

Agricultural Marketing Resource Center

Quarterly Report – October – December 2013

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.

This quarter, the average number of visits per day to the AgMRC website was 5,807, up from 4,445 per day last quarter, while the average number of pageviews per day was 22,031, up from 19,780 per day last quarter.

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

1. Fruits
2. Livestock
3. Grains and Oilseeds

During this quarter, the AgMRC Blog had 41,987 visitors, who opened a collective 137,580 pages and spent an average time of 2 minutes and 51 seconds.

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

The Renewable Energy and Climate Change newsletter is written by Don Hofstrand and Robert Wisner, retired professors at Iowa State University.

The newsletter contains pricing, profitability and supply/demand tools used for analysis of ethanol, biodiesel and distillers grains. Inquiries on these dynamic tools, updated monthly, were received from the following this quarter:

1. The Kansas City Star
2. University of Minnesota
3. Purdue University
4. Nidera BV, Rotterdam

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 4,000 unique visits per day.



5. The Wall Street Journal
6. Fanie Brink, biofuels advisor to the South African government

These tools are distributed bi-monthly through the AgMRC Renewable Energy & Climate Change newsletter, with approximately 3,000 subscribers. One issue went out in November 2013. In addition to the profitability tools and pricing models, articles included, “Emerging Ethanol Issues: Blending Mandates, Advanced Biofuels and Other Concerns,” and “The Changing Picture of Corn Ethanol Profitability.”

A new graduate student in the Department of Agricultural Education and Studies at Iowa State University was hired for the semester to continue developing new curriculum files for the AgMRC Curriculum section. Twenty-six additional lessons/worksheets were added during the quarter. Outreach focused on the curriculum section has been planned, including individual contacts at the National FFA Organization, a booth at the national conference for vocational agriculture instructors and new linkages on websites specific to FFA curriculum for instructors.

Mike Boland, University of Minnesota, began a project to update analysis of the Value Added Producer Grant Program (jobs created, products, etc.). He is updating the 2001 to 2005 study to include the 2001 to 2011 time period. A database of recipients was created and analysis has started. Boland received data from USDA through 2011 and worked with the agency to refine the analysis and add new questions to it. Information related to the industry is available for almost 90 percent of each recipient. Interviews are being conducted to determine the stage in business development. The final report was reviewed and submitted on November 1.

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

AgMRC staff researched and responded to 112 e-mailed questions pertaining to the Value Added Producer Grants, the Commodities and Products section, the Markets and Industries section, the Renewable Energy section and the Directories and State Resources section of the website this quarter. The questions requested information about such topics as aquaculture, industrial hemp, organic eggs and chickens and aronia hybrids.

As of December 31, AgMRC staff reported receiving 94 toll-free phone inquiries from 10 different states.



AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook. During this quarter, the AgMRC Facebook page had the following 13 posts, which were seen by more than 660 people.

Our national radio broadcasting contract with the National Farm Broadcasters Association was renewed. Ray Hansen taped a spot on the assistance provided by AgMRC to producers applying for Value Added Producer Grants. The piece was picked up by 95 stations nationally.

A press release went out on Assisting Producers in Applying for Value Added Producer Grants.

During this quarter, AgMRC staff prepared a PREZI presentation, or interactive powerpoint presentation, on the Value Added Producer Grant program. The PREZI walked users through the grant application, covering eligibility, application toolkits, scoring, and resources for more information.

Statistics on AgMRC were monitored after the announcement of the VAPGs. The blog article with the full USDA press release, was viewed 14,158 times. The homepage was viewed 16,200 times in December. The dedicated value-added producer grants page on the AgMRC site was viewed 233 times in December. We uploaded an alternate PREZI as a video on our YouTube channel, which has been viewed 44 times.

Value Added Producer Grant information was distributed nationally to the following AgMRC contacts.

- National Agritourism Professionals Association (NAPA)
- The National Annie's Project program list
- The National MarketMaker Network
- The National Cooperation Works Network
- Midwest High Tunnels Production Group