

Agricultural Marketing Resource Center

Quarterly Report – April – June 2018

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 256,848 with an average of 2,823 per day.

The Commodities and Products section attracts the most visits, at 155,519 this quarter total. Within Commodities and Products, Fruits is the top section at 49,910 visits. Vegetables follows at 32,689 visits. Livestock has the next highest visits at 20,342.

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

1. Strawberries – 5,044 pageviews
2. Watermelon – 3,910 pageviews
3. Industrial Hemp – 3,824 pageviews

AgMRC



The mission of AgMRC is to continue to provide independent producers and 6,848 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.



2018	Pageviews	Page Views Per Day
January	75,849	2,447
February	86,343	3,084
March	98,524	3,178
April	96,972	3,232
May	91,666	2,957
June	68,210	2,274
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		

Major Content Sections

The major content sections of the AgMRC website visits:

1. Commodities and Products – 155,519 pageviews
2. Business Development – 40,735 pageviews
3. Renewable Energy – 35,210 pageviews
4. Markets and Industries – 6,393 pageviews
5. Directories and State Resources – 2,016 pageviews

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

1. Fruits – 49,910 pageviews
2. Vegetables – 32,689 pageviews
3. Livestock – 20,342 pageviews

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

1. Getting Prepared – 14,280 pageviews
2. Starting a Business -11,208 pageviews
3. Operating a Business – 11,181 pageviews

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

1. Ethanol – 9,852 pageviews
2. Renewable Energy and Climate Change Report – 6,982 pageviews
3. Renewable Energy – 5,934 pageviews



AgMRC Website Updates:

Profiles updated this quarter (48):

Agroforestry, Apricots, Aquaponics, Aronia, Artichokes, Asparagus, Azuki Beans, Blackberries, Blueberries, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Cherries, Christmas Trees, Chufa, Citrus, Deer, Direct Marketing Beef, Eggplants, Game Birds, Garlic, Grapes, Hunting Leases, Kenaf, Lychee, Mullberries, Natural Beef, Nature-based Tourism, Nectarines, Olives, Organic Apples, Pawpaw, Peaches, Pears, Pecans, Persimmons, Plums, Pumpkins, Raspberries, Rapeseed, Squash, Strawberries, Sweet Corn, Sunflowers, Tomatoes, U-pick Apples, White Corn and Wine.

Commodities and products profiles are updated based on client inquiries to AgMRC Match participants and AgMRC office staff.

Business development files updated this quarter (2):

Managing Cash Flow, Profitability and Honest Financials and Master the Soft Skills for Hard Success.

These files were picked for updates because of client interactions from our AgMRC Match participants.

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 less than 80 pages that need slight updates to make them accessible.

Email

AgMRC staff researched and responded to 43 e-mailed questions pertaining on flax, worm casting and maple syrup to name a few.

Phone Calls

As of June 30, AgMRC staff reported having 19 toll-free phone inquiries from 9 different states.

Facebook

AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook. During this quarter, the AgMRC Facebook page had 24 posts, which were seen by more than 2,330 people.

Radio Spots

One radio spot was created during this quarter entitled, "Ag Marketing Resource Center Designed to Enhance Profitability." This radio spot was utilized by 34 stations with multiple affiliates in multiple states.



Blog

During this quarter, four blog articles were posted to the website. Blog entries entitled “The Life Cycle of a Product,” “Helping Forestland Owners Navigate the Tax Code,” “Impacts of the Value Added Producer Grant Program on Business Outcomes,” and “County-level Data Show Changes in Number and Concentration of Food Stores.”

AgMRC Subcontracts

Global Food and Agriculture Network

Goal 1

***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.*

Held early stage development meeting with programmers to create a requirements document for project. Had brief follow up meeting with Iowa State mapping team to identify data sources that should be added to platform.

Goal 2

***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,*

No progress this quarter.

Goal 3

***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.*



Iowa State mapping team completed review of the beta mapping tool. Recommended changes were made by tech team and integrated into platform.

Goal 4

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.

The following activity tracker tools have been developed and are currently being tested and refined:

- Archiving all historical activity so that those events can be aggregated over time.
- Ability to track agMRC activity related to AgMRC and MM platform integration.
- Ability to track MM profile views from all referral sites including AgMRC site
- Ability to track search behaviors and identify what kinds of searches are trending such as by product, market characteristic, etc.
- Improved ability to track economic activity related to the Buy Sell Forum.

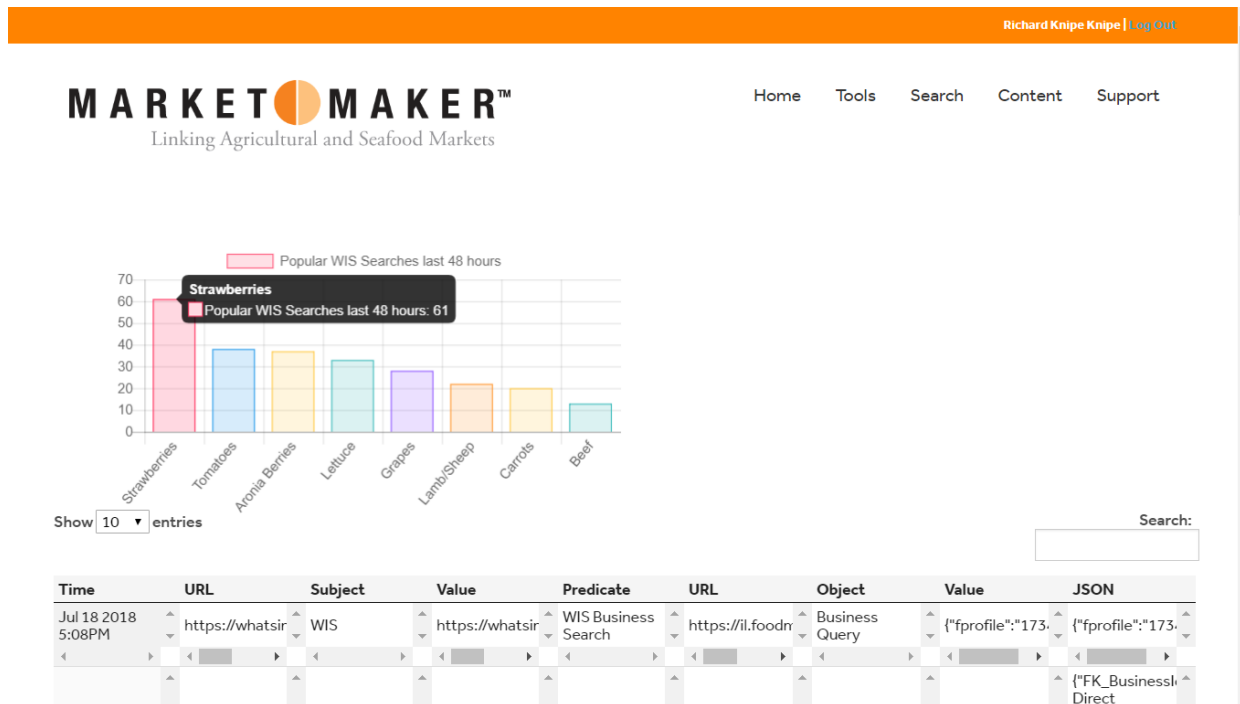


Figure 1 Example of activity tracker results: What's in Season and FoodSeacher Tool



Outreach and Engagement

Trade Shows and Conferences- The MarketMaker team attended 1 trade show and one educational field day where they promoted AgMRC as a potential resource and distributed related marketing materials.

- United Fresh and UnitedTech: Chicago, IL June 25 – 27th, 2018 UnitedTech is a one-day special event where university produced technology is highlighted for the produce industry. We featured the What's In Season App and new mapping tools including FoodSearcher Tool. In addition, United Fresh Tradeshow for 2 days displaying MarketMaker, What's In Season and related mapping tools to the produce industry, while cross promoting AgMRC.
- On-Farm Field Day Illinois Produce Industry: Carbondale, Illinois. June 7, 2018. Part of exhibit area for the Summer Horticultural Field Day at Flamm Orchards in Cobden, IL. An opportunity to support the Illinois Specialty Growers and promote MarketMaker and AgMRC.

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 between University of Vermont, Oregon State University, and Shelburne Farms. Several farms throughout the Northeast and Midwest have been identified and will be featured as case studies of value-added producers in the best practices guides. These case studies are in progress and will be completed in Q3. The farmers who will serve as reviewers for the best practices have been selected.
2. *Workshops on agritourism and value-added enterprises.* We organized three workshops in this quarter. See list below. Planning is underway for additional workshops, including one on August 9 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 on a panel at the Slow Living Summit where we discussed the VAPG program. See below.
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 19 farms in the Northeast.

Workshops:



1. Farm Based Education Workshop: Building Farmer & Educator Connections. Snow Farm Vineyard, South Hero, Vermont, April 17, 2018. Organized with South Hero Land Trust, Healthy Roots Collaborative & Shelburne Farms. 38 participants.
2. Bringing Visitors to Your Farm. Glendale Ridge Vineyard and Winery, Southampton, Massachusetts, May 29, 2018. Organized with CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture). 19 participants.
3. The Three T's of Agritourism – Tours, Talks and Tastings. Park Hill Orchard, Easthampton, Massachusetts, June 28, 2018. Organized with CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture). 17 participants.

Presentations at conferences:

1. Chase, L.C., G. Cox, J. Franklin, C. Tomlinson, and P. Ackerman-Leist. Organic Entrepreneurs: Finding Ingredients for Success and Avoiding Recipes for Disaster. Slow Living Summit, Brattleboro, Vermont, May 31, 2018.

Oregon State University – subcontract of 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.

Progress on specific deliverables include:

1. *A guide on best practices for agritourism and value-added enterprises.* Investigation of best practices for agritourism is ongoing, gathering evidence and illustrations for the future guide. A team of three students were hired for part-time summer work on this project.
2. *Workshops on agritourism and value-added enterprises.* Planning is underway for a workshop “Visitor Ready Farms and Value-Added Operations” to be presented in mid-August and repeated in different locations in the fall and winter. In addition, planning is underway for workshops in customer service, lowering risk on agritourism operations, marketing, developing safe and successful food products on farms and a VAPG training working with Ray to be presented in the fall and winter.
3. *Technical assistance to support farmers with agritourism and value-added enterprises.* Created and presented Agritourism Operator Network on-site technical tours. In April, 23 attended the network meeting at Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm and 12 attended the network meeting at Bauman’s Farm and Garden. One-on-one farm visits to 51 agritourism operations to build agritourism community strength and provide technical support.
4. *Publications to teach best practices for agritourism were written and designed.*



Stewart M. How to Create an Inventory of Agritourism Operations in an Area, County or Multi-County Region. Oregon State University Extension Service. April 2018

Stewart M. Selling Farm Produce by Volume, Count or Weight. Oregon State University Extension Service. April 2018

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 1,877 subscribers, an increase from an average of 1,854 subscribers from the previous quarter. The average open rate in quarter³² was 21%.

April Articles:

Update on U.S. Biodiesel Production and Feedstocks Usage in 2017

Value of U.S. DDGs Exports Fall, Prices Improve

Feature of the Month

Prices and Profitability Models

May Articles:

Substantial Growth in Iowa Sales of Higher Ethanol Blends in 2017

Corn Price Projected Higher in the 2018-19 Marketing Year

Feature of the Month

Prices and Profitability Models

June Articles:

Update on U.S. Ethanol Production and Ending Stocks

Looking at Current Ethanol Production: Top Five States



Feature of the Month

Prices and Profitability Models

University of Minnesota Food Industry Center

Eddie Blevins successfully completed his M.S. degree and thesis looking at the ability to achieve success in business development from the VAPG program. He defended June 26 and we are working on a manuscript for AgMRC website that will summarize his research and frame it within the context of the recent ERS report and previous reports. This should be finished by September 1. A blog and video content are being planned as well.

We worked with VAPG recipients and business development members in Minnesota. Planning meetings were done for 2019 in Minnesota, South Dakota and California. In addition, I am preparing for meetings in Oregon, Washington State, Montana and Idaho.

Community Food Systems, Iowa State University

The Community Food Systems program wrapped up all online module development for the Local Food Leader online modules and began continued working on curriculum for the Community Food Systems online modules to launch in August. Pilot locations for the certification programs now include North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Kentucky, Iowa, Alaska, Nebraska, Virgin Islands, Colorado, and Pennsylvania.

Local Food Leader has been offered in 3 states: Iowa (February 7) with 30 participants, North Carolina (March 21) with 11 participants and Texas (May 21) with 40 participants. A total of 44 participants have enrolled in the online modules to complete certification. Review of the evaluations from the first pilot states will begin in the fall of 2018.

Community Food Systems has been offered in 4 states: North Carolina (March 22-23) with 11 participants, Kentucky (May 15-16) with 22 participants, Texas (May 22-23) with 20 participants, and Georgia (May 29-June 1) with 8 participants. Online modules for this program will be up in the fall of 2018.

Initial findings from the first pilot states:

- The Local Food Leader program needs to highlight additional information about place-based projects going on, in addition to helpful skills and resources such as AgMRC within the program
- Community Food Systems will separate into multiple certifications due to the intensity of the program; it will now include a facilitator, assessor, and technical assistance certification in addition to the over community food systems certification



- A third certification program- Mapping 101- is being conducted through external resources and partnerships of this grant, and has provided meaningful connections to AgMRC as well as USDA projects and resources. This Mapping 101 curriculum focuses on the importance of maps as a decision making tool utilizing resources such as Market Maker and other mapping platforms.

August-December we will host the last 6 certifications, with the potential to host additional workshops if time allows. Additionally, we have been able to pay for evaluators for our program and an additional 5 teachers for the Community Food Systems online module platform.

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:

- Lakehouse Farms
- Does and Diva's Dairy
- Penoch Winery

All videos can be viewed at:

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