As a condition of its USDA Rural Development grant, the cooperating universities comprising AgMRC were tasked to prepare four reports a year and submit them to USDA. These reports summarize the activities completed during each quarter, including website development and functions, value-added business and economic analysis tools and outreach activities (workshops, seminars, newsletters and WebMail inquiries).
Agricultural Marketing Resource Center

Report – September 2020 – March 2021

Iowa State University

AgMRC Website Statistics
This period, the total number of page views was 577,296 with an average of 2,107 per day.

The Commodities and Products section attracts the most visits, at 459,166 this period total. Within Commodities and Products, Fruits is the top section at 127,449 visits. Vegetables follows at 95,361 visits. Grains and Oilseeds has the next highest visits at 60,666.

Within the website, the top three topics visited during this quarter were:

1. Macadamia Nuts – 15,061 pageviews
2. Apples – 14,676 pageviews
3. Industrial Hemp – 13,542 pageviews

The mission of AgMRC is to continue to provide independent producers and processors with critical information needed to build successful value-added agricultural enterprises through the www.agmrc.org electronic resource information website.

AgMRC continues to serve a national value-added agriculture audience, with nearly 3,000 unique visits per day.
### Major Content Sections

The major content sections of the AgMRC website visits:

1. Commodities and Products – 459,166 pageviews
2. Renewable Energy – 32,074 pageviews
4. Directories and State Resources – 4,589 pageviews

Within the Commodities and Products section, the top three topics visited during this period were:

1. Fruits – 127,449 pageviews
2. Vegetables – 95,361 pageviews
3. Grains and oilseeds – 60,666 pageviews

Within the Renewable Energy Section, the top three topics visited during this period were:

1. Renewable Energy and Climate Change Report – 21,297 pageviews
2. Ethanol – 2,543 pageviews
3. Feedstocks (biofuels)- 1,962 pageviews

Within the Business Development Section, the top three topics visited during this period were:

1. Value Added Agriculture – 10,154 pageviews
2. Business and Economic Concepts and Principles – 7,211 pageviews
3. Business Workbench – 2,607 pageviews

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2020</th>
<th>Pageviews</th>
<th>Page Views Per Day</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>78,032</td>
<td>2,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>76,533</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>56,153</td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>57,092</td>
<td>1,842</td>
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<td>2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>61,933</td>
<td>1,998</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>65,338</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>74,621</td>
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### AgMRC Website Updates:

#### Profiles and Pages updated this period (28):

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</thead>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td><a href="https://www.agmrc.org/commodities-products/vegetables">https://www.agmrc.org/commodities-products/vegetables</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commodities and products profiles are updated based on client inquiries to AgMRC Match participants and AgMRC office staff. This period we continued our streamlining of commodity pages on our website and worked intently at removing pages behind the scenes from the backend of our website that are no longer relevant and linked. The new revamp and reorganization of our Business Development section was published.

**Email**
AgMRC staff researched and responded to 531 e-mailed questions pertaining to wine, wheat, pumpkins, meat rabbits and broccoli among others.

**Phone Calls**
Between July 1 2020 and March 31 2021, AgMRC staff reported having 74 toll-free phone inquiries from 28 different states.

**Facebook**
AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook which has 3,744 followers. During this period the AgMRC Facebook page had 41 posts, which were seen by more than 2,721 people.

**YouTube**
The AgMRC YouTube channel added 5 new videos during this period and garnered a total of 2,302 views. The channel gained 25 new subscribers and now has 84.
Iowa State University

Modular Produce Processing Cart
In July of 2020 the project team conducted partner outreach to various organizations and businesses across Iowa, including distributors and aggregators, farm and food businesses, producers, and nonprofits. In August and September, a total of six site visits and interviews were held to determine potential need and uses of a modular cart, additionally doing a brief site assessment to understand how partners might implement the cart. In fall of 2020, we partnered with a Mechanical Engineering Capstone course with Iowa State University College of Engineering who worked closely with our team to assist in the design of the processing cart. From this partnership, a preliminary conceptual design of the cart was completed, including pricing of materials. Also during this time, a financial spreadsheet was developed that was distributed to our partners. This spreadsheet is being used to understand what specific single or multi-product items might be processed using the cart as well as markup and sales estimates to determine feasibility.

In January of 2021, three focus were held with both internal project partners as well as external businesses, producers, and organizations with a total of 13 participants. This focus group provided insight for the current design of the cart, food safety considerations, and feasibility. The financial spreadsheet was also distributed to focus group participants. The project team is partnering with another capstone course with Iowa State University College of Engineering in the Industrial Technology and Agricultural Systems Technology programs. Our initial student meeting took place in March of 2021 in which the student team is reviewing and enhancing the preliminary cart design. This partnership will continue through this year.

Local Food Leader and Community Food Systems Certifications
Due to Covid-19, the Local Food Leader and Community Food Systems certifications transitioned to an online only format from the hybrid in-person/online format. This transition included updates to the online courses and in-person curriculum during May-August, 2020. In September, 2020 the Local Food Leader and Community Food Systems certifications were launched virtually and offered to individuals nationally. The Local Food Leader cohort finished the fall 2020 certification in March, 2021 and the Community Food Systems fall 2020 cohort will complete the certification by May, 2021. A train the trainer for the Local Food Leader curriculum was offered virtually in February, 2021 to a cohort of new and existing trainers. Six new trainers and twelve existing trainers attended. A spring 2021 virtual Local Food Leader certification cohort began in March, 2021. An evaluation report of the 2019 Local
Food Leader and Community Food Systems certifications was developed in the summer of 2020 and can be found here.

**Sustaining the Iowa Farm to Summer Campaign: Institutionalizing Sponsor Participation and Local Producer Support**

Iowa Farm to Summer Campaign partners (ISU FFED, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and FoodCorps Iowa) have been meeting bi-weekly to discuss both the roll-out of the 2021 Iowa Farm to Summer Campaign, "Kick It With Carrots!" and processes for hosting the campaign in perpetuity at the Department of Education. An evaluation of the 2020 Iowa Farm to Summer Campaign was used to inform the 2021 campaign. This year and since 2018, we've seen an increase in applications from new organizations interested in participating and a large number of organizations applying to participate again. The 2021 campaign awardees will be determined at the end of April and participate from May through July 2021. As we plan to transition the program to be hosted by the Iowa Department of Education in 2022, partners are discussing an annual budget, fundraising, and continued partnership for promotion and evaluation. These discussions will inform the output, "Farm to Summer Toolkit: Tools and Best Practices for Program Delivery," to be posted on the AgMRG website this winter. This resource will cover the timeline, themed promotional materials, partnership opportunities, financing, and standard operating procedures we recommended from hosting five years of farm to summer campaigns for a national audience.

**Sustaining Strategy and Partnerships: Iowa Farm to School & Early Care Coalition**

Since June 2020 (the beginning of this grant timeline) the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition has come together consistently for five bi-monthly, virtual meetings. Three co-chairs facilitate coalition member communication and meeting logistics, and five strategy team coordinators facilitate meetings for three strategy teams (Network Development, Local Procurement, and Food Education). An output of this grant, the first Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition Annual Report was completed in October 2020. This project resulted from 20+ statewide organizations partnering to track and share consistent metrics and agreed upon recommendations and future plans. With the support of a communications intern, the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition website now exists. This website serves as a one-stop resource hub for the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Network and is continually evolving alongside statewide projects and partnerships. In January 2021, we hosted the first Annual Coalition Member Survey to gauge perspective and feedback around members' first full year of coalition involvement. The results of this survey were used to define our 2021 strategic planning processes, and we expect this survey and evaluation to take place annually. The systems and templates behind both the Annual Report and Annual Survey will be included in the output, "Best Practices for
Farm to School and Early Care Coalition Development," to be posted on the AgMRG website this winter.

**Extension's Role in Supporting Resilient Community Food Systems**

A total of 46 interviews have been completed and 2 focus groups. Initial anecdotes have been interest in outreach to marginalized farm and food businesses; creating strategic plans for responding to disasters in the future and identifying clear checklists for materials, partnerships, equipment, storage, etc., to have on hand or to be able to rely on (partners). This spring and summer, the last focus groups will be conducted and a survey will be available for all communities. Findings will be turned into snapshots for all communities and additional analysis publications will be on AgMrc by fall 2021. Details below.

- Arkansas: focus groups (6 participants- February); 10 interviews conducted; still have 2-3 to schedule
- Iowa: focus groups (6 participants- March à will be hosting a focus group with Burmese population in April TBD); 19 interviews conducted- 1 more scheduled
- Virgin Islands: focus groups scheduled in May; 2 interviews conducted; will do most interviews on site due to technology limitations
- Texas: focus groups scheduled in June; 13 interviews conducted- 1 more scheduled and will continue snowball
- Alaska; focus groups scheduled in July; 5 interviews conducted- 2 more scheduled and will continue snowball

**AgMRC Subcontracts**

**Progress Report on AgMRC MarketMaker Collaboration**

**Task 1 Food Searcher Program - Enhancements and Expansions**

A new version of the MarketMaker Registration was released that features value added products. The MarketMaker platform on the AgMRC website now supports 3,285 products in the categories of Transportation & Shipping, Community & Tourist Activities, Ag Production Inputs, Services - Food & Agricultural, Seafood & Aquaculture, Livestock & Animal Products, Value-Added Non-Food Products, and Supplies & Equipment.

A new IT baseline was developed for the 26 existing plugins. The next step is to add the data filters. The basic data model and taxonomy has been revamped and expanded. The new data model allows for supporting the deliverables in Tasks 1 and 2. This will enable the development of additional plugins for the AgMRC website with greater search options and flexibility.
During the 7-month period covering this report, AgMRC users performed 105,806 product searches, averaging 3,527 searches per week. The top 5 commodity searches were:

1. Apples 438 searches per week
2. Potatoes 348 searches per week
3. Strawberries 309 searches per week
4. Lettuce 285 searches per week
5. Watermelon 244 searches per week

Outreach: Outreach is challenging with Covid restrictions, but we did participate in three virtual conferences during this time period, the National Agricultural Marketing Summit, Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Conference and the Illinois Specialty Growers Conference.

**Task 2 Interactive Mapping Tools for Researchers, Classroom Instruction, and Technical Assistant Providers**

The new data source and model for mapping was developed that includes a geospatially aware search engine (Elastic Search) that enables detailed searches using a combination of text/fuzzy search, geospatial search, temporal search and attribute searches. The MapBoxGL license was tested and acquired. The software is necessary to build rich, interactive maps in Javascript.

Initial demonstrations of design concepts were created. See attached PowerPoint images.

We are working with Courtney Long (Iowa State University) on developing mutually beneficial agricultural data and mapping features for AgMRC that would integrate additional data sets, e.g., USDA ERS and food access information as overlays, for analyzing community food systems. We also are developing synergies in outreach and engagement efforts with Courtney Long and her AgMRC project. For example, Courtney and her AgMRC work were featured in the Annual MarketMaker Partners meeting in October 2020.

**Task 3 AgMRC/ MarketMaker Data and Content Integration**

We have developed a new data model with over 3,000 products. Each product has an optional field for an AgMRC description and link. This will be further populated and then become apparent in a mouse hover or on a product details page on the AgMRC website.

Detailed descriptions of product attributes were developed in 20 categories. These descriptions will greatly enhance the definitions and details for food businesses and products available to AgMRC users.
In the area of adding a "learn more" feature to MarketMaker, researched and defined 20 various categories pertaining to certifications, attributes, products and production. The definitions are intended to be educational to all parties; consumers interested in making purchases of products and farmers/ranchers with a desire to change/grow their businesses in these areas. With this feature, MarketMaker can be a one-stop resource center; unlike anything found on-line to date.

- Verified Attributes: 62 definitions (e.g. Traditional Organic)
- Methods of Sale: 31 definitions (e.g. U-pick)
- Product Forms: 41 definitions (e.g. Whole Grains)
- Certifications: 50 definitions (e.g. Regenerative Organic Certified)
- Meat, Fish and Poultry: 237 definitions
- Nuts: 11 definitions
- Beef & Dairy: 41 definitions
- Cattle Production: 112 definitions
- Sheep Production: 165 definitions
- Swine Production: 57 definitions
- Forage Production: 38 definitions
- Transportation Production: 33 definitions
- Goat Production: 130 definitions
- Equine Production: 369 definitions

Two AgMRC articles were included in MarketMaker newsletters,
Technology Tip - July 2020
Autumn Agritourism - November 2020

**Task 4 E-Commerce Support to Farmers**

The Food Searcher MarketMaker platform was developed to embed e-commerce capability in user profiles.

In collaboration with an e-commerce partner, Food4All, to and focus group sessions and surveys were conducted help inform and prioritize the business-to-business needs and interests related to transactional capability. As a part of this work, Kami Semick with Food4All presented her findings, working with the LSU MarketMaker Team, at both the October 2020 National MarketMaker Meeting (virtual) and the December MarketMaker Partner Meeting.

At the time of this report the new platform just went live with the new embed e-commerce capability. In the coming months we will work to help farmers and other food business build out their e-commerce profiles.
University of Vermont

Work Plan and Deliverables

The overall goal is to improve the viability of farms and ranches through research-based tools, resources, and technical assistance that promote best practices for agritourism and value-added enterprises. The project builds on past deliverables funded by AgMRC as well as new research, data analysis, and resources to provide support for producers and agricultural service providers in the Northeast and throughout the U.S. Deliverables include:

1) Publications for producers, agricultural service providers, and researchers. During the past nine months we analyzed and summarized data from a national survey of farms and ranches open to visitors for experiences and direct sales. We created the following publications for a variety of audiences including producers, agricultural service providers, policymakers, and researchers:

   a. Reports and summaries developed from national survey data. The following items were published on the project website, linked here: [https://www.uvm.edu/vtrc/agritourism-survey](https://www.uvm.edu/vtrc/agritourism-survey)

      i. Three full data analysis reports, including national quantitative and qualitative data, and Vermont quantitative data.
         1. US Survey Report
         2. US Interview Report
         3. Vermont Survey Report

      ii. Eleven summary reports were developed: seven using the data from the national survey, and four using data from Vermont respondents. The purpose of these summaries is to provide overviews of the important findings from the study that are accessible to lay audiences.
         1. US Overview
         2. US Operator Motivations
         3. US Financial Summary
         4. US Challenges
         5. US Supports Needed
         6. US Regional Summary
         7. US and VT Comparison Summary
         8. VT Overview
         9. VT Operator Motivations
        10. VT Challenges
        11. VT Supports Needed
b. Two published articles, including:


c. Three publications in progress:
   i. Challenges in Agritourism and Access to resources: A US regional analysis. Lead Author: Weiwei Wang; Co-authors: Lisa Chase, David Conner, Dee Singh-Knights.

   ii. Factors affecting profitability of agritourism in the US. Lead Author: David Conner; Co-authors: Lisa Chase, Lori Dickes, David Lamie, Dee Singh-Knights, Lindsay Quella, Chadley Hollas, Weiwei Wang.

   iii. Farm Attributes and Perceived Success in Agritourism: Results from a National Study. Lead Author: Lindsay Quella; Co-authors: Lisa Chase, David Conner, Travis Reynolds.


2) **Trainings to share best practices, decision aids, tools, and resources** with a focus on marketing, value added enterprises, agritourism and direct sales. During the past nine months, we were not able to host in-person trainings so we organized a webinar series for producers, agricultural service providers, and others working with agritourism and value-added enterprises. Below is a list of topics and numbers of participants for each webinar. Note that many participants joined multiple webinars. Before the final report on the AgMRC grant, we will summarize the participant data from this webinar series and other events online and in-person to account for unique participants and provide information on whether participants are producers, agricultural service providers, or have other affiliations. Recordings and resources are posted online at [https://www.agritourismworkshop.com/gatherings.html](https://www.agritourismworkshop.com/gatherings.html)


   b. October 8, 2020, Regenerative Tourism & Agriculture, 308 registered, 171 attended.

   c. November 19, 2020, Indigenous and Tribal Perspectives on Agritourism, 386 people registered, 193 attended.
3) Presentations at workshops and conferences to share new and existing tools. During the past nine months, we presented research, tools and resources for producers and agricultural service providers at workshops and conferences. Because of COVID-19 travel restrictions, all presentations during the past nine months were virtual.


h. Chase, L.C., T.C Lane, and L. Redhouse. Building Tourism into Tribal Agricultural Programs. Invited presentation, Webinar hosted by the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA), October 29, 2020. 150 registered, 76 participants.

4) **One-on-one technical assistance** to support producers with agritourism, direct sales, and value-added enterprises. During the past nine months, we were limited to virtual technical assistance due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Through videoconferences (Zoom, FaceTime and Teams), phone calls, texts, and emails, we provided one-on-one consultations to 43 different farms, many having multiple exchanges. These farms were located primarily in Vermont and nearby states in the Northeast. We are looking forward to returning to in-person farm visits as COVID-19 travel restrictions ease in the coming months.

**University of Arkansas**

The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture (UADA) initiated this project in the fall of 2020 with preliminary discussions with potential collaborators on the project. Throughout the first quarter UADA engaged faculty across the UA system as well as collaborated with University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and Arkansas State University to explore offering enhanced technical assistance with valued added areas. Throughout the first quarter, efforts focused on identifying collaborating faculty and programs to start planning resources development and outreach efforts. Due to COVID-19, no face-to-face meetings were held and the resource development process has been hampered. However, discussions are on-going to initiate activities in late spring of 2021.

In January, a position was posted to hire a communication’s program associate within the UADA’s Southern Risk Management Education Center. This position will drive the development of a website and social media campaign to drive farmer and consumer engagement in local/regional food systems and value-added efforts. A person was selected for hire with a start date of April 1. The program associate’s initial program will seek to launch a promotional campaign that celebrates the local brand, Arkansas Grown and connecting farmers and ranchers to the numerous ways to engage and support these entrepreneurs. The website development and promotional campaign concept begin discussions with a potential online influences and Farmers Market Manager, Me and McGee Market, Me and McGee Market | Arkansas Farmers Market | Farmers Market AK. This market is one of the most successful markets operating in Arkansas with a regional impact from surrounding states and it manager has a large social media following. The initial plans are to leverage a collection of activities to raise awareness of farmers promoting the local brand—direct marketing farmers and farmers markets—as well as promoting opportunities for farmers and ranchers to understand and engage in value added processing ventures. The effort will leverage the MarketMaker, MarketMakerWebsite (foodmarketmaker.com), platform and value-added resources available throughout the state and region.
Since the onset of COVID-19, food supply chains across the world have experienced major disruptions; as such, supply and demand imbalances have created fear and uncertainty. The supply chain series was developed to educate consumers, distributors, producers and suppliers on what happened, the current state of play and what the near and long-term future entails for various commodities.

Part I focused on how supply chains work, what occurred within meat, produce and other markets as well as how transportation and logistics networks were impacted.

In addition to the 15-part series, industry panels were convened thereby providing unique insight into how the COVID-19 supply chain shocks impacted their operations (Part II).

Part II of the series focused on how rural communities across the nation improve their resilience to supply chain shocks. Experts from producers, processors, distributors and logisticians were brought together to provide to help farmers and ranchers make the best decisions for their respective businesses.

Below is the listing of videos which have been developed and the view numbers on the University of Minnesota Crookston You Tube channels.

This series of short 2-3 minute videos featured the following:

- Videos 1 -3 --Fundamentals of supply chains (1153 views)
- Video 4 --Meat supply chains (372 views)
- Video 4b-Meat supply chains in Spanish (2 views)
- Video 5 --Eggs supply chains (24 views)
- Video 6 --Corn and Ethanol supply chains (160 views)
- Video 7 -- Dairy supply chains (316 views)
- Video 7b—Dairy supply chains in Spanish (2 views)
Throughout the academic year, members of the National Association of College Agricultural Teachers of America (NACTA) and the approximately 370 members of the American Association for Agricultural Education received an email from Chancellor Holz-Clause with the link to the supply chain videos. As the academic year starts back up again, this group will receive the information again, as well as details on updated videos.

Profiles of past recipients of the Value Added Agriculture Program (VAPG)

For many entrepreneurs and farmers across the country, the Value Added Producer Grant program has been a critical source for sustaining and growing their businesses. The profiles of past recipients of the Value Added Agriculture Program (VAPG) were interviewed to determine how they used their grant and the impact it has had on their business. Several themes emerged about the VAPG program being an important tool for them.

- It was key to have support and an open phone line with staff at USDA Rural Development.
• The flexibility of the program, especially during the pandemic, made all the difference.

Detailed interviews of the recipients are on the AgMRC website. In summary those interviewed included:

DX Beef LLC, a business whose mission is “beef that is local, nutritious, and improving our communities” was founded by Kelsey Ducheneaux Scott, her father Zach, and her husband Monte. The family raises grass-fed beef in the heart of the Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservation in South Dakota, and wants to help consumers reconnect with their food source.

Christopher Patton, founder and president of the Midwest Elderberry Cooperative based in Minneapolis, Minnesota started up his effort in 2012. While he will say he wasn’t the first, Patton definitely is one of the few who have seen the market potential for elderberry farming in the United States and has doggedly worked to get that market off the ground.

Craig and Sarah Neuzil are what you could call “homecomers”. After more than 20 years traveling the world as a military family, they settled back into northeast Iowa where they both grew up on farms. Their business, Pivo Brewery and Blepta Studios, is a brewery, tap room, art studio and event center in Calmar, Iowa, with a population of just around 1000 people.

Gary and Amy Blase each grew up on dairy farms and started their married life with a dairy of their own in 1972. Their son, Chad Blase, and his partner Laura Klock, came on board a few years ago to help the family farm adapt to the changing dairy industry. Chad and Laura founded Farm Life Creamery in Ethan, South Dakota, and grew their artisan cheese and milk bottling business through the ups and downs of the pandemic.

Future work will include an aggressive campaign in social media. Starting in May (for May Beef Month) and throughout the next time period, social media posts on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and other social media will be in force.

Additionally the subcontract with North Dakota State University will be started and they will be providing a series of seminars which will be broadcast on specialty grains and ancient grains, outlining the opportunities for producers to consider these markets.