



Quarterly Report

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

April 1, 2013 – June 30, 2013

Submitted by Iowa State University and the University of Minnesota.

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 4,537, up from 4,517 per day last quarter, while the average number of pageviews per day was 20,377, up from 20,066 per day last quarter.

Within the United States, the most visits came from the states of California (20.8% ↑), Washington (8.6% ↓), Michigan (7.2%, ↑), Texas (5.2% ↑) and New York (4.7% ↑). Washington visitors viewed more pages per visit (13.9 ↑) than visitors from any other state, followed by North Carolina visitors (13.6 pages ↓) and California (11.2 pages ↑).

As usual and as expected, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from the United States (49.7% ↑), followed by (in order): China (5.7% ↓), Canada (3.6% ↓), the United Kingdom (UK) (3.7% ↑) and India (3.0% ↑). On average, visitors from Sudan (12.0 pages), Hong Kong (8.9 pages), Uganda (7.7 pages), Czech Republic (7.5 pages) and Denmark (7.3 pages) viewed more pages per visit than did American visitors (5.7 pages ↑).

Blog

During this quarter, 38,205 visitors (↑) viewed the AgMRC Blog, opening 121,468 pages (↑) and spending an average time of 2 minutes and 20 seconds (↓). The two most frequently viewed blog posts were: Market Maker Honored (7.1% ↑) and USDA Contracting Opportunities Conference (4.9% new to list).

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 (34.2% ↑)
2. Business Development (19.1% ↑)
3. Renewable Energy (12.3% ↓)
4. Markets and Industries (5.2% ↑)
5. AgMRC Blog (3.5% ↑)

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 371,970 visits (↑) and 406,643 pageviews (↑); Bus Dev accounted for 207,041 visits (↑) and 219,449 pageviews (↓). Renewable Energy still ranks third in visits, capturing 133,805 visits (↓) and 175,617 pageviews (↓).

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

1. Fruits (71,247 visits ↑)
2. Livestock (61,711 visits ↑)
3. Grains and Oilseeds (55,403 ↑)

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

1. Operating a Business (66,627 visits ↑)
2. Getting Prepared (45,154 visits ↑)
3. Starting a Business (40,417 visits ↑)

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

1. Ethanol (32,417 visits ↓)
2. Biofuels and Biorefining (18,652 visits ↓)
3. AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter (17,591 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, started updates on value-added products.

The following 22 profiles were updated: Aquaculture, Artichokes, Canola, Carrots, Chickpeas, Commodity Beef, Dates, Floriculture, Hazelnuts, Hybrid Striped Bass, Meat Goats, Mustard, Pecans, Pine Nuts, Prunes, Rice, Sorghum, Sweet Corn, Sweet Potatoes, Wine Industry and Yellow Perch.

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

Markets and Industries

The following topic was reviewed: 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).

Nothing was completed in this category.

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 on the website).

Mike Boland, University of Minnesota, began a project to update analysis of the Value Added Producer Grant Program (jobs created, products, etc.). He will update the 2001 to 2005 study to include the 2001 to 2011 time period. A database of recipients was created and analysis has started. Boland received data from USDA through 2011 and worked with the agency to refine the analysis and add new questions to it. Information related to the industry is available for almost 90 percent of each recipient. Interviews are being done to ascertain the stage in business development.

Iowa State University is working with Mike to analyze the Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) past recipients. Staff have been surveying Iowa, Nebraska and Missouri recipients about their activities since their VAPG award. All information will be combined with Mike's analysis for an updated look at the program.

The AgMRC homepage summarizes the last round of Value Added Producer Grant funding and provides a [link to the list of recipients](#).

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 Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin.

Trade Show Promotions

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
April 3-4	Risk Management Education Conference	Denver, CO	Presenting: Madeline and Marsha
May 19-22	National Value-Added Agriculture Conference	Rogers, AK	Presenting: Ray and Craig AgMRC sponsored a break at the conference.

Client Requests

AgMRC staff researched and responded to 127 e-mailed questions pertaining to the Value Added Producer Grants, 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 78 toll-free phone inquiries from 19 different states, that is, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and Wisconsin.

Staff also received two calls from Canada, one call from Ontario and one from Quebec.

Subscriptions to the Renewable Energy Newsletter list now total more than 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 continues to feature timely topics, such as Agritourism, Energy Audits, Food Hubs, 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 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 Aronia Berries: A New Commercial Crop, Cities Developing Urban Agriculture Codes and Register for 2013 National Value Added Ag Conference in Arkansas!

The AgMRC homepage also provides a link to a section about the annual National Value Added Agriculture Conference. The [2013 conference](#), hosted by the University of Arkansas, was held in Rogers, Arkansas, from May 19 – May 21, 2013. Information is also available about other past conferences.

AgMRC Renewable Energy Newsletter

The April, May and June 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, new research and a Web page providing the latest price, profitability and supply/demand figures for corn/ethanol and soybean/biodiesel. This quarter, experts affiliated with Iowa State University contributed a total of six articles.

June 2013

- Corn-Ethanol Supply Chain Profitability, Don Hofstrand, retired ISU Extension ag economist, http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc-renewable-energy-newsletter/?cornethanol_supply_chain_profitability&show=article&articleID=1175&issueID=320 - This article examines the corn-ethanol industry and factors that affect the profitability of the ethanol industry, specifically, supply costs.
- Recent Trends in U.S. Ethanol Production, Profitability and Inventories, Dr. Robert Wisner, retired Iowa State University Professor, http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc-renewable-energy-newsletter/?recent_trends_in_us_ethanol_production_profitability_and_inventories&show=article&articleID=1176&issueID=320 - In this article, we review trends in these aspects of the biofuels industry and their contributions to increased ethanol profitability. A key question for ethanol producers and the industries supplying corn to them as well as for other users of corn is whether the increased profitability will continue through late summer and early fall.

May 2013

- Biofuels Mandates Approach a Market Collision Point, Dr. Robert Wisner, retired Iowa State University Professor, http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc-renewable-energy-newsletter/?biofuels_mandates_approach_a_market_collision_point&show=article&articleID=1121&issueID=295 - In this article, we examine issues related to the biofuels mandates and note some possible longer-term alternatives for resolving those issues.
- The Changing Economics of Corn Ethanol, Don Hofstrand, retired ISU Extension ag economist, http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc-renewable-energy-newsletter/?the_changing_economics_of_corn_ethanol&show=article&articleID=1122&issueID=295 - Changes in the corn-ethanol cost structure, along with the rapid increase in the revenue generated from the sale of distillers dried grains with solubles, have changed the relationship between ethanol sale price and the breakeven corn purchase price for profitable corn-ethanol production. In this article I will discuss these changes and their impact.

April 2013

- Feedstocks Used for U.S. Biodiesel: How Important is Corn Oil?, Dr. Robert Wisner, retired Iowa State University Professor, http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc-renewable-energy-newsletter/?feedstocks_used_for_us_biodiesel_how_important_is_corn_oil&show=article&articleID=1088&issueID=284 - This article examines potential forecasts for U.S. biodiesel. If proposed renewable fuels mandates are filled by biodiesel, will there be enough corn oil to satisfy demand?
- Cost Price Squeeze Emerging for Corn Farmers, Don Hofstrand, retired ISU Extension ag economist, http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc-renewable-energy-newsletter/?cost_price_squeeze_emerging_for_corn_farmers&show=article&articleID=1091&issueID=284 - This article examines the increased crop production costs and its implications for farmers.

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

AgMRC Blog

The following five entries were posted during the quarter:

1. Minnesota Department of Agriculture Announces Grant Recipients, June 26, 2013, http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc_blog/?minnesota_department_of_agriculture_announces_grant_recipients&show=entry&blogID=1005
2. 2013 Locavore Index ranks states in terms of commitment to local foods, May 15, 2013, http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc_blog/?2013_locavore_index_ranks_states_in_terms_of_commitment_to_local_foods&show=entry&blogID=987
3. Don't Miss Your Chance to Provide the Facts Straight from the Farm, May 9, 2013, http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc_blog/?dont_miss_your_chance_to_provide_the_facts_straight_from_the_farm&show=entry&blogID=982
4. Helping Produce Businesses in Many Ways, April 24, 2013, http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc_blog/?helping_produce_businesses_in_many_ways&show=entry&blogID=974
5. USDA Restores Monthly Agricultural Reports, April 11, 2013, http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc_blog/?usda_restores_monthly_agricultural_reports&show=entry&blogID=968

AgMRC on Facebook

AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook. During this quarter, the AgMRC Facebook page had the following four posts, which were seen by 441 people:

1. USDA awards 54 recipients in 21 states with RBEG awards.
2. Biofuels mandates and ethanol economics highlighted in the May issue of the Renewable Energy newsletter.
3. The city-grown local food movement is gaining momentum.
4. The April issue of the Renewable Energy newsletter is now online.

Press Release

Two press releases were distributed this quarter:

1. Guide for Game-Bird Preserves Now Online, April 18, 2013, http://www.agmrc.org/media_room/press-releases/?guide_for_gamebird_preserves_now_online&show=news&newsID=16411 - A new publication, the Game-Bird Preserve Business Development Guide, is available for Iowa landowners interested in establishing a profitable hunting preserve.
2. Registration is Open for the 2013 National Value Added Agriculture Conference, April 9, 2013, http://www.agmrc.org/media_room/press-releases/?registration_is_open_for_the_2013_national_value_added_agriculture_conference&show=news&newsID=16351 - Registration is open for the 2013 National Value-added Agriculture Conference in Rogers, Arkansas. Agriculture service providers are encouraged to attend sessions on rural entrepreneurship, adding value to agricultural products, agritourism and rural economic development.

Radio Spots

Ron Rainey, Arkansas, completed a radio spot directing value-added agriculture service providers to AgMRC to find information and to the registration links for the 2013 National Value-added Agriculture Conference in Rogers, Arkansas. The spot was picked up by 24 stations, many with multiple affiliates.

Interviews

Inquiries about renewable energy, from the people and organizations below, were received and responded to:

- Caseus Energy, Encino, California
- Norfolk Southern, Norfolk, Virginia
- Renewable Fuels Association, Washington, D.C.
- Growth Energy, Washington, D.C.
- Wallaces Farmer, Urbandale, Iowa
- WOI Radio, Ames, Iowa

Articles

AgMRC was mentioned in the following articles:

- KFYI, Arizona News

AgMRC Curriculum

Two graduate students at Iowa State University developed [28 lessons](#) to educate high school students about value-added agriculture and the information shared on the AgMRC website. The majority of the lessons introduced students to the major topics covered in the Commodities and Products section of the website, including Agritourism, Aquaculture, Energy and Livestock. Another two lessons introduced students to the Business Development section of the site and one lesson provided a [website orientation](#). [Teacher guides](#) were prepared for each of the lessons. Additional lessons will be added as they are developed.

Prepared by Diane Huntrods, AgMRC, Iowa State University, July 2013.