

AgMRC COVID Report

July 2022 – September 2022

Iowa State University

AgMRC Website Statistics

This period, the total number of page views was a total of 523,130 with an average of 5686 per day. Around 3% of the visitors to the site were returning users.

The Commodities and Products section attracts the most visits, at 438,774 this period total. Within Commodities and Products, Fruits is the top section at 103,265 visits. Vegetables follows at 74,704 visits. Grains and Oilseeds has the next highest visits at 68,537.

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

1. Rapeseed – 8,862 pageviews
2. Peaches – 7,739 pageviews
3. Potatoes – 7,689 pageviews
4. Apples – 8,033 pageviews
5. Dragon Fruit – 6,603 pageviews
6. Poultry – 6,133 pageviews
7. Watermelon – 5,292 pageviews
8. Lettuce – 5,324 pageviews

2020	Pageviews	Page Views Per Day
July	54,865	1,770
August	57,227	1,846
September	67,456	2,249
October	71,066	2,293
November	67,698	2,257
December	57,092	1,842
2021		
January	61,933	1,998
February	65,338	2,108
March	74,621	2,407
April	73,151	2,438

May	71,668	2,312
June	58,396	1,947
July	56,628	1,827
August	58,722	1,894
September	62,632	2,088
October	70,929	2,288
November	72,936	2,431
December	56,617	1,826
2022		
January	67,178	2,167
February	63,074	2,253
March	72,289	2,332
April	176,305	5,876
May	187,113	6,035
June	171,675	5,722
July	172,103	5,551
August	169,477	5,467
September	183,550	6,118

Major Content Sections

The major content sections of the AgMRC website visits:

1. Commodities and Products – 438,774 pageviews
2. Renewable Energy – 106,513 pageviews
3. Business Development – 63,800
4. Media Room – 48,179 pageviews

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

1. Fruits – 103,265 pageviews

2. Vegetables – 74,704 pageviews
3. Grains and oilseeds – 68,537 pageviews

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

1. Renewable Energy and Climate Change Report – 71,603 pageviews
2. Ethanol – 14,222 pageviews
3. Climate Change – 1,958 pageviews

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

1. Value Added Agriculture – 21,231 pageviews
2. Business and Economic Concepts and Principles – 9,047 pageviews
3. Business Workbench – 8,342 pageviews

AgMRC Website Updates:

Profiles and Pages updated this period (31):

Abalone
Addison Farms Vineyard
Aquaponics
B & E's Trees
Biofuels
Biomass
Cellulosic Ethanol
Clams
Corn Stover
Crappie
Crystal Prairie LLC
Dream Apple Farm
Fee Fishing
General Biomass
Hay Biomass
Heavenly Creations
Hickory Hill Milk

Hickory Nut Gap Meats
Jubilee Orchards
Little Vine Updated
Manure Biogas
Marine Shrimp
Miscanthus
New South Produce Co-op
Ralston Family Farms
Round Mountain Creamery
Sawdust
Shipleigh Farms
Short Rotation Woody Crops
Switchgrass
Taylor Fish Farm Partnership

Commodities and products profiles are updated based on client inquiries to AgMRC Match participants and AgMRC office staff, and available USDA data. This period we reviewed active webpages for relevancy, consistent formatting, and broken links, particularly in static descriptive pages where the information does not need updating, but does need to be reviewed.

We began contracting with specialists across the country to do more comprehensive profile updates to a variety of commodity sections including aquaculture, grains & oilseeds, and biofuels. The first round of aquaculture, and grains & oilseeds commodity sections were updated, with the remainder of those sections and the biofuels section coming later this spring.

Email

AgMRC staff researched and responded to 92 e-mailed questions pertaining to wine, popcorn, blackberries, buckwheat, and many other topics.

Phone Calls

Between April 1 and June 31, 2022, AgMRC staff reported having 34 toll-free phone inquiries from 15 different states.

Facebook

AgMRC has expanded its public outreach by creating a page on Facebook which has 3,853 followers. During this period the AgMRC Facebook page had 35 posts, which were seen by more than 3,836 people.

YouTube

The AgMRC YouTube channel continued promotion of the VAPG videos this period and garnered 4,821 new views, for a lifetime total of 24,028. There are a total of 96 VAPG videos now highlighting case studies across the country. The channel gained 39 new subscribers and now has 222. The AgMRC videos have been viewed an additional 3,745 times on the [Model Farm Vimeo Channel](#).

Project 1. Extension's Role in Supporting Resilient Community Food Systems

The territory of the Virgin Islands held five action planning sessions with 21 participants between August 14 and August 19. They chose to move forward with facilitation support for creating a cooperative business model for farmers.

Benton and Washington County, Arkansas held three action planning session with 12 participants between September 14-16. Based on sessions, a consultant will support researching feasibility of scaling-up agriculture and increasing local food procurement in schools.

The next action planning sessions for October-December:

- The Kenai Peninsula, Alaska: November 6-9
- Marshall County, Iowa: December 8-9

Project 2. Fruit and Vegetable Processing for COVID

Continued to share about opportunities for utilizing the mobile cart; including outreach with food hub managers, Iowa Regional Food System Working Group, farmers, and additional individuals. Completed the agreement form with legal and procurement at Iowa State. The cart will be ready to distribute to partners upon agreed upon interest and use.

A general FAQ was developed for interested organizations to better understand use.

Can you tell me more about the processing cart pilot opportunity?

Yes, we have \$5000 to offer to folx who are willing to test out the cart. This is also negotiable, if partners would like to test for longer or with multiple businesses, we could add to that. See the attached draft contract for the deliverables expected for testing.

What timeframe does the pilot need to happen? Right now is kind of an awkward time as produce slows down?

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It needs to happen before end of June 2023 due to our grant timeline. We were hopeful for getting this out earlier in the summer, but timing didn't work as well. Part of the funds can be used to purchase products from the grocery and test too (although I realize that is not ideal).

What types of processing can be done?

The contract details that a bit more and shows the specific types of equipment that are on the cart. There isn't storage or options beyond fresh cut processing at this time, but we anticipate hearing feedback on that need, however, if partners have access to added storage options, heat elements for canning, etc., we would just want to confirm the proper food safety procedures with inspection.

We also have a feasibility study for a processing facility happening over the next 18 months as well. In addition to the processing cart, our grant includes the design development of a specialty crop processing trailer (which may be more helpful for farmers—that way it can just roll on to a farm and you don't have to worry about the food safe location to go into).

Does a farmer doing a pilot, need to hold any licenses during the pilot period?

Yes, if the product will be sold, there are certain licenses that will need to be held. We anticipate working individually with businesses who are interested in selling processed product to ensure that appropriate licenses are in place. If products will be sold, they'll have to be within a food-safe location.

I assume the cart needs to sit inside a building? Or at least under a shelter?

Yes- will have to be within a food-safe/ commercial grade space. It could be a church kitchen or other location that the cart can roll into – or a grocery for example that doesn't have processing equipment. It can't be in a barn, etc., without food safe walls. It could also be within a food hub that has a warehouse license.

Do you have any idea what the carts would cost if/when they become available for sale? Would hate to fall in love with it just to learn that it falls well outside my price range ;) --

We have an estimate (\$10,000-\$15,000 with build out and processing equipment), but we know that things need to be modified. Which is part of this study. We are asking for partners to utilize and share what needs to be changed, so we can better approximate the full cost of development. I'll be honest, my anticipation is that this will not be perfect for farmers (especially those at scale for doing their own production and processing)- and that

farmers will more than likely prefer a trailer that can roll onto a farm and have the foodsafe space enclosed. That being said, if there is a way to collaborate with a food safe location that exists in your community- like Extension, Church, Community Organization, etc.. then it could be a cost advantage, especially at a smaller scale, or community development model.

Is it the type of thing that once released for sale, that farmers could reasonably share between farms? I'm not talking during the pilot period but if/when farmers are able to buy one themselves.

Yes, absolutely. This could definitely be a shared/ cooperative model. Our goal would be to replicate, if it is found useful. I anticipate that this will be useful at small scales, but potentially not at a wholesale (each week processing a thousand pounds of products).

Project 3. Value-added Agriculture/Food Entrepreneur Centers

Researchers are currently studying existing value-added centers/programs with the end goal of creating a best practices manual for other land grant institutions, including financial models, common needs for technical assistance and introductory research needed on Covid-19 impacts to value-added businesses. Initial steps in this process also included the development of a full list of value-added and food entrepreneur centers throughout the United States. During this quarter, the developed list of value-added and food centers across the United States was refined and data was categorized for each. Initial interviews began with centers around the country to determine what is working, best practices and most common technical assistance methods for producers of value-added products.

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Project 4. Rural Grocery Store Development

Completed preliminary outline of report sections and will use this to guide our research and our work going forward. Continued research and collection of relevant articles.

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Project 5. Midwest Farm to School and Early Care COVID Response

The third group meeting of the Midwest Farm to School and Early Care Networking group took place in late August 2022 and centered on discussion around racial and social equity in farm to school and early care work. The process continues to be collaborative and connective, as partners in neighboring states share similar challenges and barriers to growing farm to school and early care efforts. However, these partners are also able to brainstorm solutions based on experiences and regional connections for one another. The next group meeting is scheduled for early November. In this meeting, attendees will share perspective

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and experience around partnerships for policy change in support of farm to school and early care.