



Quarterly Report

**to USDA Rural Development
Agricultural Marketing Resource Center
(AgMRC)**

January 1, 2010 to March 31, 2010

Submitted by Iowa State University and Kansas State University.

Iowa State University Extension

Second Quarter Report

January 1, 2010 to March 31, 2010

Goal #1

Create and promote an electronic, Web-based library with powerful search capabilities to make value-added information and other resources available to producers (includes Website development and functions). Provide electronically available information and resources on value-added markets and industries including a wide variety of commodities and products (this includes the Commodities and Products and Markets and Industries sections of the Website).

In terms of visits to the website, the total number was 258,011 (↑) during the quarter, while the average number of visits per day was 2,867 (↑).

Within the United States, the most visits came from the states of Washington (36.0% ↓), California (12.8% ↑), New York (6.9% ↓), Illinois (3.2% unchanged) and Texas (2.6% new). By country, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from the United States (71.2% ↑), followed by (in order): China (3.2% ↓), Canada (3.0% ↓), India (2.8% ↓) and United Kingdom (2.2% ↓).

Blog

During this quarter, 18,100 visitors (↑) viewed the AgMRC Blog, opening 28,093 pages (↑) and spending an average of two minutes and 46 seconds (↑).

Major Content Sections

When the content sections of the Web site are considered, Commodities and Products (C&P) and Business Development (Bus Dev) continue to rank as the top two most frequently visited sections this quarter. C&P accounted for 24.5 percent of website visits (↑), and Bus Dev accounted for 19.3 percent of visits (↓). Renewable Energy, the newest section on the website, now ranks third in visits, capturing 11.7 percent of the visits (↑). In terms of average time spent on a page, the average time spent on the C&P index was 2 minutes and 28 seconds, the average time on the Bus Dev index was 2 minutes and 19 seconds, and the average time on the Renewable Energy index was 2 minutes and 18 seconds.

Within the C&P section, the top three topics visited during this quarter were:

1. Fruits (16.3% ↑)
2. Livestock (16.1% ↓)
3. Grains and Oilseeds (14.8% ↑)

The top three topics visited in the Bus Dev section were:

1. Operating a Business (31.1% ↓)
2. Getting Prepared (22.6% ↑)
3. Starting a Business (16.4% ↓)

The top three topics visited in the Renewable Energy section were:

1. AgMRC Renewable Energy Newsletter (26.2% ↓)
2. Ethanol (21.4% ↑)
3. Biofuels/Biorefining (general) (9.4% ↑)

Web site usage is tracked and analyzed using Urchin version 6.6 from Google. Visits are the number of visits to the site from the country/region/city. Pages/Visit is pageviews divided by number of visits. ↑ indicates percentage increased from the last quarter, and ↓ indicates percentage decreased from the last quarter.

Updated Topics

Commodities and Products

During this quarter, the following 50 profiles were updated: Agritourism, Alligators, Almonds, Amaranth, Apples Online, Organic Apples, You-Pick Apples, Direct Market Beef, Bees, Catfish, Christmas Trees, White Corn, Cranberries, Equine Agritourism, Fiber Overview, Hay, Hazelnuts, Commodity Lamb, Direct Marketing Lamb, International Market Lambs, Olives, Peaches, Peanuts, Pennycress, Pistachios, Plums, Certified/Verified Pork, Direct Marketing Pork, Foodservice Pork, International Market Pork, Natural Pork, Niche/Ethnic Pork, Organic Poultry, Proso Millet, Prunes, Quinoa, Rapeseed, Rural Weddings, Safflower, Soyfood, Triticale, Trout, English Walnuts, Colorado Wine, Illinois Wine, Kansas Wine, Missouri Wine, Nebraska Wine, South Dakota Wine and Wine Tours.

All profile links to external sites are checked when the profile is being updated.

Markets & Industries

The Food Safety topic was expanded and featured on the homepage. The following 42 topics were reviewed: Antibiotic Use, Baking, Bioterrorism, Canning, Community Supported Ag, Co-packing, Direct Markets, Distributing, Energy Industry Structure, Energy Market Trends, Energy Regulation, Federal Energy Programs, Fiber Industry Structure, Food Development/Processing Centers, Food Packaging, Food Processing, (University) Food Safety Centers, Foodservice, Fresh Processing, Freezing, Genetically Modified Foods, Grocery Industry, International Issues, International Markets, Irradiation, Kitchen Incubators, Kosher Industry, Labeling, Manufacturing, Meat Processing, Meat Science/Processing Labs, Natural Foods, Food Packaging, Private Labeling, Quality Management Systems, Restaurants, Retailing, Specialty Food, Supply, Trade Shows, Understanding Markets and Wholesaling.

All profile links to external sites are checked when the profile is being updated.

Renewable Energy

The following six new subsections were added: Anaerobic Digestion, Landfill Gas, Carbon Dioxide, Methane, Nitrous Oxide and Combined Heat and Power. Three existing subsections were revised. One new information file was added: Economic Impacts of Eliminating State Ethanol Production Subsidies in the Upper Great Plains. Nearly 80 new external links were added.

Goal #2

Provide value-added business and economic analysis tools, including information on business principles, legal, financial and logistical issues (information contained in the Business Development section of the Web site).

Four information files were reviewed and/or revised: Romance vs. Reality: Hard Lessons Learned in a Grass-fed Beef Marketing Cooperative, How to Use Grants, Grain Price Options Fence and Grain Price Hedging Basics.

Goal #3

Conduct research and analysis on economic issues facing producers involved in value-added business ventures (this includes research activities on all topics included at the Web site).

As of this quarter, 53 case studies profiling recipients of USDA Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) are available online at:

http://www.agmrc.org/business_development/strategy_and_analysis/analysis/case_studies_of_value_added_producer_grant_recipients.cfm

Goal #4

Conduct outreach activities to disseminate the research and information assembled and developed under the previous three goals. These activities are designed for producers, producer groups, businesses and others involved in value-added agriculture (this includes all outreach activities of the Center including workshops, seminars, newsletters and other delivery methods including individual client requests for specific information).

Trade Show Promotions/Outreach

Staff attended and manned a booth at numerous trade shows to continue development of a user base. The following table represents programs, events and outreach either funded by AgMRC or represented AgMRC as match dollars through staff time and travel dollars.

Date	Event	Location	AgMRC Participant
January 7-9	Great Plains Fruit and Vegetable Conference	St. Joseph, MO	Linda
January 8-9	PFI Annual Conference	Marshalltown, IA	Madeline, Margaret
January 21-22	Midwest Value Added Ag Conference	Eau Claire, WI	Dan
January 25	IA Renewable Fuels Assoc Summit	Des Moines, IA	Connie
January 29-30	IA Fruit and Vegetable Growers Marketing Conference	Des Moines, IA	Malinda, Margaret, Linda, Marsha, Sue; AgMRC co-sponsored
February 2-3	High Tunnel workshop	Lewis, IA	Presenting: Linda
February 6	Beginning Farmer Workshop	Des Moines, IA	Presenting: Margaret
February 17	AgMRC Advisory Council Meeting	Arlington, VA	Ray, Christa, Barry Mary, Don
February 18-19	USDA Ag Outlook Forum	Arlington, VA	Ray, Barry, Mary, Don
February 25-27	MOSES Organic Farming Conference	LaCrosse, WI	Presenting: Margaret
February 26-28	National Pheasant Fest	Des Moines, IA	Dan, Ray, Barry; booth
March 6	High Tunnel workshop	Marshalltown, IA	Presenting: Linda
March 23-25	Nat'l Women in Ag Educators Conference	Baltimore, MD	Madeline
March 24	ANR Professional Development Day	ISU, Ames, IA	Ray, Christa, Connie, Linda, Dan, Barry, Lani
March 25	ISU/Kanawha Research Farm annual meeting	Wesley, IA	Presenting: Don Hofstrand

Client Requests

Staff researched and responded to 81 e-mailed questions pertaining to the Commodities and Products section, the Markets and Industries section or the Directories and State Resources section of the Website this quarter.

During this quarter, AgMRC received a total of 49 toll-free phone inquiries from 18 different states, that is, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin. Nine calls were also received from Canada (British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Saskatchewan). Each caller was directed to Website resources for information or forwarded to specialists for additional assistance.

Another 32 e-mails and phone calls were received with comments or questions about the Renewable Energy section from such organizations as Economic Research Service, USDA; Farmgate; FC; Financial Times; Kiplinger Ag Letter; Mississippi State University; Morgan Stanley; MTED; Northwestern University; Progressive Dairy Publishing; and University of Oklahoma.

Subscriptions to the Renewable Energy Newsletter list now total 1,435 addresses. Subscribers access and self-subscribe to the newsletter online at:
http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc_renewable_energy_newsletter.cfm?show=subscribe&newsletterID=4

Homepage

The AgMRC homepage is now featuring a “hot” topic, such as Agritourism, Food Safety, Local/Regional Foods, Organics, Renewable Energy and the Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) Program, in a center column titled Featured Topics. Pertinent AgMRC profiles and articles are highlighted in this column as well as resources from land-grant university Cooperative Extensions, SARE, ATTRA and USDA. The left column features announcements such as the upcoming National Value Added Ag (VAA) Conference. The right column features quick links to helpful resources and links to funding resources, emphasizing the VAPG Program.

During this quarter, the homepage provided information about the VAPG Program, emphasizing the basic requirements and changes from last year’s VAPG Program. Links were included to the VAPG Program Webpage, to the State USDA Rural Development Offices and to the NOFA in the Federal Register. To continue being a source of the most current information, the VAPG Program information on the homepage was revised as needed.

Additional Public Relations

AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter

The January, February and March issues of the AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter were distributed via e-mail and made available online at:

http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc_renewable_energy_newsletter.cfm. The newsletter is sent monthly to a list comprised of producers in value-added agriculture, service providers, media and others. Each newsletter consists of several articles from partnering organizations in AgMRC, new research and a Web page providing the latest price, profitability and supply/demand figures for corn/ethanol and soybean/biodiesel. This quarter, experts at Iowa State University (8 articles), Kansas State University (2 articles) and North Dakota State University (2 articles) contributed articles.

Newsletter articles included:

- The Role of Greenhouse Gas Offsets for Agriculture - Part II
- Implications of EPA's Renewable Fuels Standard II for Ethanol and Biodiesel
- USDA Projections of Bioenergy-related Corn and Soybean Use for 2010-2019
- Ethanol Production in the Upper Great Plains
- Value-added Business Success Factors - the Role of Investor Attitudes and Expectations
- Renewable Energy Newsletter Evaluation
- The Role of Greenhouse Gas Offsets for Agriculture - Part 1
- Why Do Gas Prices Rise in Summer?
- Carbon Tax: A Unique Twist
- Climate Change Policy Webcast
- E-15 Ethanol Blends, EPA and Implications for the Ethanol Industry
- Using Biochar Systems to Sequester Carbon
- Grain Availability for Biofuels: Has the Picture Changed in the Last Year?
- Indirect Land Use: The Folly of Over-Indulgent Environmentalism?
- Differences in Corn Prices across the U.S. Ethanol Producing Regions

All articles are now provided in one print-ready format.

AgMRC Blog

As of this quarter, 55 entries had been posted under ten categories. The following 16 entries were posted during this quarter:

1. Organic Consumer Web Site, January 6
2. USDA Launches High Tunnel Pilot Study to Increase Local Foods, January 11
3. POET Explores a Possible Ethanol Pipeline, January 13
4. USDA Study Targets Market Barriers for Organic Farmers, January 13
5. Florida Agriculture Losses, January 19
6. Farm to School Initiative, January 26
7. Creating a New Business, January 29
8. USDA Farm Service Agency Seeks Comments on Proposed Biomass Crop Assistance Program, February 4
9. Your Food Environment Atlas Launched by ERS, February 10
10. USDA Issues Ruling on Pasture for Organic Operations, February 19
11. Wal-Mart Plans to Reduce Supply Chain Emissions, February 26
12. Guide to Federal Programs for Sustainable Agriculture Available, March 4
13. Think Good Agricultural Practices Prior to Spring Planting, March 10
14. Funds Available to Promote Rural Biofuel and Bioenergy Production, March 17
15. Agritourism Employees, March 24
16. USDA Launches Toll-Free Help Desk for Small Meat and Poultry Processors, March 29

AgMRC Forum

The first AgMRC forum, on Local/Regional Foods, was introduced in early March. Four posts about farmers' markets are now available.

Press Releases

The following press releases were distributed this quarter:

- USDA Launches Program to Increase Construction of High Tunnels to Expand Growing Season, January 15
- AgMRC Provides Information on Starting a Business in a Downturn, February 1

In addition, AgMRC received positive press this past quarter. Articles appeared in the Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, Des Moines Register, Fort Dodge Messenger, Iowa Farmer Today, Iowa State University Extension and USDA Farmers Market Manager Newsletter.

Kansas State University

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Responded to six requests for information on various commodities.

Goal #2

Provide value-added business and economic analysis tools, including information on business principles, legal, financial and logistical issues (information contained in the Business Development section of the Web site).

Developed and wrote monthly ethanol newsletter articles for the AgMRC newsletter. Met to discuss subcontracts for AgMRC with Montana State, North Dakota State and Oklahoma State. Reviewed grants for VAPG program. Worked with North Dakota State on three articles for the newsletter.

Goal #3

Conduct research and analysis on economic issues facing producers involved in value-added business ventures (this includes research activities on all topics included at the Web site).

Continued work on value-added activities in the alfalfa seed, retail and rural electric development industries. Completed supervision of student analyzing impact of CO2 emissions on rural retail businesses and preparing article for newsletter.

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Conduct outreach activities to disseminate the research and information assembled and developed under the previous three goals. These activities are designed for producers, producer groups, businesses and others involved in value-added agriculture (this includes all outreach activities of the Center including workshops, seminars, newsletters and other delivery methods including individual client requests for specific information).

Worked with VAPG recipients and business development members in California, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.