



Quarterly Report

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

October 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009

Submitted by Iowa State University and Kansas State University.

Iowa State University Extension

First Quarter Report

October 1, 2009 to December 31, 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).

In terms of unique visitors to the site, the total number was more than 255,700 during the quarter, while the average number of unique visitors per day was 2,780.

Within the United States, the most visits came from the states of Washington (36.6%), California (9.6%), New York (7.1%), Georgia (3.6%) and Illinois (3.2%). By country, the largest number of visits this quarter originated from the United States (69.2% ↓), followed by (in order): China (3.4% ↑), Canada (3.1% ↑), India (3.0% ↓) and United Kingdom (2.5% ↑).

The largest group of visitors by length of visit (199,949) spent 10 seconds or less on the Web site, and the largest group of visitors by depth of visit (182,885) viewed one page during their visit.

Blog

During this quarter, 8,485 visitors viewed the AgMRC Blog, opening 15,990 pages and spending an average of two minutes. The number of visits to the blog has increased from 5,444 last quarter.

Major Content Sections

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 23.2 percent of Web site visits (↑), and Bus Dev accounted for 22.0 percent of visits (↓). Renewable Energy, the newest section on the Web site, now ranks third in visits, capturing 11.5 percent of the visits (↓). In terms of average time spent on a page, the average time spent on the C&P index was 50 seconds, the average time on the Bus Dev index was 1 minute and 6 seconds, and the average time on the Renewable Energy index was 1 minute and 10 seconds.

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

1. Livestock (17.2% ↑)
2. Fruits (14.6% ↓)
3. Grains and Oilseeds (14.0% ↓)

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

1. Operating a Business (31.9% ↓)
2. Getting Prepared (20.9% ↑)
3. Starting a Business (17.5% ↑)

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

1. AgMRC Renewable Energy Newsletter (29.9% ↓)
2. Ethanol (21.2% ↑)
3. Biofuels/Biorefining (general) (9.1% ↑)

Calendar Year 2009 AgMRC Web Site Statistics

During 2009, more than 801,000 Web site sessions were completed. An average of 2,200 sessions were completed per day.

Web site usage is tracked and analyzed using Urchin version 6.6 from Google. Visits are the number of visits to the site from the country/region/city. Pages/Visit is pageviews divided by number of visits. ↑ indicates percentage increased from the last quarter, and ↓ indicates percentage decreased from the last quarter.

Updated Topics

Commodities and Products

During this time, the following 22 profiles were updated: Artichokes, Avocado, Broccoli, Buckwheat, Chufa, Commodity Apples, Dried Beef, Eggs, Fiber Goats, Floriculture, Fluid Milk, International Dairy Markets, Maple Sugar, Marketing Beef to Latino Customers, Meat Goats, Organic Corn, Peppers, Raisins, Raspberries, Red Wheat, Spelt and White Wheat.

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

Markets & Industries

A staff member has begun expanding the Food Safety topic. The following 12 topics were reviewed: Animal Rights & Welfare, Attribute Marketing, Branded Food Products, Consolidation, Diet/Health/Obesity, E-Commerce, Exports, Farmers' Markets, Food Profitability, Functional Foods, Trans Fats and Vertical Coordination.

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

Renewable Energy

Two new sections, titled Energy Efficiency and Ocean and Tidal Energy, were added to the Web site. Four new subsections were also added to the site this quarter: Farm Energy, Home Energy, Energy Calculators and Wind Calculators. A total of 66 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).

Two new information files titled Pricing for Profit and Corn and Soybean Price Basis were placed on the AgMRC Web site. In addition, 15 information files were reviewed and/or revised:

- Keys to Successful Planning for Strengthening your Business
- Improving Business Communication Skills
- Designing Successful Business Teams
- Solving Conflicts Between Business Associates
- Obtaining a Business Loan
- Forming a Viable Project Committee and Holding Successful Business Meetings
- Top Management and Key Personnel Positions in a Business
- Assessing Business Opportunities
- Understanding Net Worth
- Understanding Cash Flow Analysis
- Understanding Profitability
- Building Equity in Your Farm
- Grain Price Options Basics
- Option Tools to Enhance Price
- Option Tools to Reduce Price Risk

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
October 7	Extension Office Assistants Development Conference	Ames, IA	Presenting: Ann Johanns
October 10-13	Community Food Security Coalition Conference	Des Moines, IA	Craig, booth
October 14-16	PDI Fall Conference	Des Moines, IA	Craig
October 20-24	eXtension Annual Meeting	St. Louis	Madeline
October 21-23	FFA Career Show	Indianapolis, IN	Linda, Ray, booth
October 22	Extension Annual Meeting	Ames, IA and virtual	Everyone
October 26-30	CooperationWorks! Session II Coop Development Training	Madison, WI	Madeline
October	AFBF Annual Commodity Outlook Conference		Presenting: Bob Wisner
November 3-4	National Market Maker Conference	Denver, CO	Craig
November 5	Farm Energy, Biofuels, and Grain Outlook	Virginia Polytech Institute	Presenting: Bob Wisner
November 9-10	Farmers Coop Conference	St. Paul, MN	Madeline
December 1	Bioeconomy Conference		Ray, Reg, Connie and Craig
December 2-3	Integrated Crop Management Conference	Ames, IA	Connie
December 5	Iowa Organic Conference	Ames, IA	Margaret, booth
	Fresno State University Business Conference	Fresno, California	Presenting: Don Hofstrand
	Two ISU Extension Crop Clinics	Iowa	Presenting: Don Hofstrand

Client Requests

Staff researched and responded to 74 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.

During this quarter, AgMRC received a total of 61 toll-free phone inquiries from 22 different states, that is, Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Washington and Washington, D.C. Two calls were also received from Canada (British Columbia and Ontario). Each caller was directed to Web site resources for information or forwarded to specialists for additional assistance.

Another 32 e-mails and phone calls were received with comments or questions about the Renewable Energy section from such organizations as Biodiesel magazine, DOE, ERS, Ethanol Producer magazine, Farm Bureau Spokesman, Iowa Soybean Review, North Dakota Extension newsletters, Oil Mill Gazetteer, Progressive Dairymen magazine, Progressive Farmer, Renewable Energy Group, USDA and Wall Street Journal.

Subscriptions to the Renewable Energy Newsletter list now total 1,457 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

Homepage

Each week, the AgMRC homepage continued to feature newly updated profiles and articles from the Commodities & Products, Markets & Industries, Business Development 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.

Staff is beginning work on updating the homepage, making it more user friendly and visually appealing.

Additional Public Relations

The October, November and December 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 monthly to a list 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, Kansas State University (4 articles) and Oregon State University (1 article) contributed articles.

Newsletter articles included:

- Corn and Soybean Oil Supplies - Adequacy for Biofuels Production
- Crop Residue - A Valuable Resource
- Trends in U.S. Fuel Ethanol Production Capacity: 2005-2009
- Electric Vehicles - How Close are they to Making Major Contributions?
- Fertilizer Price Volatility and its Impacts on Producers
- Risk Management Issues and Challenges in Ethanol Production
- Trends in U.S. Energy Use and Supplies
- Perspectives on Indirect Land Use
- Biochar - A Multitude of Benefits
- Risk Management Issues and Challenges for Starch-based Ethanol Biorefineries, Part II
- More Perspectives on Indirect Land Use Change Effects
- Milo May Provide Ethanol Cost Advantages over Corn
- U.S. World Fossil Fuel Supply Inventories

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, 37 entries had been posted under nine categories. The following nine entries were posted during the quarter; they related to the categories of Agritourism, Grants, Local/Regional Foods, Organics and Renewable Energy:

1. Foodservice and Retail Distributors Product Considerations, October 12.
2. Apple of His Eye Orchard, October 27.
3. Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food, November 9.
4. Local Food Systems, November 11.
5. Green Energy Live Targets \$154 Billion U.S. Livestock Industry for Sustainable Biomass-to-Energy, November 16.
6. Value Added Producer Grant Deadline Approaching, November 24.
7. U.S. Could Create 4.5 Million Jobs in Renewable Energy, December 3.
8. Hottest Menu Trends for 2009, December 8.
9. Organic Growth Potential, December 10.

The following press releases were distributed this quarter:

- Nation's newest wineries popping up in non-traditional places, November 3.
- Indirect Land Use Emissions Pose Threat to Biofuels, November 18.
- Buying Local Includes Christmas Trees, December 1.

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 nine 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 newsletter. Wrote one 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, North Dakota State and Oklahoma State. Responded to 27 VAPG grant writers.

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).

Continued 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 California, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oregon and Washington.