

Agricultural Marketing Resource Center

Quarterly Report – April – June 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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Goal 1. Maintain an electronic, web-based library.

AgMRC Website Statistics

This quarter, the average number of sessions per day to the AgMRC website was 2,053, down from 2,459 per day last quarter, while the average number of pageviews per day was 3,125, a decrease from 3,738 per day last quarter.

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

1. Industrial Hemp – 7,453 pageviews
2. Strawberries – 5,689 pageviews
3. Avocados – 4,688 pageviews

Blog

During this quarter, three blog articles were posted to the website. A blog entry entitled “Amortization and Depreciation and Your Small Business” was written by Dan Burden, content specialists for AgMRC. The other two blog entries, “Local Economy Benefits from Turkey Farm Success With USDA Infusion” and “San Xavier Co-Op Farm’s Milling Facility Gets Boost From USDA Grant” were written by Dan Lee and his team at Cal-Poly Pomona. Blog entries this quarter had 269 visitors. This is down from the previous quarter of 387 visitors.

Major Content Sections

The major content sections of the AgMRC website visits:

1. Commodities and Products – 190,015 pageviews
2. Business Development – 36,764 pageviews
3. Renewable Energy – 28,438 pageviews
4. Markets and Industries – 6,586 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.



5. Directories and State Resources – 2,546 pageviews

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

1. Fruits – 56,353 pageviews
2. Vegetables – 35,386 pageviews
3. Grains and Oilseeds – 26,514 pageviews

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

1. Getting Prepared – 11,70 pageviews
2. Starting a Business -10,397 pageviews
3. Operating a Business – 9,674 pageviews

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

1. Ethanol – 8,330 pageviews
2. Renewable Energy and Climate Change Report – 4,922 pageviews
3. Renewable Energy – 4,725 pageviews

AgMRC Website Projects

Global Food and Agriculture Network

The subcontract with the Global Food and Agriculture Network was established to expand the research of both MarketMaker and AgMRC respectively. Activity completed during this quarter include:

Migration from Window to Linux Operating System - Updated the MarketMaker platform and code base from Windows to Linux to improve security and reliability of supporting functionality. It also enhances the ability and ease with which to collaborate with AgMRC programmers and share functions and data with the AgMRC web site.

API - Completed the development of a limited API to enable MarketMaker data to be queried and shared among applications. This is the basis for the suite of search and map widgets that are embedded in the AgMRC widgets, allowing for easier integration of content between the AgMRC and MarketMaker platforms.

Registration Widget - A registration widget has been completed and will allow AgMRC users to create profiles from the AgMRC website that will populate the newly developed widgets for the site.

Projects under construction during this quarter include:

Hot links - Hot links for each commodity to direct AgMRC users to the commodity specific map at the bottom of the page, for searching and mapping farmers. See appendix.

New Search Functionality - MarketMaker hosts an extensive library of detailed profiles on farmers and other enterprises in the food supply chain. The information can be searched and map by the user by



constructing complicated search queries that narrow down results based on products produced, marketing attributes, methods of sale, certifications, etc. The MarketMaker tech team has developed a new search tool that is much more intuitive and more closely approximates the searches found on popular online shopping sites. The new search tool is scheduled for release in October 2017. See appendix.

[Additional Commodity and Farmers Market Widget](#) - Search, map farmers and Farmer Markets. Farmers markets not already in the data base can create profiles and add their information to the directory.

[Measuring Traffic on the MarketMaker Site](#) - Using Google Analytics and MarketMaker profile views, MarketMaker staff are documenting traffic on the MarketMaker site as linkages are built between the MarketMaker and AgMRC platforms.

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, and almost 200 PDF's that need to be made accessible. AgMRC is talking with Global Reach on how best to complete the PDF's, as those are the most time consuming.

Commodity Pricing Chart

Additionally, AgMRC has started another website project in Quarter 3. Information from the USDA National Retail Reports will be used for a newly designed commodity pricing chart that will be more 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. Estimated project end date is half way through Quarter 4.

Newsletter Template

In an effort to increase readership and lessen the amount of redundancy, the Renewable Energy Report underwent some cosmetic changes in this quarter. Instead of having a relatively generic "Greetings" article every month, we decided to go towards current newsletter trends and put information about sponsors and authorship of the newsletter in the footer section of the newsletter format. We will keep you updated on newsletter statistics in order to track any readership changes due to this change. We anticipate that our click rate will go up.

Towards the end of quarter 3, we also made an additional change to the newsletter format. We have always included a "Prices and Profitability" article in our newsletter, which is a file from Ag Decision Maker at Iowa State University. The files that are linked on this page are updated each month without



changing the URL, however, the content does not change. In our old template, we would have to add a new “Prices and Profitability” article making, essentially, multiple pages on our site with the same content, but we had to do this so it would be included with the newsletter when we sent it out through email. We talked with Global Reach about this, and they added the content from our “Prices and Profitability” article into the template. This will eliminate the number of redundant Prices and Profitability pages that are on AgMRC, which search engines do not like either.

Goal 2. Provide value-added business and economic analysis tools.

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 1,798 subscribers, an increase from an average of 1,758 subscribers from Quarter 2. The average open rate in quarter 3 was 20.55%.

April Articles:

Historical Analysis of U.S. Biodiesel Production and Feedstock Usage – 82 pageviews

U.S. Ethanol: Production, Consumption, and the Relevance of Increasing Exports – 159 pageviews

Feature of the Month - April 2017 – 22 pageviews

Prices and Profitability Models – 21 pageviews

May Articles:

Overview of Iowa Biofuel Tax Credits and Ethanol Blends Sales: E10, E15, E20, and E85 – 71 pageviews

Historical Analysis of South American Corn Production: Record Yields and Productions in 2016/2017 – 42 pageviews

The Feature of the Month - May 2017 – 30 pageviews

Prices and Profitability Models – 42 pageviews

June Articles:

Review of Current U.S. Ethanol Production and Ending Stocks 2017 – 25 pageviews



Ethanol Leads Credit Generation for California Low Carbon Fuel Standard – 16 pageviews

The Feature of the Month - June 2017 – 13 pageviews

Professional Development

In order to continue to meet goal #2, a staff person from AgMRC attended a Value Added Coop Succession Planning workshop in Madison, Wisconsin. Lessons learned from the workshop will help add to the Focus on Feasibility workshop.

Goal 3. Link producers with electronically available information and resources.

Email

AgMRC staff researched and responded to 29 e-mailed questions pertaining to chickpea production, dry edible beans production in the United States, and the National Value Added Agriculture Conference.

Phone Calls

As of June, AgMRC staff reported having 31 toll-free phone inquiries from 10 different states.

Facebook

AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook. During this quarter, the AgMRC Facebook page had 7 posts, which were seen by more than 1,000 people.

Radio Spots

Two radio spots were created during this quarter entitled, “AgMRC Renewable Energy Report Offers Valuable Info For Farmers” and “Micro FSA Loans Available for Value Added Agriculture”. These radio spots were utilized by 32 stations with multiple affiliates in multiple states.

Goal 4. Conduct Outreach Activities

National Value Added Agriculture Conference

The 19th Annual National Value Added Agriculture Conference will be 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.

Focus on Feasibility

There were no Focus on Feasibility workshops conducted in quarter 3. The team is working on getting one scheduled in Minnesota for later this year.



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 and write case studies about them. 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. In the fall of 2017, they will update these studies to include 2001 to the most recent data. They have identified 2,567 recipients totaling \$343 million in grants and are trying to verify this with USDA. They have created postal addresses for 98% of these recipients; phone numbers for 96% of these recipients; and websites with a contact email for 92% of the recipients. In addition, they are seeking to determine what step in business development they are currently in and creating similar variables as we used in previous studies. Because many of these new VAPG grants since 2006 are producers, they think we shall be able to make a determination on number of jobs created in the final step of business development.

Cal-Poly Pomona University

During this quarter, colleagues from Cal-Poly Pomona University have been working on updating specialty crops profiles for the AgMRC website. In addition, the graduate student who was working on drivers of local consumption for her thesis is in the second iteration of analysis. Another project looking at the role of value added products and how diversity and the products available contribute to overall sales. Finishing these projects, and working on the AgMRC curriculum are goals for quarter 4.

Model Farm (Iowa State Daily)

AgMRC will be 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. Iowa State Daily-Model Farm has completed the first video that served as an example when coordinating with other states. View the first video, [here](#). Three more are to be completed in quarter 4.

MarketMaker

MarketMaker staff include AgMRC handouts as part of every tradeshow and show the AgMRC website and introduce farmers and other ag industry personnel to the AgMRC resources whenever it is appropriate. The tradeshows and educational ag conferences that MarketMaker staff have participated in in the last six months include:

- Illinois Specialty Growers Conference, January 11 – 13, 2017
- Southern SAWG Conference Trade Show, January 26 – 28, 2017 Lexington, KY
- USDA Ag Outlook Forum – Arlington, VA Feb. 23 – 24, 2017
- Illinois Farmers Market Conference March 29, 2017 Chicago, IL
- “Local Foods Impact Conference” Washington DC, April 3 – 4, 2017 GW University



- United Tech, United Fresh Trade Show, Chicago, IL June 13 – 15, 2017



Appendix. Hot Links Example





Appendix. Search Functionality Example

Search Markets

CLEAR ALL FILTERS

Business Type

- Food Retailer
- Farmers Market
- General Member

clear

Product

Blueberries

Producer-Verified Attributes

Certifications

Product Forms

Location

CURRENT LOCATION

State

County

ZIP

Range

Lat

Long

Blueberries product **SEARCH**

- Maize Valley Winery and Market, Hartville OH
- Black Rock Orchard, Manchester MD
- Beehind Thyme Garden & Wares, Campbellsville KY
- A. Faith Farms, Jenkins KY
- C and J's Blueberry Vineyard, Live Oak FL
- COPE Farms Caretakers Of Planet Earth, Fort Valley GA
- Strites' Orchard Farm Market and Bakery, Harrisburg PA
- Far Reach Ranch, Tavares FL
- Putman Place, Somerset PA
- Father's Hope Nursery, DeRidder LA
- North Florida Organic Growers, Newberry FL
- ...

VIEW AS MAP **895 businesses**