



# Quarterly Report

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

*July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2011*

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Submitted by Iowa State University and the University of Minnesota.

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## *Fourth Quarter Report*

*July 1, 2011 to September 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).*

This quarter, the average number of visits per day to the AgMRC website was 3,184 (↑), up from 3,027 per day last quarter, while the average number of pageviews per day was 13,919 (↑), up from 10,772 per day last quarter.

Within the United States, the most visits came from the states of California (19.1% ↑), Washington (18.9% ↓), New York (9.4% ↓), Texas (4.8%, new to list) and Florida (4.4% ↓). Arkansas visitors viewed more pages per visit (99.8 ↑) than visitors from any other state, followed by New Mexico visitors (11.1 ↓).

As usual, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from the United States (52.8% ↓), followed by (in order): Japan (11.8%, ↑), China (9.6% ↑), India (2.8% ↑) and Canada (2.0% ↓). On average, Russian and French visitors viewed more pages per visit (14.7 ↑ and 14.4 respectively) than visitors from any other country, even viewing more pages than American visitors (5.4 ↑).

### *Blog*

During this quarter, 31,687 visitors (↑) viewed the AgMRC Blog, opening 57,462 pages (↓) and spending an average of 1:33 (↑).

### *Major Content Sections*

The major content sections of the AgMRC website account for the following percentages of total visits to the website:

1. Commodities and Products (25.7% ↑)
2. Business Development (16.5% ↑)
3. Renewable Energy (11.0% ↑)
4. AgMRC Blog (4.3%)
5. Markets and Industries (4.2%)
6. Directories and State Resources (2.2%)

The Commodities and Products (C&P) section and the Business Development (Bus Dev) section continue to rank as the top two most frequently visited sections this quarter. C&P accounted for 189,834 visits (↑) and 217,550 pageviews; Bus Dev accounted for 122,001 visits (↑) and 144,512 pageviews. Renewable Energy, the newest section on the website, still ranks third in visits, capturing 80,998 visits (↑) and 98,025 pageviews.

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

1. Fruits (32,439 visits)
2. Livestock (31,127 visits)
3. Grains and Oilseeds (26,408 visits)

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

1. Operating a Business (39,481 visits)
2. Getting Prepared (23,233 visits)
3. Starting a Business (22,112 visits)

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

1. AgMRC Renewable energy newsletter (22,212 visits)
2. Ethanol (18,615 visits)
3. Biofuels and Biorefining (7,296 visits)

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*

Mike Boland, University of Minnesota, has begun preparing profiles on value-added seed potatoes and on extracting energy from sugarbeets for the AgMRC website.

During this time, the following 27 profiles were updated: Barley, Sweet Corn, Citrus Industry, Crambe, Cuphea, Eggplants, Figs, Forestry, Organic Lamb, Meadowfoam, Miscanthus, Mustard, Nursery Trees, Onions, Ostriches, Pistachios, Pomegranates, Pumpkins, Rye, Salmon, Sesame, Sorghum, Commodity Strawberries, Sugarbeets, Sunflowers, Switchgrass, Tobacco, Tennessee Wine, Texas Wine, Vermont Wine, Washington Wine and Wine Industry.

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

### *Markets & Industries*

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

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, developed and wrote a blog article for the AgMRC website 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 AgMRC staff to discuss planning activities for spring 2012. He also continued to research ways for mutuals and fraternal to invest equity in value-added ventures and collaborative efforts among food manufacturers and producer groups.

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 VAPG recipients and business development members in Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota.

## 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 by AgMRC as match dollars through staff time and travel dollars.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>AgMRC Participant</b>
July 26-29	ACE Institute	Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada	Attending: Madeline
July 28	This Land is Your Land Leasing/Conservation Conference	Drake University, Des Moines, IA	Attending: Margaret

Aug 3-5	Council for Food and Ag Research	Washington, DC	Presenting: Madeline
Aug 16-17	New Farmer Forum	Drake University, Des Moines, IA	Attending: Madeline
Aug 31	Food Safety Training	Sysco, Calmar, IA	Attending: Craig
Sept 14-15	Food Safety - Pet Foods Conference	NGFA	Attending: Connie

### **Client Requests**

In-house AgMRC staff researched and responded to 76 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 September 30, AgMRC staff reported receiving 58 toll-free phone inquiries from 26 different states, that is, Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, Washington, D.C. and Wisconsin.

Three calls were 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](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 Agricultural Cooperatives, Apples: One of the most popular fruits in the world, U.S. Wine Industry and Value Added Producer Grants.

The AgMRC homepage also provides a link to a section about the annual National Value Added Agriculture Conference. The 2012 conference, hosted by Michigan State University Product

Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources, will be held in Traverse City, Michigan, on June 24 - 26. Information is also available about past conferences.

### **Additional Public Relations**

#### *AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter*

The July, August 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 contributed a total of eleven articles.

- Will There be Enough Corn for 2011-2012 Feed and Biofuel Needs?, September, Robert Wisner
- Tight Soybean Supplies and Implications for the Livestock and Biofuels Industries, September, Robert Wisner
- Climate Change Beginning to Impact Global Crop Production, September, Don Hofstrand
- Climate Change Consequences for Agriculture in Iowa, September, Natalia Rogovska and Richard Cruse
- Climate Change in Iowa - Part II, August, Eugene Takle
- The Need for Climate Prediction Information for Agriculture, August, Don Hofstrand
- Trends in U.S. Gasoline and Ethanol Use and Petroleum Production and Imports, August, Robert Wisner
- A Position Statement on Climate Change from the Agriculture Sector, August, Don Hofstrand
- Proposed Biofuels Mandates for 2012 and the Blend Wall, July, Robert Wisner
- Climate Change in Iowa - Part I, July, Eugene Takle
- Ethanol Supply Chain Profitability, July, Don Hofstrand

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

#### *AgMRC Blog*

The following entries were posted during the quarter:

1. Value Added Producer Grant Changes, August 8
2. USDA Awarded Agricultural Marketing System Grants, July 20

#### *AgMRC on Facebook*

AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook. During this quarter, the AgMRC Facebook page had 3 posts, generating 446 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*

In conjunction with the Value-Added Producer Grant program, a press release titled “AgMRC Assists Producers in Applying for USDA Value-added Grants” was distributed this quarter. The release was picked up approximately 26 times by various newspapers and magazines.

*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. Connie Hardy recorded a spot in September titled “Challenging Growing Season Means Challenges Come Harvest.” A total of 16 radio stations picked up the spot.