



Quarterly Report

**to USDA Rural Development
Agricultural Marketing Resource Center
(AgMRC)**

July 1, 2009 – September 30, 2009

Submitted by Iowa State University and Kansas State University.

Iowa State University Extension

Fourth Quarter Report

July 1, 2009 to September 30, 2009

Goal #1

Create and promote an electronic, Web-based library with powerful search capabilities to make value-added information and other resources available to producers (includes Web site development and functions). Provide electronically available information and resources on value-added markets and industries including a wide variety of commodities and products (this includes the Commodities and Products and Markets and Industries sections of the Web site).

During this quarter, the total number of valid hits to the AgMRC Web site was 4.4 million. The average number of valid hits per day was 47,690. In terms of unique visitors to the site, the total number was 193,353 this quarter, while the average number of unique visitors per day was 2,102.

The largest group of visitors by length of visit (148,452) spent 10 seconds or less on the Web site. However, the second largest group of visitors (10,085) spent from 10 to 30 minutes on the site, followed by the third largest group of visitors (9,601) who spent from 3 to 9 minutes.

When the content sections of the Web site are considered, Commodities and Products (C&P) and Business Development (Bus Dev) continue to rank as the top two most frequently visited sections this quarter. C&P accounted for 22.5 percent of Web site visits, and Bus Dev accounted for 22.8 percent of visits. Renewable Energy, the newest section on the Web site, now ranks third in visits, capturing 11.7 percent of the visits. Markets and Industries ranks fourth, with 4.1 percent of the visits, and Directories and Resources ranks fifth, with 3.0 percent.

Within the C&P section, the top five topics visited during this quarter were:

1. Livestock (16.7%)
2. Fruits (15.0%)
3. Grains and Oilseeds (15.0%)
4. Agritourism (11.4%)
5. Vegetables (11.3%)

The top five topics visited in the Bus Dev section were:

1. Operating a Business (32.7%)
2. Getting Prepared (20.3%)
3. Starting a Business (17.4%)
4. Strategy and Analysis (10.8%)
5. Business Workbench (5.0%)

The top five topics visited in the Renewable Energy section were:

1. AgMRC Renewable Energy Newsletter (31.9%)
2. Ethanol (20.6%)
3. Biofuels/Biorefining (general) (8.1%)

4. Climate Change (6.3%)
5. Biodiesel (5.1%)

When the domain name indicated country of origin, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from (in order): United States (69.8%), India (3.4%), Canada (2.9%), United Kingdom (2.3%) and China (2.0%). U.S. visitors viewed an average of 5.8 pages per visit, Indian visitors viewed 2.7 pages per visit and Canadian visitors viewed 2.5 pages. U.K. and Chinese visitors both viewed an average of two pages per visit.

Web site usage is tracked and analyzed using Urchin version 6.6 from Google. Valid Hits describe the number of successful connections to your Webservers.

New and Updated Topics

Commodities and Products

During this time, the following 35 profiles were updated: Agritourism, Aquaculture, Asparagus, Barley, Camelina, Cellulosic Ethanol, Commodity Lamb, Crambe, Cuphea, Deer Ranching, Eggplants, Figs, Forestry, General Biomass, Manure Digester Biogas, Meadowfoam, Miscanthus, Mustard, Nursery Trees, Onions, Organic Lamb, Potatoes, Pumpkins, Rye, Salmon, Sorghum, Sugarbeets, Sunflowers, Sweet Corn, Switchgrass, Tennessee Wine, Texas Wine, Vermont Wine, Washington Wine, Wine Industry

All profile links to external sites are checked when the profile is being updated.

Markets & Industries

Staff members have been working on two new topics to be added to this section: Local/Regional Foods and Supply Chains. The Local/Regional Foods topic will include links to Web sites that highlight local foods in each state. The Supply Chain topic will list USDA-produced resources as well as other resources.

The following five topics were updated: Country of Origin, Food Consumption, Pharmaceutical Market Trends, Traceability, Trade Shows.

Renewable Energy

A total of 25 external links were added to this section.

Goal #2

Provide value-added business and economic analysis tools, including information on business principles, legal, financial and logistical issues (information contained in the Business Development section of the Web site).

A new topic, Governance, was added to this section. The topic includes seven information files related to a company's board of directors and their training needs. A new information file titled "The Role of Farmer Alliances in Business Formation" was also added. During the quarter, 45 information files in this section were reviewed, and if necessary, revised.

Goal #3

Conduct research and analysis on economic issues facing producers involved in value-added business ventures (this includes research activities on all topics included at the Web site).

As of this quarter, 53 case studies profiling recipients of USDA Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) are available online at:

http://www.agmrc.org/business_development/strategy_and_analysis/analysis/case_studies_of_value_added_producer_grant_recipients.cfm

Goal #4

Conduct outreach activities to disseminate the research and information assembled and developed under the previous three goals. These activities are designed for producers, producer groups, businesses and others involved in value-added agriculture (this includes all outreach activities of the Center including workshops, seminars, newsletters and other delivery methods including individual client requests for specific information).

Trade Show Promotions/Outreach

Staff attended and manned a booth at numerous trade shows to continue development of a user base. The following table represents programs, events and outreach either funded by AgMRC or represented AgMRC as match dollars through staff time and travel dollars.

Date	Event	Location	AgMRC Participant
July	American Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting	Milwaukee, WI	Presenting: Bob W.
July 13-15	Annie's Train-the-Trainer	Clare, MI	Madeline
July 13-15	Livestock Marketing Info Center Annual Technical Advisory Committee Meeting	Omaha, NE	Bob W.
July 17-18	Ag Extension Outlook Conference	Columbus, OH	Bob W.
July 28-31	ACE Conference	Minneapolis, MN	Madeline
August	Midwest, Great Plains, and Western Annual Outlook Conference,		Moderating: Bob W.
Sept 4	Producing Sustainability: Tri-State Local Food	Fairfield, IA	Presenting: Ray and Marsha

	Conference		
Sept 11-25	Cochran Meat/Vet Team from Macedonia	Ames, IA	Madeline, Dan and Barry
Sept 13-16	American Assn. of Cereal Chemists	Baltimore, MD	Connie
Sept 21-24	Cooperation Works! Annual Meeting	Olympia, WA	Madeline

Client Requests

Staff researched and responded to 111 e-mailed questions pertaining to the Commodities and Products section, the Markets and Industries section or the Directories and State Resources section of the Web site this quarter. Another 59 e-mails and phone calls were received with comments or questions about the Renewable Energy section from such organizations as Agri-Pulse, BioEnergy Business, Biofuels Digest, Cattle Network, Corn and Soybean Digest, Ecostrat Inc/General Biofuel Inc., Ethanol Producer magazine, Farm Progress, Jacobsen Publishing, Kiplinger Agriculture Letter, KRVN/Rural Radio Network Farm Director, Nebraska Market Journal, Pro Farmer and Yankton radio.

During this quarter, approximately 30 new subscriptions were added to the Renewable Energy Newsletter list, which now totals over 1,536 addresses. Subscribers access and self-subscribe to the newsletter online at:

http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc_renewable_energy_newsletter.cfm?show=subscribe&newsletterID=4

During this quarter, AgMRC received a total of 79 toll-free phone inquiries from 20 different states, including Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin. Three calls were also received from Canada (Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec). Each caller was directed to Web site resources for information or forwarded to specialists for additional assistance.

Homepage

Each week, the AgMRC homepage continued to feature newly updated profiles and articles from the C&P, Bus Dev and Renewable Energy sections of the Web site.

During this quarter, the homepage also provided information about the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) Program, emphasizing the basic requirements and changes from last year's VAPG Program. Links were included to the VAPG Program Webpage, to the State USDA Rural Development Offices and to the NOFA in the Federal Register. To continue being a source of the most current information, the VAPG Program information on the homepage was revised as needed.

Additional Public Relations

The July, August and September issues of the AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter were distributed via e-mail and made available online at:

http://www.agmrc.org/renewable_energy/agmrc_renewable_energy_newsletter.cfm. The newsletter is sent bi-monthly to a list of over 1,536 names comprised of producers in value-added agriculture, service providers, media and others. Each newsletter consists of several articles from partnering organizations in AgMRC, new research and a Web page providing the latest price, profitability and supply/demand figures for corn/ethanol and soybean/biodiesel. This quarter, experts at Iowa State University and Kansas State University contributed articles.

Newsletter articles included:

- Cellulosic Ethanol: Will the Mandates be Met?
- Corn and Soybean Oil Supplies - Adequacy for Biofuels Production
- Corn, Ethanol and Crude Oil Price Relationships - Implications for the Biofuels Industry
- Crop Residue - A Valuable Resource
- Electric Vehicles - How Close are they to Making Major Contributions?
- Ethanol Supply Chain Profitability
- Fertilizer Price Volatility and its Impacts on Producers
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Corn Ethanol Production
- Impact of Cap and Trade Legislation on U.S. Agriculture
- Issues in Raising Allowable Ethanol-Gasoline Blends to E-15 or Higher for Conventional Vehicles
- Prices, Profitability and Supply/Demand
- Trends in U.S. Fuel Ethanol Production Capacity: 2005-2009

A PDF option was added for the newsletter in September. All articles are now provided in one print-ready format.

The AgMRC blog was introduced in May 2009. As of this quarter, 13 entries had been posted under eight categories. The following six entries were posted during the quarter; they related to the categories of Agritourism, General, Grants, Local/Regional Foods and State Happenings:

1. Why have producers been successful with artisan cheese?
2. Is your business sustainable?
3. Start Your Own Business: A Reality Check
4. Lessons for Local/Regional Foods to be Learned from Conventional Food Systems
5. What's Happening in Maryland
6. Mid-Tier Value Chains in Value Added Producer Grant Program

The following press releases were distributed this quarter:

- Celebrate and Enjoy National Farmers' Market Week
- Climate Bill Likely to Generate Net Gains for U.S. Agriculture
- Corn Ethanol's Success Sparks New Uncertainty in Farm Country
- E-15 Ethanol Concerns Could Drive Biofuels in New Directions
- Ethanol's Greenhouse Gas Report Card Keeps Getting Better

- Ethanol Ready to Leap Forward – if wild cards are played right
- Wind Energy Generates Jobs and Tax Revenue for North Dakota

In addition, AgMRC received positive press this past quarter. Articles appeared in *AgriPulse*, *BioEnergy Business*, *Biofuels Digest*, *Cattle Network*, *Corn and Soybean Digest*, *Ethanol Producer* magazine, *Farm Progress*, *Kiplinger Agriculture Letter*, *Nebraska Market Journal* and *Pro Farmer*.

Kansas State University

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Responded to eleven requests for information on various commodities.

Goal #2

Provide value-added business and economic analysis tools, including information on business principles, legal, financial and logistical issues (information contained in the Business Development section of the Web site).

Developed and wrote monthly ethanol newsletter articles for the AgMRC Renewable Energy newsletter. Wrote an article for the AgMRC newsletter and one for the AgMRC blog. Reviewed and updated previously completed business development articles. Met to discuss subcontracts for AgMRC with Montana State and North Dakota State and Oklahoma State.

Goal #3

Conduct research and analysis on economic issues facing producers involved in value-added business ventures (this includes research activities on all topics included at the Web site).

Completed work on risk management and margin concept for producers. Began work on value-added activities in the cling peach, rice and alfalfa seed industries.

Goal #4

Conduct outreach activities to disseminate the research and information assembled and developed under the previous three goals. These activities are designed for producers, producer groups, businesses and others involved in value-added agriculture (this includes all outreach activities of the Center including workshops, seminars, newsletters and other delivery methods including individual client requests for specific information).

Worked with VAPG recipients and business development members in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa.