



Quarterly Report

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

October 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011

Submitted by Iowa State University and the University of Minnesota.

First Quarter Report

October 1, 2011 to December 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).

This quarter, the average number of visits per day to the AgMRC website was 4,171 (↑), up from 3,184 per day last quarter, while the average number of pageviews per day was 15,703 (↑), up from 13,919 per day last quarter.

Within the United States, the most visits came from the states of California (19.7% ↑), Washington (8.2% ↓), New York (6.7% ↓), Texas (5.5%, ↑) and Michigan (new to list). Arkansas visitors viewed more pages per visit (21.3 ↓) than visitors from any other state, followed by North Carolina visitors (12.3 ↑).

As usual, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from the United States (52.6% ↓), followed by (in order): China (12.5% ↑), Canada (3.6% ↑), India (3.3% ↑), and United Kingdom (new to list). On average, Russian and French visitors viewed more pages per visit (7.1 and 5.0 respectively) than visitors from any other country, even viewing more pages than American visitors (4.6 ↓).

Blog

During this quarter, 30,613 visitors (↓) viewed the AgMRC Blog, opening 121,116 pages (↑) and spending an average of 1:38 (↑).

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 (32.1% ↑)
2. Business Development (14.2% ↓)
3. Renewable Energy (10.0% ↓)
4. Markets and Industries (4.4% ↑)
5. AgMRC Blog (3.7% ↓)
6. Directories and State Resources (1.8% ↓)

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 266,138 visits (↑) and 293,883 pageviews; Bus Dev accounted for 117,881 visits (↓) and 129,916 pageviews. Renewable Energy, the newest section on the website, still ranks third in visits, capturing 82,672 visits (↑) and 98,832 pageviews.

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

1. Vegetables (63,851 ↑)
2. Fruits (41,637 visits ↑)
3. Livestock (39,652 visits ↑)

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

1. Operating a Business (37,120 visits ↓)
2. Getting Prepared (24,945 visits ↑)
3. Starting a Business (22,015 visits ↓)

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

1. AgMRC Renewable energy newsletter (20,181 visits ↓)
2. Ethanol (20,655 visits ↑)
3. Biofuels and Biorefining (8,113 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 about value-added seed potatoes, energy sugarbeets and Russian dandelion for the website. He also recommended North Dakota State University, University of Minnesota and Michigan State University faculty who could assist with commodity updates.

During this time, the following twelve profiles were updated: Asparagus, Avocado, Buckwheat, Chufa, Dry Edible Beans, Fiber Goats, Floriculture, Maple Sugar, Meat Goats, Peppers, Raisins and Spelt.

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

Markets & Industries

The following nine topics were reviewed: Animal Rights and Welfare, Attribute Marketing, Branded Food Products, Diet/Health/Obesity, E-Commerce, Exports, Food Profitability, Functional Foods and Trans Fat.

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 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, 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

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 California, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Tennessee 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 by AgMRC as match dollars through staff time and travel dollars.

Date	Event	Location	AgMRC Participant
Oct 19-21	FFA Convention	Indianapolis	Attending: Madeline, Marsha, Ray
Nov 3-5	Extension Annual Conference	Ames, Iowa	Attending: Barry, Dan, Diane, Linda, Madeline, Margaret, Marsha, Ray, Reg

Client Requests

In-house AgMRC staff researched and responded to 132 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 December 31, AgMRC staff reported receiving 80 toll-free phone inquiries from 24 different states, that is, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, Washington, D.C. and Wisconsin.

Two calls were also received from Canada (Ontario and Manitoba). The callers were directed to website resources for information.

Subscriptions to the Renewable Energy Newsletter list now total 2,500 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 Agricultural Cooperatives, Apples: One of the most popular fruits in the world, Christmas Trees, Energy Audits, Food Safety and Free Apps for Agriculture.

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 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 contributed a total of five articles.

- Can the World Feed Nine Billion People by 2050?, November, Don Hofstrand, Iowa State University.
- Arriving at the Ethanol Blend Wall, November, Bob Wisner, Iowa State University.
- Climate Change Beginning to Impact Global Crop Production, November, Don Hofstrand, Iowa State University.
- November Update - Will there be Enough Corn?, November, Bob Wisner, Iowa State University.
- Climate Change Consequences for Agriculture in Iowa, November, Natalia Rogovska and Richard Cruse, Iowa State University.

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

AgMRC Blog

The following entries were posted during the quarter:

1. Government Purchase of Biofuel, December 6
2. Funding To Create Jobs, Reduce Energy Costs for Agricultural Producers Announced, December 15
3. Winter Farmers' Markets, December 22

AgMRC on Facebook

AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook. During this quarter, the AgMRC Facebook page had six posts that reached 288 people.

Press Release

No press releases were distributed this quarter.

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 October titled "Challenging Growing Season Means Challenges Come Harvest." A total of 15 radio stations picked up the spot.

Prepared by Diane Huntrods, AgMRC, Iowa State University, January 2012.