



# Quarterly Report

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

*January 1, 2011 – March 31, 2011*

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Submitted by Iowa State University and the University of Minnesota.

# Iowa State University Extension

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## *Second Quarter Report*

*January 1, 2011 to March 31, 2011*

### **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 visits per day was 3,379 (↓), while the average number of pageviews per day was 12,344 (↑).

Within the United States, the most visits came from the states of New York (17.9% ↓), Washington (17.9% ↑), California (12.3% ↓), Florida (5.9% ↓) and Massachusetts (5.1% ↑). New Mexico visitors viewed more pages per visit (17.3 new to list) than visitors from any other state, followed by California visitors (11.6 ↑).

By country, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from the United States (67.0% ↑), followed by (in order): Canada (3.3% ↓), India (3.3% ↓), United Kingdom (2.5% ↑) and China (2.4% ↓). On average, Ukraine visitors viewed more pages per visit (13.1) than visitors from any other country, even viewing more pages than American visitors (3.8).

### *Blog*

During this quarter, 42,064 visitors (↑) viewed the AgMRC Blog, opening 82,715 pages (↑) and spending an average of 38 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 184,124 visits or 23.4 percent of website visits (↓), and Bus Dev accounted for 129,174 visits or 16.4 percent of visits (↑). Renewable Energy, the newest section on the website, now ranks third in visits, capturing 82,544 visits or 10.5 percent of the visits (↓).

Within the C&P section, the number of visits to the following two topics increased during this quarter:

1. Vegetables (24,859)
2. Specialty Crops (8,913)

The number of visits to the following three topics in the Bus Dev section also increased this quarter:

1. Operating a Business (39,399)
2. Starting a Business (22,253)
3. Strategy and Analysis (18,567)

The number of visits to the following two topics in the Renewable Energy section increased as well:

1. Biofuels/Biorefining (general) (6,556)
2. Biodiesel (2,810)

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 53 profiles were updated: Agritourism Overview, Almonds, Amaranth, Apples (on-line ordering), Organic Apples, Apples (you pick), Dried Beef, Bees, Catfish, Cherries, Christmas Trees, Cotton, Cranberries, Equine Agritourism, Fee and Lease Pond Fishing, Fiber Overview, Biomass, Dairy Goats, Hunting Leases, Commodity Lamb, Lamb (direct marketing), Lamb (international markets), Wool, Olives, Peaches, Peanuts, Pistachios, Plums, Pork (certified/verified), Commodity Pork, Pork (direct marketing), Pork (foodservice), Pork (international markets), Natural Pork, Niche/Ethnic Pork, Proso Millet, Prunes, Quinoa, Rapeseed, Rural Weddings, Safflower, Sawdust, Fresh Tomatoes, 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.

In anticipation of the next round of USDA Value-Added Producer Grants, AgMRC staff began researching, assembling and updating information about the grant program. This information will be featured on the AgMRC homepage in advance of the 2011 Notice of Funding Availability.

### *Markets & Industries*

The following 31 topics were reviewed: Bioterrorism, Energy Industry Structure, Energy Market Trends, Energy Regulation, Ethnic Foods, Federal Energy Programs, Fiber Industry Structure, Food Safety, University Food Safety Centers, Food Supply, Foodservice/Retail Trends, Genetically Modified Foods, Grocery Industry, International Issues, International Markets, Irradiation, Kitchen Incubators, Kosher Industry, Labeling, Market Trends, Meat Processing, Natural Foods, Private Labeling, Quality Management Systems, Restaurants, Retailing, Specialty Food, Supply Chains, Trade Shows, Understanding Markets and Wholesaling

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

**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).*

Mike Boland, University of Minnesota, prepared a blog article and monthly ethanol newsletter articles for the AgMRC Renewable Energy 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 Website).*

Mike Boland, University of Minnesota, met with Iowa State University staff to discuss planning activities for 2011.

The AgMRC website provides 53 case studies profiling recipients of USDA Value-Added Producer Grants 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).*

**Outreach Activities**

Mike Boland, University of Minnesota, worked with Value Added Producer Grant recipients and business development members in Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

**Trade Show Promotions**

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>
January 6, 7	eXtension Board Meeting	Kansas City, Missouri	Presenting: Madeline, Attending: Diane
January 7, 8	PFI Annual Conference	Marshalltown, Iowa	Attending:

			Margaret, booth
January 14	ANR at Noon	Ames, Iowa	Presenting: Madeline
January 22	Women in Denim Conference	Northwest Iowa	Presenting: Madeline
January 24	Farm Credit	San Francisco	Presenting: Madeline
January 27	Midwest Value Added Conference	Madison, Wisconsin	Attending: Dan
January 27, February 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10	GAPs Training	Des Moines, Muscatine, Oelwein, Ames, Council Bluffs, Sioux City, Mason City	Presenting: Margaret
January 28, 29	IFVGA Conference	Des Moines, Iowa	Attending: Linda, Margaret, Marsha, Craig
February 24, 25	USDA Ag Outlook Forum	Arlington, Virginia	Attending: Ray
February 24, 25	MOSES Organic Farming Conference	Lacrosse, Wisconsin	Attending: Margaret
March 9	Women in Ag Program	Ames, Iowa	Attending: Madeline
March 22-24	ANR In-Service	Ames, Iowa	Attending: Ray, Barry, Dan, Linda, Madeline, Margaret, Marsha, Craig
March 27-29	Small Farms Conference	Hattiesburg, Mississippi	Presenting: Madeline

### Client Requests

In-house AgMRC staff researched and responded to 127 e-mailed questions pertaining to the Commodities and Products section, the Markets and Industries section, the Renewable Energy section and the Directories and State Resources section of the website this quarter. Three e-mail inquiries related to the next deadline for or requested additional information about the USDA Value-Added Producer Grants.

As of March 31, AgMRC staff reported receiving 64 toll-free phone inquiries from 21 different states, that is, California, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Washington, D.C.

One call was also received from Canada (British Columbia). The caller was directed to website resources for information.

Subscriptions to the Renewable Energy Newsletter list now total 1,400 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)

### **Homepage**

The AgMRC homepage is now featuring a “hot” topic, such as Agritourism, Cellulosic Ethanol, Energy Audits, Local/Regional Foods, Organic Foods, 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 Ag Cooperatives, High Tunnels, Food Safety, Functional Foods and Value Added Producer Grants.

The AgMRC homepage also provides a link to a section about the annual National Value Added Agriculture Conference. The 2011 conference, hosted by Penn State University and Ohio State University, will be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on June 26-28. Information is also available about past conferences.

### **Additional Public Relations**

#### *AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter*

The 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](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 contributed a total of four articles.

- U.S. Ethanol Exports: What's the Trend and Where are They Being Shipped?, March, Bob Wisner
- The Role of Natural Gas in Tomorrow's Energy Economy, March, Don Hofstrand
- Should I Invest in Agricultural Start-up Business Ventures, February, Don Hofstrand
- Update on Availability of Corn and Soybeans for Biofuels, February, Bob Wisner

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

#### *AgMRC Blog*

The following six entries were posted during the quarter:

1. National Risk Management Education Conference, March 10
2. USDA Introduces Online Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America, February 23
3. Rural Broadband, January 31
4. Getting to Scale with Regional Food Hubs, January 19
5. Investor Issues, January 12
6. Detroit's Eastern Market: A Food Hub in a Food Desert, January 4

#### *AgMRC on Facebook*

AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook. During this quarter, the AgMRC Facebook page had 10 posts, generating 3,053 impressions. The number of impressions displayed for a post is the raw number of impressions shown to users. These impressions may appear in users' News Feeds, visits to Pages or through a Fan Box widget.

#### *Press Releases*

The press release titled "[Supply/Demand Link Connects Farmers, Markets & Consumers](#)," updating readers on the national MarketMaker tool, was distributed in March.

#### *Radio Spots*

AgMRC signed an agreement with the National Farm Broadcaster's Association to use their news service to market AgMRC topics on national farm radio. In January, the service released "[Before Investing in Outside Ventures, Several Factors Farmers Should Consider](#)," which generated 19 pickups by national stations. "[Time to Get a Jump on Applying for Value Added Producer Grants](#)," which generated 16 pickups by stations, was released in March.

In addition, AgMRC received positive press this past quarter. Articles appeared in DTN/Televent, Ethanol Producer magazine and Farmgate.