

Agricultural Marketing Resource Center

Quarterly Report – July – September 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 1,742, down from 2,053 per day last quarter, while the average number of pageviews per day was 2,652, a decrease from 3,125 per day last quarter. We typically see a decrease in these numbers in the summer months of the year.

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

1. Industrial Hemp – 5,074 pageviews
2. Strawberries – 3,882 pageviews
3. Avocados – 3,589 pageviews

Blog

During this quarter, five blog articles were posted to the website. Blog entries entitled “Inclusive and Professional Meetings: A Few Guidelines” and “Yearly Financial Planning” were written by Dan Burden, content specialists for AgMRC. Another blog entry, “USDA Grant Ignites Major Growth for Colorado’s Jumpin’ Goat Dairy” was written by Dan Lee and his team at Cal-Poly Pomona. The other two blog posts, “Farm Credit Sponsored MarketMaker Innovation Awards for Best Practices Currently Accepting Proposals” and “Grant Assistance Offered by Agricultural Marketing Resource Center” were written by Shannon Hoyle, content specialist for AgMRC. Blog entries this quarter had 219 visitors. This is down from the previous quarter of 269 visitors.

Major Content Sections

The major content sections of the AgMRC website visits:

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.



1. Commodities and Products – 156,464 pageviews
2. Business Development – 38,967 pageviews
3. Renewable Energy – 21,745 pageviews
4. Markets and Industries – 5,125 pageviews
5. Directories and State Resources – 2,030 pageviews

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

1. Fruits – 47,213 pageviews
2. Vegetables – 28,760 pageviews
3. Grains and Oilseeds – 21,124 pageviews

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

1. Starting a Business – 13,139 pageviews
2. Getting Prepared -11,700 pageviews
3. Operating a Business – 9,407 pageviews

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

1. Ethanol – 6,157 pageviews
2. Renewable Energy and Climate Change Report – 4,259 pageviews
3. Renewable Energy – 3,478 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:

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. Global Reach has been hired to fix 108 PDF's from mainly the AgMRC Curriculum section of the website to make those documents accessible. This project will be completed in Quarter 1.

Commodity Pricing Chart

In Quarter 3, the Commodity Pricing Chart project started. 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. The Commodity Pricing Chart project has been completed, but Global Reach is working on the aesthetics and how it will fit into our website. Full implementation of the pricing chart will occur in Quarter 1 of FY2017/2018.

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 1,829 subscribers, an increase from an average of 1,798 subscribers from Quarter 3. The average open rate in quarter 3 was 20.39%.

July Articles:

U.S. Corn Exports to China: Significant Impact from New Chinese Ag and Trade Policies - 113

U.S. Ethanol and DDGs Exports to NAFTA Partners - 38

The Feature of the Month - July 2017 - 75

August Articles:



U.S. DDGS Production and Disappearance: New Dynamics on Animal Feed Protein Market - 144

Biodiesel Blended Sales Trends in Iowa - 54

The Feature of the Month - August 2017 - 32

September Articles:

Looking at Current Iowa Ethanol Gross Production Margins - 19

Argentina's Biodiesel Exports to the U.S. Increased 77 Percent - 11

The Feature of the Month - September 2017 - 4

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 21 e-mailed questions pertaining to value added agriculture production questions and statistics.

Phone Calls

As of June, AgMRC staff reported having 25 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 18 posts, which were seen by more than 4,304 people.

Radio Spots

Two radio spots were created during this quarter entitled, "New App Connects Consumers, Farmers Markets" and "Funds Available to Help Promote Value-Added Agriculture". These radio spot were utilized by 38 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 4. There is a Focus on Feasibility Workshop being coordinated in Norwich, Virginia the last week in October.

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. Cal-Poly coordinated with the L.A. Food Policy Council to submit a proposal for the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research urban food systems call. Colleagues took tours of several value added farms. Colleagues also attended and presented at the Agriculture, Food and Human Values Conference in Pasadena, CA. This conference was especially helpful to find tools for collecting data at Farmers Markets. A Mapping activity and data collection at all farmer's markets in California was collected. This information will be used to analyze the progress of Value Added products in farmers' markets, and what factors drive or inhibit inclusion.

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

The first video can be viewed here: [Value Added Producer Grant: Jokir's Wild](#). This video has been viewed 195 times. Two other videos have had their footage recorded and Model Farm is finishing editing. Model Farms is seeking a peer-group at the University of Pennsylvania for the next set of videos.

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