



Quarterly Report

to USDA Rural Development

**Agricultural Marketing Resource Center
(AgMRC)**

July 1, 2013 – September 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 4,445, down from 4,537 per day last quarter, while the average number of pageviews per day was 19,780, down from 20,377 per day last quarter.

Within the United States, the most visits came from the states of California (20.8% ↑), Michigan (7.2%, ↑), Washington (8.6% ↓), Texas (5.2% ↑) and New York (4.7% ↑). Washington visitors viewed more pages per visit (23.4 ↑) than visitors from any other state, followed by North Carolina visitors (16.8 pages ↑) and California (9.6 pages ↓).

As usual and as expected, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from the United States (45.1% ↓), followed by (in order): China (5.9% ↑), France (3.7%, new to list), India (3.4% ↑), Canada (3.1% ↓) and the United Kingdom (UK) (3.1% ↓). On average, visitors from Switzerland (38.4 pages), Kenya (9.8 pages) and South Korea (8.2 pages) viewed more pages per visit than did American visitors (5.6 pages ↓).

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 (34.8% ↑)
2. Business Development (20.1% ↑)
3. Renewable Energy (11.8% ↓)
4. Markets and Industries (5.3% ↑)
5. AgMRC Blog (4.2% ↑)

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 385,915 visits (↑) and 419,383 pageviews (↑); Bus Dev accounted for 222,862 visits (↑) and 235,939 pageviews (↑). Renewable Energy still ranks third in visits, capturing 130,926 visits (↓) and 177,656 pageviews (↑).

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

1. Fruits (78,452 visits ↑)
2. Livestock (63,912 visits ↑)
3. Grains and Oilseeds (56,306 ↑)

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

1. Operating a Business (72,601 visits ↑)
2. Getting Prepared (48,229 visits ↑)
3. Starting a Business (42,383 visits ↑)

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

1. Ethanol (31,094 visits ↓)
2. Biofuels and Biorefining (17,523 visits ↓)
3. AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter (15,980 visits ↓)

During this quarter, the AgMRC Blog had 46,664 visitors (↑), who opened 152,454 pages (↑) and spent an average time of 2 minutes and 24 seconds (↓). The three most frequently viewed blog posts were: Market Maker Honored (708 visitors ↓), Hottest Menu Trends (440 visitors, new to list) and Kentucky Passes New Agritourism Law (324 visitors, new to list).

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, continued updates on value-added products.

The following three new profiles or articles were prepared this quarter:

- Aquaponics
- Australian Redclaw Crayfish
- Barramundi, or Asian Sea Bass
- The Safety of Imported Spices

The following 17 profiles were updated: almonds, apricots, asparagus, canola, cellulosic ethanol, cherries, cranberries, crawfish, dates, fiber goats, flax, peaches, peanuts, rice, sorghum, spinach and sunflowers

Markets and Industries

The following topic was reviewed: Farmers' Markets

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 conducted to determine the stage in business development. The final report was reviewed and submitted on November 1.

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 VAPG recipients and business development members in Minnesota, Iowa, and North Dakota.

Client Requests

AgMRC staff researched and responded to 104 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. The questions requested information about such topics as asparagus, canola meal, pecans, quinoa and sunflower seeds.

As of September 30, AgMRC staff reported receiving 108 toll-free phone inquiries from 14 different states, that is, Arkansas, California, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

Staff also received two calls from Canada.

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 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 Celebrating the Blueberry Harvest, Drought 2013, Food Hubs, Number of Farmers' Markets Continues to Grow, the U.S. Wine Industry and Will U.S. Aquaculture Production Exceed U.S. Beef Production?

The AgMRC homepage also provides a link to a section about the annual National Value Added Agriculture Conference. A Save the Date note was posted about the 2014 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 Renewable Energy and Climate Change newsletter is written by Don Hofstrand and Robert Wisner, retired professors at Iowa State University. During this quarter, their emeritus contracts with the university were negotiated and signed. The Renewable Energy and Climate Change newsletter will resume in late November/December. At that time, the newsletter will again be distributed via e-mail and made available online at:

http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc_renewable_energy_newsletter.cfm

AgMRC Blog

The following eight entries were posted during the quarter:

1. [Funding for USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants Announced](#), September 25, 2013.
2. [NCR-SARE Announces 2014 Farmer Rancher Grant Call for Proposals](#), September 9, 2013.
3. [Will Food Safety Rules Slow Local Food Movement?](#), August 30, 2013.
4. [USDA Seeking Applicants to Assist Rural Microentrepreneurs](#), August 19, 2013.
5. [Have a Food Business in Minneapolis?](#), August 14, 2013.
6. [Wisconsin Pasture-based Dairy Report Available](#), July 31, 2013.

7. [Apple Crop Rebounds After 2012](#), July 25, 2013.
8. [USDA Designates New Biobased Product Categories](#), July 15, 2013.

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 six posts, which were seen by more than 530 people:

1. Farm Fresh New releases new graphic on local nutrition, consumption, food miles, etc
2. Impacts of Food Safety Modernization Act set to go into effect next year
3. Find a Farmers' Market near you as part of National Farmers' Market Week
4. Crop prices are increasing, based on the latest crop report
5. USDA is asking for help in communicating why a Farm Bill is important.
6. Cover crops as a tool to improve soil health and fertility

Press Release

No press releases were distributed this quarter.

Radio Spots

Our national radio broadcasting contract with the National Farm Broadcasters Association was renewed. While that paperwork was handled, one radio spot was created and distributed. Linda Naeve taped a radio spot, [Sampling Enhances Farmers Market Experience for Consumers, Farmers](#), in September.

Interviews

The following interviews were conducted this quarter with the people and organizations below:

- AgMRC was referenced in an 8-27-13 radio interview with the host of Living the Country Life on game bird preserves.
- Steve Everly of the Kansas City Star interviewed Robert Wisner on 8-13-13 on RINS and the AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter.
- Citi Research interviewed Don Hofstrand on 7-24-13 on the ethanol profitability model.
- Cargill, Inc. interviewed Robert Wisner on 7-5-13 on trading DDGs.

Articles

AgMRC was mentioned in the following articles:

- A 10-31-13 story in Iowa Farmer Today on gamebird preserve business development.
- A 9-20-13 story on Market to Market on Iowa Public Television about aquaponics.

AgMRC Curriculum

A new graduate student in the Department of Agricultural Education and Studies at Iowa State University was hired for the semester to continue developing new curriculum files for the AgMRC Curriculum section. Twenty-five additional lessons/worksheets were added during the quarter. Outreach focused on the curriculum section has been planned, including individual contacts at the National FFA Organization, a booth at the national conference for vocational agriculture instructors and new linkages on websites specific to FFA curriculum for instructors.

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