

Agricultural Marketing Resource Center

Quarterly Report – October – December 2017

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).



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Iowa State University

AgMRC Website Statistics

This quarter, the total number of page views 267,410 with an average of 2,907 per day.

The Commodities and Products section attracts the most visits, at 165,793 this quarter total. Within Commodities and Products, Fruits is the top section at 47,506 visits. Vegetables follows at 37,785 visits. Livestock has the next highest visits at 21,454.

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

1. Potatoes – 4,926 pageviews
2. Industrial Hemp – 4,414 pageviews
3. Pumpkins – 4,260 pageviews

AgMRC



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 more than 2,000 unique visits per day.



2017	Pageviews	Page Views Per Day
January	114,077	3,680
February	106,908	3,818
March	115,510	3,726
April	105,978	3,533
May	102,103	3,294
June	76,320	2,544
July	74,842	2,414
August	78,988	2,548
September	90,223	3,007
October	101,913	3,288
November	98,121	3,271
December	67,376	2,173

2017 Analysis
1,132,359 total pageviews
3,108 average page views per day

Major Content Sections

The major content sections of the AgMRC website visits:

1. Commodities and Products – 165,793 pageviews
2. Business Development – 43,585 pageviews
3. Renewable Energy – 28,805 pageviews
4. Markets and Industries – 6,587 pageviews
5. Directories and State Resources – 2,177 pageviews

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

1. Fruits – 47,506 pageviews
2. Vegetables – 37,785 pageviews
3. Livestock – 21,454 pageviews

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

1. Getting Prepared – 16,510 pageviews
2. Starting a Business -10,829 pageviews
3. Operating a Business – 10,807 pageviews

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

1. Ethanol – 8,503 pageviews
2. Renewable Energy – 5,143 pageviews
3. Renewable Energy and Climate Change Report – 4,268 pageviews



AgMRC Website Updates:

Profiles updated this quarter (41):

Amaranth, Cabbage, Camelina, Cauliflower, Clay Target Shooting Facilities, Chickpeas, Dairy Sheep, Direct Marketing Lamb, Eggs, Equine Agritourism, Fiber, Goats for Fiber, International Lamb, Meadowfoam, Medicinal Herbs, Melons, Mustard, Natural Beef, Onions, Organic Beef, Organic Corn, Organic Poultry, Organic Soy, Pastured Poultry, Pennycress, Peppers, Plums, Popcorn, Proso Millet, Pumpkins, Quinoa, Rapeseed, Rice, Rye, Safflower, Sesame, Sugarbeets, Sunflowers, Sweet Potatoes, Triticale and Wine Tours.

Business development files updated this quarter (3):

Barriers to Entry and Exit, Breakeven Selling Price & Breakeven Volume and Elasticity of Demand.

AgMRC Accessibility

AgMRC is getting closer to completing the Accessibility Project to make AgMRC compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. These updates to the content and framework of our website will ensure that users who use devices to interpret web-content, such as screen readers, will be able to get value added agriculture information they are seeking. AgMRC has a little over 100 pages that need slight updates to make them accessible.

Commodity Pricing Chart

The commodity pricing fruits and vegetables market report went live in October 2017. Information from the USDA National Retail Reports was used for a newly designed commodity pricing chart that is visually appealing and user friendly. Users will be able to filter the fruit and vegetable data date range, region, commodity, variety, organic status and unit.

Email

AgMRC staff researched and responded to 33 e-mailed questions pertaining to aronia berries, hay pellets, industrial hemp, and total wine production in the U.S.

Phone Calls

As of December, AgMRC staff reported having 17 toll-free phone inquiries from 8 different states.

Facebook

AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook. During this quarter, the AgMRC Facebook page had 19 posts, which were seen by more than 4,995 people.

Radio Spots

Two radio spots were created during this quarter entitled, "Funds Available to Help Promote Value Added Agriculture" and "Census of Agriculture Data is Vital to the Future of American Ag." These radio spot were utilized by 32 stations with multiple affiliates in multiple states.



Blog

During this quarter, five blog articles were posted to the website. Blog entries entitled “Census of Agriculture Helps Promote all Types of Agriculture,” “AgMRC’s YouTube Channel Now Features VAPG Recipient Videos,” “AgMRC Resources for Your Value Added Enterprise,” “National Value Added Agriculture Conference Will Feature Current Issues in Value Added Agriculture, Food Security, and Rural Development,” and “VAPG Program Webinar Will Help Producers Apply for USDA Funds.”

National Value Added Agriculture Conference

The 19th Annual National Value Added Agriculture Conference was held in Little Rock, Arkansas, November 14th-16th, 2017. The hosts of this year’s conference is the University Of Arkansas System Division Of Agriculture. AgMRC co-sponsored the event and had staff members Ray Hansen and Robert Mortensen attend. Of particular interest was the opportunity to talk about the Focus on Feasibility workshops to generate some interest for the 2018 workshops. Interest was gained from Oregon, Minnesota and the southeast.

AgMRC Subcontracts

Global Food and Agriculture Network

Build Exportable Maps and Reports- Develop a series of maps and customizable marketing studies that provide Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) applicants with market intelligence that can easily be incorporated into feasibility studies and business plans that support the VAPG application process.

Early stage planning meeting with IT team.

Integrate Educational Content from AgMRC site into MarketMaker Platform- Develop additional MarketMaker search tools targeting the AgMRC site educational content, building on the progress made in the first round of funding,

Began second phase of content integration between AgMRC site and MarketMaker platform. Earlier efforts involved building capacity to share MarketMaker data with the AgMRC site. MarketMaker team redesigned homepages for all the MarketMaker sites to feature content from the AgMRC site .



Content is to be educational in nature and drives traffic to AgMRC with a link to view entire article. Content will change periodically to reflect current issues or seasonal topics.

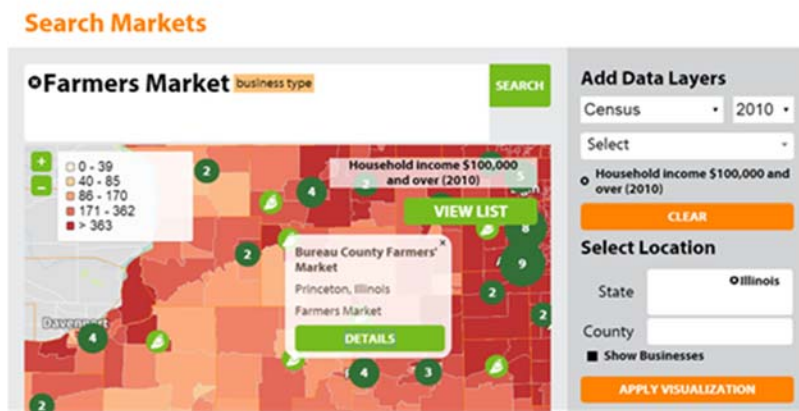
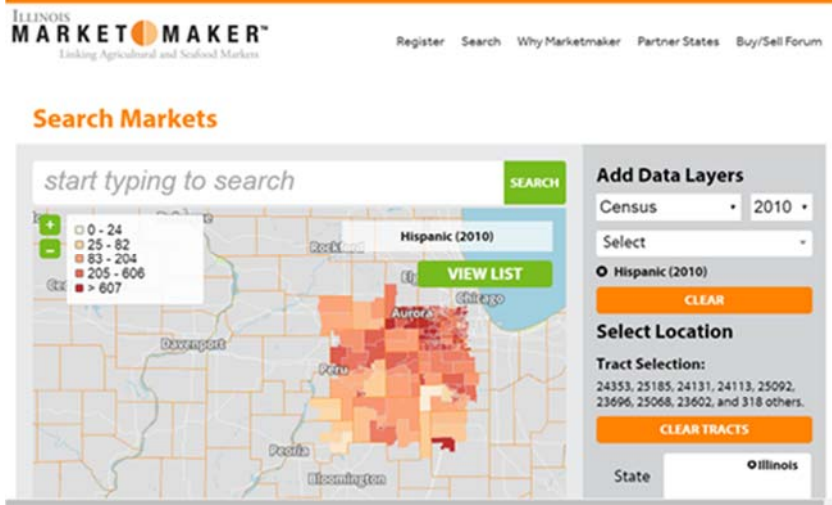


Enhance MarketMaker Advanced Mapping Tools- Expand the secondary data sources from USDA that can be incorporated into the MarketMaker interactive mapping platform. Develop a more intuitive interface that will make the resource more user friendly to the non-technical user. Develop new functionality that will allow VAPG grant applicants to identify market trends.

New Advanced Mapping interface was launched and is ready for user group testing.

New features include:

- More robust search tools
- The ability to map multiple business types that can be used to map local and regional infrastructure
- The capacity to integrate new secondary data sources.
- Maps can be “animated” to show trends in consumption patterns, demographic , rainfall, etc. over time.



Build Metrics and Impacts- Develop tracking tools that will allow AgMRC and MarketMaker staff to collect data that can be used for evaluation purposes and ultimately the long-term economic impact of the resources being developed.

Early stage meeting with IT team to draft requirements.

Outreach and Engagement

Trade Shows and Conferences- The MarketMaker team attended 3 trade shows where they promoted AgMRC as a potential resource and distributed related marketing materials.

- The Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Carolina Sustainable Ag Conference Trade Show in Durham, North Carolina.
- The National Value-Added Ag Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas.



- MarketMaker and AgMRC staff united at the National Value-Added Ag Conference in Little Rock.

Value Added Producer Grant Program - Used MarketMaker internal push notification system to periodically send information and reminders of the 2018 VAPG grant program to all farmers and fisheries in the MarketMaker data base.

University of Vermont

The primary objective is to provide tools and resources to support agritourism and value-added agriculture enterprises. Funding is being used to develop materials and deliver trainings and technical assistance for producers and for agricultural service providers. Specific deliverables include:

1. *A guide on best practices for agritourism and value-added enterprises.* The guide is in development, with coordination planned between University of Vermont, Oregon State University, and Shelburne Farms.
2. *Workshops on agritourism and value-added enterprises.* We have organized five workshops to date. See below for a list of workshops. Planning is underway for additional workshops, including ones in May in Southampton, MA and August in Thetford, VT.
3. *Presentations at national conferences to share the best practices guide and VAPG program with producers and with agricultural service providers.* We presented at three conferences to share our work on agritourism and value-added enterprises. See below for a list of presentations.
4. *Technical assistance to support farmers with agritourism and value-added enterprises including farms applying for Value-Added Producer Grants.* We provided direct technical assistance through farm visits and one-on-one consultations to 14 farms in the Northeast. Some, but not all, resulted in applications to the VAPG program cycle due January 2018.

Workshops:

- 1) Feasibility Studies for Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) Applications. Norwich Inn, Norwich, Vermont, October 25, 2017. 21 participants.
- 2) Engaging Farm Visitors: Tours, Camps & Animals. Shelburne Farms, Shelburne, Vermont, November 2, 2017. 34 participants.
- 3) Dairy Tours & Overnight Farm Stays. Liberty Hill Farm, Rochester, Vermont, December 6, 2017. 24 participants.

Renewable Energy Report

The Renewable Energy Monthly Report is produced as a partnership between the Agricultural Marketing Center, the Iowa Grain Quality Initiative, and is authored by Decision Innovation Solutions.



The newsletter contains pricing, profitability and supply/demand tools used for analysis of ethanol, biodiesel and distiller's grains and is sent out on a monthly basis. During this quarter, three issues of the Renewable Energy Monthly Report were published and distributed. The monthly report was distributed, on average, to 1,854 subscribers, an increase from an average of 1,758 subscribers from the previous quarter. The average open rate in quarter 1 was 18.55%.

October Articles:

Latest on U.S. Corn Ending Stocks: Second Largest Since 1987/1988 – 48 pageviews

EPA Proposes Additional Cuts to 2018-2019 RFS Levels – 71 pageviews

Feature of the Month – More than 1,000 Fuel Stations Offering E15 in the U.S – 16 pageviews

Prices and Profitability Models – 21 pageviews

November Articles:

China's New Ethanol Use Mandate Will Create Opportunities for U.S. Exports – 166 pageviews

U.S. Corn Exports Showing Signs of Improvement – 95 pageviews

Feature of the Month – Global Ethanol Production – 71 pageviews

Prices and Profitability Models – 42 pageviews

December Articles:

Update on Current U.S. Ethanol Production and Ending Stocks 2017: Production Sets New Record – 112 pageviews

U.S. Wind Power Shows Strong Growth in 2016 and 2017 – 23 pageviews

Feature of the Month – Total Ethanol Producing Firms – 38 pageviews

Prices and Profitability Models – 44 pageviews

University of Minnesota Food Industry Center

Dr. Michael Boland and his team at the Food Industry Center have continued to study Value Added Producer Grant recipients. Over the life of the USDA VAPG Program, two graduate students have studied the program in two different time periods, 2001-2005 and 2001-2012. During the fall quarter, we began updating a database of all VAPG recipients to undertake a third study as we have done in the past. We are checking physical addresses, websites, telephone numbers, contact persons, number of



workers, etc. We have been calling or emailing 2,565 recipients and contacted USDA for the remaining list of recipients that we do not have for the database. Worked with VAPG recipients and business development members in Minnesota, California, and South Dakota.

Community Food Systems, Iowa State University

The Community Food Systems program worked to develop curriculum for the in-person trainings and online modules for Local Food Leader and Community Food Systems Program. Pilot locations for the certification programs were confirmed and include North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Kentucky, and Iowa. The Local Food Leader in person workshop curriculum has been completed, and we are working with over 10 different teachers for the online modules.

Model Farm (Iowa State Daily)

AgMRC is utilizing student journalist from across the country to make 1-minute videos about VAPG projects from around the country. Iowa State Daily-Model Farm will manage the project using their peer-group colleagues from 33 universities around the country to gather footage from their local VAPG recipients. Iowa State Daily-Model Farm will manage the mini-contracts and editing here at ISU in preparation for them to be added to the AgMRC site by the site managers. During this quarter, videos were added on the following:

- North Iowa Fresh
- Hansen's Farm Fresh Dairy
- Jokir's Wild

All videos can be viewed at:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDsV3k7fXdKj1faJOPHvxcg/videos?view_as=subscriber.