



# Quarterly Report

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

*July 1, 2010 – September 30, 2010*

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Submitted by Iowa State University, Kansas State University  
and the University of Minnesota.

# Iowa State University Extension

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## *Fourth Quarter Report*

*July 1, 2010 to September 30, 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 AgMRC website this quarter, the average number of sessions per day was 3,206, while the average number of pageviews per day was 10,592. The average length of visits was 4.2 minutes.

Within the United States, the most visits came from the states of New York (25.1% ↑), Washington (11.9% ↓), California (11.5% ↓), Florida (7.6% ↑) and North Carolina (3.4% ↑). California visitors viewed more pages per visit (7.0 ↑) than visitors from any other state, followed by Washington visitors (5.5 ↑).

By country, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from the United States (64.1% ↓), followed by (in order): China (6.1% ↑), India (3.9% ↑), Canada (2.9% ↓) and Australia (2.0% ↑). On average, French visitors viewed more pages per visit (3.7) than visitors from any other country, even viewing more pages than American visitors (3.4).

### *Blog*

During this quarter, 12,629 visitors (↓) viewed the AgMRC Blog, opening 18,016 pages (↓) and spending an average of 3 minutes and 16 seconds (↑).

### *Major Content Sections*

When the content sections of the website 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 180,096 visits or 42 percent of website visits (↑), and Bus Dev accounted for 119,368 visits or 28 percent of visits (↑). Renewable Energy, the newest section on the website, now ranks third in visits, capturing 18 percent of the visits (↑).

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

1. Livestock (17.2% ↑)
2. Fruits (16.8% unchanged)
3. Grains and Oilseeds (14.9% ↑)

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

1. Operating a Business (31.1% ↓)
2. Getting Prepared (20.6% ↓)
3. Starting a Business (18.6% ↑)

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

1. AgMRC Renewable Energy Newsletter (28.4% ↑)
2. Ethanol (22.5% ↓)
3. Biofuels/Biorefining (general) (8.2% ↓)

Website 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 time, the following 34 profiles were updated: Asparagus, Barley, Bioreactors, Cabbage, Citrus, Sweet Corn, Crambe, Cuphea, Edible Dry Beans, Eggplants, Figs, Forestry, Organic Lambs, Meadowfoam, Miscanthus, Mustard, Nursery Trees, Onions, Blood Red Oranges, Pomegranates, Potatoes, Pumpkins, Rye, Salmon, Sorghum, Strawberries, Sugarbeets, Sunflowers, Switchgrass, Wine Industry, Tennessee Wine, Texas Wine, Vermont Wine and Washington Wine.

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

### *Markets & Industries*

The following four topics were reviewed: Country of Origin, Food Consumption, Traceability and Pharmaceutical Market Trends.

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

### *Renewable Energy*

The following three new subsections were added to this section of the AgMRC website:

- Legal and Finance Sections – Biomass, Solar, Geothermal
- Algae (Other Energy Sources)
- Carbon Exchanges

Nearly 40 new information files were added: Nine files were added to the Biomass topic, twelve to the Solar topic, seven to the Geothermal topic and nine to the Algae topic. The external news source websites were re-categorized, and more than 45 new external links were added.

At the American Agriculture Economics Association (AAEA) meeting, the Renewable Energy section of the AgMRC website was recognized by several speakers as making significant contributions in the area of biofuels. Linwood Hoffman from USDA asked Robert Wisner to review his second publication on DDGs. Bill Tierney indicated that USDA is working to develop a DGS balance sheet and perhaps AgMRC can contribute to that process. Mike Boehlje indicated he prints and saves most of the AgMRC articles and uses them in his classes and in other discussions with students. References were also made to Don Hofstrand's ethanol cost model and charts.

**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 Website).*

Broken external links were revised.

**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 Website).*

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](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.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>AgMRC Participant</b>
	Midwest-Great Plains Outlook Conference		Presenting: Bob W.
July 13	High Tunnels 101 workshop	LeMars, Iowa	Presenting: Linda and Craig
July 19-20	High Tunnels 101 workshop	Decorah, Iowa	Presenting: Linda and Ray
July 21	U.S. Congressional Subcommittee testimony	Washington, D.C.	Margaret
July 27-30	ACE Institute	Cleveland, Ohio	Madeline
July 29	All Horticulture field day	ISU Hort Farm	Linda and Craig

August 1-5	International Diffuse Reflectance Conference	Chambersburg, Pennsylvania	Connie
August 2-3	SE Iowa High Tunnel – Growing in the Garden	Mt. Pleasant, Iowa	Presenting: Linda
August 10	Staff Development Day	Story City, Iowa	All staff
August 12	“The Five Dysfunctions of a Team” seminar	Des Moines, Iowa	Ray and Connie
August 31-September 1	Farm Progress Show	Boone, Iowa	Presenting: Ray, Linda and Craig

### Client Requests

In-house AgMRC staff researched and responded to more than 130 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.

As of September 30, AgMRC staff reported receiving 68 toll-free phone inquiries from 20 different states, that is, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin. Four calls were also received from Canada (British Columbia). Each caller was directed to website resources for information or forwarded to specialists for additional assistance.

Another 25 e-mails and phone calls were received with comments or questions about the Renewable Energy section from such organizations as the Applied Process Technology International, LLC, Conoco Phillips, Koester Performance Research, Midwest Steel Company, Inc. and NEATech, LLC.

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](http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc_renewable_energy_newsletter.cfm?show=subscribe&newsletterID=4)

Renewable energy articles were reprinted in *Ethanol Producer* magazine and the *Wallaces Farmer*. Bob and Don were asked to review a manuscript for USDA’s Economic Research Service.

### Homepage

The AgMRC homepage is now featuring a “hot” topic, such as Agritourism, Food Safety, Local/Regional Foods, Organics, Renewable Energy and Value Added Producer Grants, in the center column. Pertinent AgMRC profiles and articles are highlighted in this column as well as resources from land-grant university Cooperative Extension, ATTRA, SARE, MOSES and USDA. The left column features announcements such as the National Value Added Ag (VAA) Conference and the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. The right

column features quick links to helpful resources and links to funding resources, emphasizing the Value Added Producer Grant Program.

During this quarter, the homepage provided information about Agritourism, Agricultural Cooperatives, Energy Audits for Farms and Ranches, Farm-to-School Programs and Renewable Energy.

### **Additional Public Relations**

#### *AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter*

The July and September 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](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 (3 articles), Kansas State University (2 articles), North Dakota State University (2 articles) and The Windmill Group (2 articles) contributed a total of seven articles.

Newsletter articles included:

- Agricultural Research Combats Global Warming
- Is E-85 Ethanol Competitive with E-0 Outside the Midwest?
- Economic Issues with Climate Change Legislation and its Effect on Kansas Agricultural Cooperatives
- Value-added Business Success Factors: The Role of Local Infrastructure and Support
- The Ethanol Blenders' Tax Credit, Part II
- U.S. Distillers Grains Supply-Use Under E-10, E-12 and E-15
- Value-added Business Success Factors: The Role of Management and Operations

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

#### *AgMRC Blog*

The following 11 entries were posted during the quarter:

1. Secretary Vilsack Commends Dairy Industry for Efforts to Reduce Carbon Footprint
2. Indiana Cooperative Summit
3. Specialty Crop Block Grant Awards Announced
4. Tiers of the Food System: A New Way of Thinking About Local and Regional Food
5. Some Thoughts on Climate Change
6. A Different Perspective on Food versus Fuel
7. Family Farms Still Prevalent in U.S.
8. CRP Sign-up Now Through August 27
9. Local Foods and Farms
10. Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Stories
11. New Biofuels Processing Method for Mobile Facilities

### *AgMRC on Facebook*

AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook. As of September, the AgMRC Facebook page had an average of 15 fans, and an average of 40 visits was made to the page each week.

### *AgMRC Forum*

The AgMRC forum on Local/Regional Foods continues. Posts about farmers' markets are now available.

### *Press Releases*

The press release titled "Checklist for Using Grant Funds Effectively" was picked up by a wide variety of national papers and websites, including farmenergy.org, Arizona Department of Agriculture, ATTRA, Successful Farming, Wallace's Farmer and Iowa Farmer Today.

During this quarter, AgMRC signed an agreement with the National Farm Broadcaster's Association to use their news service to market AgMRC topics to farm radio on a monthly basis. The service begins in October.

# **Kansas State University and the University of Minnesota**

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### **Goal #1**

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Responded to 13 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 Website).*

Developed and wrote monthly ethanol newsletter articles for the AgMRC Renewable Energy and Climate Change newsletter and two blog articles. Completed article on carbon dioxide impact on a value-added business.

### **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 Website).*

Completed work on the alfalfa seed, retail and rural electric development industries and started new project on biomass with rural utilities. Completed work on looking at fresh and canned fruit comparisons for value-added to better understand USDA's new local foods approach. Met with Iowa State University staff to discuss planning activities for 2011.

### **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).*

Worked with Value-Added Producer Grant recipients and business development members in Kansas, Minnesota and Iowa.