



Quarterly Report

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

October 1, 2010 – December 31, 2010

Submitted by Iowa State University and the University of Minnesota.

Iowa State University Extension

First Quarter Report

October 1, 2010 to December 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 AgMRC website this quarter, the average number of visits per day was 3,475 (↑), while the average number of pageviews per day was 10,816 (↑).

Within the United States, the most visits came from the states of New York (19.9% ↓), Washington (13.2% ↑), California (12.6% ↑), Florida (6.4% ↓) and Massachusetts (4.5%, new to list). California visitors viewed more pages per visit (5.5 ↓) than visitors from any other state, followed by Washington visitors (4.5 ↓).

By country, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from the United States (64.6% ↑), followed by (in order): China (4.7% ↓), Canada (3.5% ↑), India (3.3% ↓) and United Kingdom (2.4%, new to list). On average, French visitors viewed more pages per visit (3.7) than visitors from any other country, even viewing more pages than American visitors (3.1).

Blog

During this quarter, 37,993 visitors (↑) viewed the AgMRC Blog, opening 46,910 pages (↑) and spending an average of 1 minute and 58 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 191,872 visits or 25.6 percent of website visits (↑), and Bus Dev accounted for 120,639 visits or 16.1 percent of visits (↑). Renewable Energy, the newest section on the website, now ranks third in visits, capturing 10.7 percent of the visits (↑).

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

1. Livestock (17.5% ↑)
2. Fruits (16.5% ↓)
3. Grains and Oilseeds (13.6% ↓)

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

1. Operating a Business (31.5% ↑)
2. Getting Prepared (21.4% ↑)
3. Starting a Business (17.6% ↓)

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

1. AgMRC Renewable Energy Newsletter (27.6% ↓)
2. Ethanol (25.3% ↑)
3. Biofuels/Biorefining (general) (8.1% ↓)

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 13 profiles were updated: Commodity Apples, Avocado, Broccoli, Buckwheat, Organic Corn, Floriculture, Fluid Milk, Fiber Goats, Meat Goats, Maple Syrup, Peppers, Raisins and Spelt.

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

Markets & Industries

The following 25 topics were reviewed: Animal Rights and Welfare, Antibiotic Use, Attribute Marketing, Baking, Branded Food Products, Canning, Community Supported Agriculture, Consolidation, Co-Packing, Diet/Health/Obesity, Direct Markets, Distributing, E-Commerce, Exports, Food Profitability, Foodservice, Freezing, Fresh Processing, Functional Foods, Manufacturing, Meat Science, Packaging, Processing, Trans Fats and Vertical Coordinating.

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, now at the University of Minnesota, developed and wrote a blog article and monthly ethanol newsletter 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 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 (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).

Outreach Activities

Mike Boland, University of Minnesota, worked with VAPG recipients and business development members in California, Colorado, Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

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.

Date	Event	Location	AgMRC Participant
October 7	Market Ready Conference	Knoxville, IA	Attending: Linda
October 19 & 20	Annual MarketMaker Partnership Meeting	Destin, FL	Attending: Craig
October 20 - 22	Iowa Tourism Conference	Burlington, IA	Attending: Marsha
October 20 - 22	National FFA Career Show	Indianapolis, IN	Attending: Linda and Barry, booth
October 20 - 21	Extension Annual Conference	Ames, IA	Attending: All
November 21 - 22	Iowa Organic Conference	Ames, IA	Attending: Margaret and Craig, booth
December 10, 13, 14, 16 and 17	Organic Grain and Livestock Outlook	Tripoli, Fairfield, Nevada, Atlantic and Storm Lake, IA	Presenting: Margaret

Client Requests

In-house AgMRC staff researched and responded to 93 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 December 31, AgMRC staff reported receiving 68 toll-free phone inquiries from 18 different states, that is, Alabama, Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Virginia and Washington, D.C. Two calls were also received from Canada (Ontario and Quebec). Each caller was directed to website resources for information or forwarded to specialists for additional assistance.

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, Cellulosic Ethanol, 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 November and December 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 (5 articles) and Kansas State University (1 article) contributed a total of six articles.

Newsletter articles included:

- The Impact of a Renewable Electricity Standard and a Carbon Payment Program
- Distillers Grain Price Relationships and Export Developments

- Corn and Soybean Availability for Biofuels in 2010-11
- Profitability of the Corn Ethanol Supply Chain
- Comparing Corn Ethanol Use Data Sources from U.S. Government Agencies
- The Rise of China's Clean Energy Industry

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

AgMRC Blog

The following 10 entries were posted during the quarter:

1. USDA Offers Conservation Funding to Organic Producers
2. Wind Turbines on Farmland May Benefit Crops
3. USDA Introduces Tool to Connect Beginning Farmers with Retiring Farmers
4. USDA Contracting Opportunities Conference December 7
5. Kentucky FarmStart Program Bringing Fresh Faces to Agriculture
6. Microloan Program to Benefit Rural America
7. MarketMaker Honored
8. October is Cooperatives Month
9. USDA Announces Funding For Cooperatives to Create Jobs and Nurture Rural Business Development
10. Vilsack to Open Global Farmer Meeting on Biodiversity at ISU on Oct. 12

AgMRC on Facebook

AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook. During this quarter, the AgMRC Facebook page averaged 60 fans. Each of the 16 Facebook posts during that period had an average of 200 impressions, which is the raw number of times the post was viewed on the AgMRC wall and the wall of our fans.

Press Releases

The press release titled “Many Benefits to Buying Locally Grown Christmas Trees” was distributed in December, and the release titled “Fall and Winter Hunting Seasons Give Farmers Time to Evaluate for Business Opportunities” was distributed in October.

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 began in October with “Consumers Demanding, Producers Supplying Agritourism.” The topic “National Effort to Inform about Cooperatives Starts with University Extension” was released in November.

In addition, AgMRC received positive press this past quarter. Articles appeared in ISU Extension, Dubuque News, Wallaces Farmer and the Minneapolis Star Tribune.