

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

University Extension



**HOW VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE
PRODUCERS IN 20 U.S. STATES
FIND, INTAKE AND VALIDATE
KNOWLEDGE INPUTS**

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Population

- VAPG recipients
- Resources available
- Interest in pursuing beyond typical commodity
- Early adopters or innovators of new products

Why does this matter to our
clients?

Why is this important?

- AgMRC and Value Added Agricultural Providers
- Understanding of what resources these farm groups use.
- Maximize impact of our services

Research Objectives

- How access and utilize resources
- Where they go for information
- Understand resources utilized in developing their strategies

Research Questions

- What are the types of technical, business, and marketing assistance the VAPG firms need?
- How do producers go about finding out about this information?
- What resources do they use to guide their business decisions?
- How do they like to receive information and education? Whom do they turn to?
- Do they use Web-based resources?

Methodology

- Qualitative research
- Variety of businesses
- 20 states
- Partial anonymity
- Authors interviewed 80 VAPG recipients
 - CEO, CFO, President or Manager

Findings—Journal of Extension

- Utilizing universities and Extension services as a source of non biased information
- Responses varied

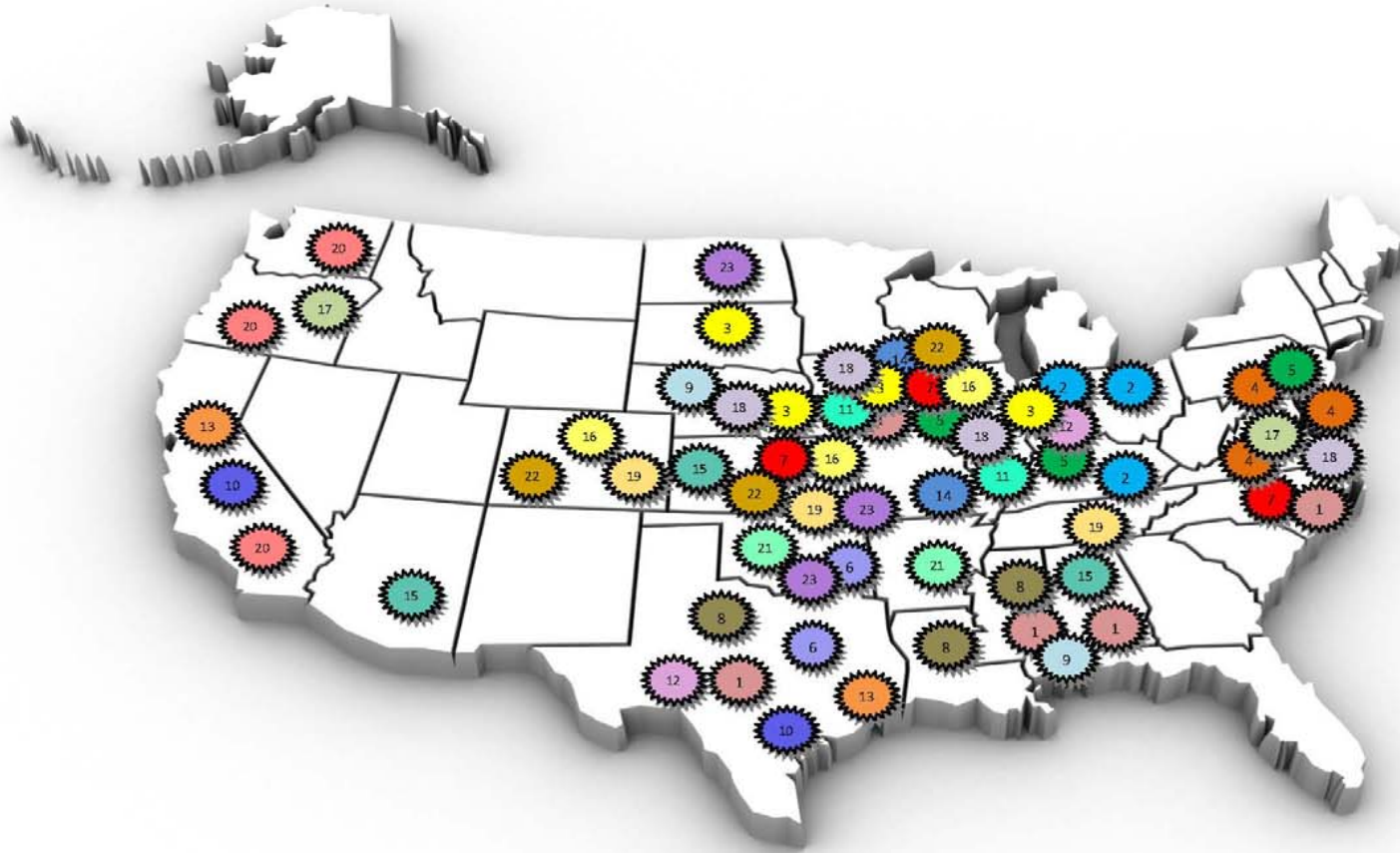
Comments from Producers

- The university—that's what they're paid to do is help you. If the USDA wants to continue this value-added thing they need to see to it that these universities, that some of these places are funded properly because they are the ticket. That's your only ticket, really.... Without the university help we would have been out the door. Nebraska

Comments from Producers

- When we first started the Extension people didn't know a lot. They were nice—just not helpful. .. Extension people are getting better and better trained, better equipped to help groups like ours. Iowa

Land grant system



Business Development Questions

“There is so much information out there you can really suffer from information overload. The university people help you make it into a usable and understandable piece.”

- Iowa--... Our farmers are already familiar with Extension. I think our state Extension is their first choice. Farmers are using them for production things so we are comfortable for using the university people for our business plans and feasibility studies.
- Nebraska--Familiarity is pretty important. Our people already trust their agent.

How Farmers Use the University Resources

- Web and citations—then look at where they came from
- Email updates and electronic newsletters
- On-site classes

Don't use university resources

- No one knows anything on their particular area
- Didn't meet the requirements of the university—grants, community size, etc
- No one available—resources stretched too thin

Journal of Applied Communication--Findings

- Land grants most frequently cited source
- Governmental agencies, departments of agriculture, etc.
- Commodity groups, NGOs
- Consultants

Consultants

- Varied regarding their effectiveness
- Finding quality consultants an issue
- Referrals

Other sources

- Trade shows
- Conferences
- Tours
- Manufacturer representatives, vendors, sales representatives

Internet

- Availability of information
- Immediate access and success in finding information
- Creation of a community of like-minded people
- New information that had not been available to them previously

Farmers using the Internet in their business transactions

- Communicate information with their producer/suppliers via email and with Web pages.
- Disburse business documents
- Aggregate product
- Provide individualized performance and transaction information such as quality control data (somatic cell counts, beef cattle grid kill sheets, etc)
- Facilitate dialogue on topics through the use of blogs and on-line forums

Where Producers Find Information

- Networks and word of mouth
 - Communication network
- Internet research
- Personal relationships
- Peer modeling

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The land grants and Extension are important service providers
 - Original vision on ground or virtually is still an effective method
 - Extension providers are respected for their content knowledge and ability to ferret answers
 - Individual clients do not begin with the notion of Extension as a national system

Value-Added Ag Providers Need

- Trained in understanding the depths of the land grant system
- Avoid parochial tendencies
- Stay ahead of the client
- Meet client on their terms
- Professional development
- Experience matters
 - Mentor and nurture replacement

Value-Added Ag Providers Need

- Relevance
- Retooling
 - Method of sourcing information by and for clients
 - Redundancy of experience and capacity

When Working with the Client

Focus on Positioning

- Personal service and trust relationships
- Appropriate evaluation and translation of information
- Objective trial validation of information, innovation and technology

Internet Usage

- VAPG clients increasingly relying on the Internet
- Internet usage significant—but positioning
 - New virtual media—Facebook
 - Marketing to virtual media different

Ag Educators When Using the Internet

- Help in facilitating social networks
- Help to fit the pieces together
- Serve as the filter for clients

Administrators

- Provide training for employees beyond the technical skills
- Redundancy of experience and capacity
- Continue to fill positions on retirement, leaving, etc.—and creative ways to finance that
- Pay, support and recognize the troops



Thanks.

Do you have questions for me?