



Quarterly Report

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

October 1, 2008 – December 31, 2008

Submitted by Iowa State University and Kansas State University.

Iowa State University Extension

First Quarter Report

October 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008

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 web site 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/Products and Markets/Industries sections of the Web site).

Due to Web site conversion and reorganization, the following statistics are not a reliable representation of actual AgMRC Web site usage during this quarter. The site averaged just over 1,500 visits per day during November and December. Each visitor viewed an average of 5 pages and remained at the site about 9 minutes.

Updated Commodities & Products

During this time, the following 20 profiles were updated: Commodity Apples, Artichokes, Avocado, Broccoli, Buckwheat, Cheese, Organic Corn, International Dairy Markets, Ethanol, Floriculture, Fiber Goats, Meat Goats, Industrial Hemp, Maple Syrup, Peppers, Popcorn, Commodity Poultry, Raisins, Raspberries and Solar Power.

Following the conversion to the new Web site, all profile links to external sites are checked when the profile is being updated.

AgMRC Web site Changes Planned

Staff continued work on proposed changes to the AgMRC Web site. Global Reach has completed its update of the content management system (CMS) to a newer content management application, thus avoiding potential gaps in server support and upgrades. Web site content was ported to the new system, with the exception of a few sections such as the AgMRC Value-Added Directories, and the new CMS application that manages the Web site went “live” in October 2008. The new CMS allows for additional newsletters and news lists to be managed much more efficiently. New formatting features for editors were also incorporated into the CMS.

Minor tweaks were made to the organizational structure. The left navigation was modified through Global Reach. This new structure features a “Hot Topics” section to highlight topics currently in the news and an “AgMRC Toolbox” to highlight specific feasibility and outlook tools developed for the site.

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).

During this time, the Legal Organizational Structure subsection was revised.

The following seven Web pages were revised or created:

- Do Cooperatives Create or Destroy Value?
- Legal Framework
- Renewable Trends in Finance and Structures
- The Changing Boardroom
- Agricultural Outlook
- A Question of Value Proposition
- Conversions and Restructurings

New page sections are being created on each subsection to organize links to external sites. This distinction was lost during the conversion to the new content site. In addition, all links to external sites are being inventoried and checked following the conversion.

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).

Mary Holz-Clause interviewed and prepared profiles of the owners of the following businesses:

- Heavenly Creations
- Hilmar Cheese Company
- I-35 BioVillage
- Innovative Growers
- Jisa Farmstead Cheese
- Kilby Cream
- Leaning Oaks Vineyard
- MaxYield Cooperative
- Olive Grower's Council
- Organic Essentials
- Picket Fence Creamery
- Springbank Farm
- Texas Aquaculture Cooperative
- Texas Olive Ranch
- Valley Fig Growers
- Vande Rose Farms LLC

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
October 9	Extension Office Assistants Development Conference	Ames, IA	Connie
October 15	Iowa Venture Capital & Entrepreneurs Conference	Des Moines, IA	Bob, Craig, booth registered
October 22-23	Extension Annual Conference	Ames, IA	Connie (co-chair); Ray, Connie, Christa, Bob, Margaret, Linda
October 22-24	FFA National Convention	Indianapolis, IN	Diane, Madeline, Ag Ed students
October 31	High Tunnel Workshop	River Falls, WI	Linda, Margaret
November 19-20	Annie's Project State Coordinators meeting	Kansas City, MO	Madeline
November 24	Iowa Organic Conference	Ames, IA	Linda, Margaret
November 25	Iowa Institute for Coops Annual Meeting	Ames, IA	Madeline
December 15-16	Midwest Ag Energy Summit: Policies to Prosper in the New Carbon Economy	Chicago, IL	Craig

Client Requests

Staff researched and responded to 72 e-mailed questions pertaining to the Commodities & Products section, the Markets and Industries section or the Directories & State Resources section of the Web site this quarter. Another 40 e-mail messages--including communications with Ethanol Producer Magazine, Biodiesel Magazine, Des Moines Register, Cattle Network and Dow Jones Newswires--were received with comments or questions about the Renewable Energy section.

During this quarter, 115 new subscriptions were added to the Renewable Energy Newsletter list. Subscribers can now access and self-subscribe to the newsletter online at:
http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc_renewable_energy_newsletter.cfm?show=subscribe&newsletterID=4

AgMRC received a total of 73 toll-free phone inquiries this quarter from 16 different states, including Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Texas and Wisconsin. Two calls were also received from Canada (Ontario and Saskatchewan). Each caller was directed to Web site resources for information or forwarded to specialists for additional assistance.

Additional Public Relations

Two issues of the AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter, the October and the November/December issues, 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 bi-monthly to a list of 1,345 names 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's newsletters contained articles by experts at Iowa State University, Oklahoma State University and the Kansas City Federal Reserve. The October newsletter featured an article about ethanol's impact on the livestock and poultry industry, while the November/December newsletter featured an article about the effect of declining gasoline use on ethanol demand. The former newsletter also included an article about Brazilian renewable fuels and grain-processing capabilities. The November/December newsletter also highlighted "Ethanol's Economic Impact on Rural Communities" and the effect of climate change on Midwestern agriculture.

Two press releases were distributed on November 4. One titled "New Supply/Demand Link connects Farmers, Markets and Consumers" highlights MarketMaker, and the other, titled "The Biofuels Boom: Will it Last?" considers ethanol and the biofuels industry.

Additionally, AgMRC received positive press this past quarter. Articles appeared in the *Farm Bureau Spokesman*, *Iowa Department of Tourism e-traveler*, *Iowa Farmer Today*, *USA Today*, *Wallace's Farmer* and broadcasts on Iowa farm radio.

Kansas State University

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Reviewed six commodities on the AgMRC Web site. Responded to 22 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 Renewable Energy newsletter. Wrote two articles for the AgMRC 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).

Finished research on artisan cheeses and market development using branding strategies.

Goal #4

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Planned the Center for Creative Leadership business development program, which was rescheduled because of weather issues. Conducted director development programs in California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas and Minnesota. Worked with VAPG recipients in California, Colorado, Kansas, Minnesota and Missouri.