



Quarterly Report

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

April 1, 2011 – June 30, 2011

Submitted by Iowa State University and the University of Minnesota.

Third Quarter Report

April 1, 2011 to June 30, 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 3,027 (↓), while the average number of pageviews per day was 10,772 (↓).

Within the United States, the most visits came from the states of Washington (20.4% ↑), New York (17.0% ↓), California (15.3% ↑), Massachusetts (5.5%, ↑) and Florida (4.9% ↓). Arkansas visitors viewed more pages per visit (46.1, new to list) than visitors from any other state, followed by New Mexico visitors (11.6 ↓).

As usual, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from the United States (64.6% ↓), followed by (in order): Japan (6.1%, new to list), China (3.3% ↑), Canada (2.5% ↓) and India (2.3% ↓). On average, Russian visitors viewed more pages per visit (11.1) than visitors from any other country, even viewing more pages than American visitors (3.8).

Blog

During this quarter, 31,602 visitors (↓) viewed the AgMRC Blog, opening 61,621 pages (↓) and spending an average of 59 seconds (↑). Within the last year, the number of visits to the blog increased 22.4 percent and the number of pageviews increased 59.7 percent.

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 156,871 visits or 23.9 percent of website visits (↓), and Bus Dev accounted for 101,005 visits or 15.4 percent of visits (↓). Renewable Energy, the newest section on the website, still ranks third in visits, capturing 69,709 visits or 10.6 percent of the visits (↑).

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

1. Livestock
2. Fruits
3. Grains and Oilseeds

The average time spent in this section increased 8.1 percent from last quarter, rising to 2 minutes and 8 seconds. When the data for the C&P section and for this quarter are compared to the same data from one year ago, the number of pageviews increased 22 percent from 2010. Also, visits to

the Vegetable subsection increased 9.8 percent, to the Specialty Crops subsection increased 2.6 percent and to the Energy subsection increased 2.5 percent.

Within the Bus Dev section, the top three topics visited during this quarter were:

1. Operating a Business
2. Getting Prepared
3. Starting a Business

The average time spent viewing the following subsections in the Bus Dev section increased from last quarter:

- Strategy and Analysis + 27.1 percent
- Starting a Business + 23.6 percent
- Business Workbench + 23.5 percent

When the data for the Bus Dev section and for this quarter are compared to the same data from one year ago, the number of visits to the Strategy and Analysis subsection increased 8.7 percent and the number for the Interviews and Presentations subsection increased 6.7 percent from 2010.

Within the Renewable Energy section, the top three topics visited during this quarter were:

1. AgMRC Renewable energy newsletter
2. Ethanol
3. Biofuels and Biorefining

Compared to last quarter, the following subsections experienced the largest increase in average time spent viewing those webpages:

- Ocean and Tidal Energy + 104.0 percent
- Transportation + 62.7 percent
- Biogas + 56.8 percent
- Solar Energy + 55.9 percent

The following subsections in the Renewable Energy section experienced the largest increase in number of visits within the last year:

1. Climate Change and Agriculture + 71.1 percent
2. Greenhouse Gases + 28.8 percent
3. Solar Energy + 21.2 percent

Website usage is tracked and analyzed using Urchin version 6.6 from Google Analytics. Visits are the number of visits to the site from a particular country/region/city. Pageviews are the number of times the webpage was displayed. 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: Alpaca, Apricots, Azuki Beans, Commodity Beef, Branded Beef, Natural Beef, Organic Beef, Bison, Blackberries, Blueberries,

Camelina, Canola, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Cheese, Chestnuts, Chickpeas, Dairy Products, Dates, Egyptian Wheat, Elk, Garlic, Hazelnuts, Herbs, Kenaf, Melons, Mushrooms, Pears, Pecans, Pine Nuts, Popcorn, Organic Pork, Pork Processing, Sweet Potatoes, Ducks and Geese, Turkeys, Prairie Grasses/Wildflowers, Raspberries, Rice, Dairy Sheep, Solar Power, Organic Soy, Soyfood, Spinach, Squash, You Pick Strawberries, Sugarcane, Processed Tomatoes, Black Walnuts, Watermelons, Wind Energy and Worms.

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 (VAPGs), AgMRC staff created a homepage about the VAPGs. When the 2011 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) was published in the Federal Register in late June, the VAPG homepage was published, with links to the NOFA, 7 CFR part 4284, the Application Template and the Grants.gov grant application.

Markets & Industries

The following seven topics were reviewed: Allergens, Convenience Stores, Drying, Eco Labels, Farmers' Markets, Organic Food Trends and Tourism.

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 for the AgMRC Blog.

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 AgMRC staff to discuss planning activities for fall 2011. He also began research on ways for mutuals and fraternal to invest equity in value-added ventures.

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

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 Iowa, Minnesota and North Carolina.

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
Apr 12-13	National Extension Risk Management Education Conference	St. Louis, MO	Attending: Madeline and Lani
May 23-25	National Small Food Manufacturers Conference	Omaha, NE	Attending: Connie
June 20-23	National eXtension Workshop	Louisville, KY	Attending: Madeline and Diane
June 25-27	National Value-Added Ag Conference	Pittsburgh, PA	Attending: Ray and Craig

Client Requests

In-house AgMRC staff researched and responded to 66 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.

As of June 30, AgMRC staff reported receiving 45 toll-free phone inquiries from 19 different states, that is, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Texas, Washington, Washington, D.C. and Wisconsin.

One call was also received from Canada (Ontario). 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

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 such topics as Farm to School Programs, Hot Topic: Local/Regional Foods, National Value Added Ag Conference 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, was held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on June 26-28. Information is also available about past conferences.

Additional Public Relations

AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter

No issues of the AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter were published this quarter while a contract was being negotiated with the Livestock Marketing Information Center (LMIC) in Denver, Colorado, to continue the popular newsletter. It has resumed as of this month.

Ordinarily, the newsletter is 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.

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

AgMRC Blog

The following entries were posted during the quarter:

1. Ribbon Cutting Opens Doors for Food Entrepreneurs in Pennsylvania, June 22
2. Iowa Poultry Processing Expands, June 1
3. Flex-Fuel Pump Numbers to Increase, May 19
4. Update Your USDA Farmers' Market Directory Listing, May 9

5. New USDA Rule Encourages the Purchase of Local Agricultural Products for Schools, April 27
6. Farmers' Market Information Wanted, April 19
7. Healthy Gardens, Healthy Youth Pilot Program Announced, April 7

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 2,941 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 Release

The press release titled "AgMRC Assists Producers in Applying for USDA Value-added Grants," updating readers on VAPG grants, was distributed in June. AgMRC helps independent producers, ag producer groups and farmer and rancher cooperatives by gathering information used to apply for the USDA Rural Business and Cooperative Service VAPGs, which were announced in the *Federal Register* on June 28, 2011.

This release was picked up nationally on the Columbia Daily Tribune, the Daily Astorian, the Fergus Falls Daily Journal, the Eastern Iowa Life, Maui Now, Wallaces Farmer, Western Farm Press and Delta Farm Press.

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 June, the service released "Complete Resource Available to Those Applying for Value Added Producer Grants," which generated 19 pickups by national stations.

In addition, AgMRC received positive press this past quarter. The center was referenced on the Livestrong website; Franchise Opportunity website; Lane County, Oregon website; USDA's Rural Development website, the Albany Herald and others.