural crops.”

Other exemptions to the prohibition on hiring were extended to illegal aliens employed in animal husbandry, “or in the care, feeding and training of horses.” Additional exemptions were granted to illegal aliens who handle livestock, dairy or poultry products.

“A person who is employed at a cotton gin or rice mill is engaged in processing or refining the raw agricultural products,” DeJean wrote.

“As such he is, in the opinion of this office, not engaged or employed in the production of raw agricultural crops.

“Accordingly, the exemption provided by R.S. 23:992.1 is inapplicable to illegal aliens employed at cotton gins or rice mills,” he concluded.