

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities 2016 Q3 Insights Report

July 1 – September 30, 2016

Overview

The goal of the Ag Is America project is to be a public, unified voice that communicates the value of the land-grant system in order to protect and grow its federal funding sources. Over the last four-plus years, the Ag Is America brand has become an established and trusted source of information for influencers, stakeholders, the media and the general public.

In mid-Q3, kglobal conducted a strategic planning session to reflect on what we have accomplished over the last several years, which tactics have worked and which are ready to be discarded, and where we should focus our resources going forward. As a result, we presented the CMC with recommendations to strategically shift the focus of the Ag Is America project from “building” to “engagement” through a new content-creation strategy focusing on the BAA priority areas, streamlined internal communications and an emphasis on robust interactions within our digital communities.

With the approval of the CMC, and with support from the Joint Meeting of the Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Sections in Jackson Hole in late September, our team has been working diligently to implement the recommended changes to the Ag Is America project. We’ve expanded the internal project team to better support our new direction and we finished out Q3 creating some of the foundational documents that will support our efforts moving forward. We are excited to share the initial analysis and results with the CMC in our Q4 report.



Content Creation

Compelling content is important to position Ag Is America as an active, engaged, and creative brand. Unique, visually interesting content is the most important mechanism we utilize to communicate meaningful information to our audiences.

In Q3, we continued to research, solicit, and categorize case studies, impact statements, and feature stories from land-grant universities to be repurposed and disseminated over Ag Is America digital platforms. This included **45 blog posts** and nearly **200 social media posts**.

Towards the end of the quarter, kglobal began to shift content ratios to focus on the BAA priority areas: water, healthy food systems, infrastructure and ongoing funding. By the end of 2016, we plan to have completely transitioned our content strategy to focus on these priority areas.

Digital + Social

During Q3, Ag Is America hosted **two Twitter Town Halls** on the Master Gardeners program and the Zika virus. During our weeks-long preparations for each Town Hall, the kglobal team actively targeted local and national media, various stakeholders, faculty and alumni at target schools, and key legislators.

During this quarter, we also conducted **outreach to high-impact bloggers**. This allowed us to use the innovative Twitter Town Hall format to expand the Ag Is America universe. Several well-known and high-impact blogs participated in our Twitter Town Halls by retweeting our tweets and replying to questions from people around the United States. Many of the blogs are now following our Twitter account. kglobal will continue to update and create blogger media lists as appropriate to encourage additional engagement.

The foundation of our social media content is our AgIsAmerica.org website. Every article links back to the website for more information and provides a visitor with the opportunity to return to the original article on the school's website. This quarter, we published **45 new blog posts**, generating thousands of new and recurring page views. We also tweaked the format of our blogs to make them more concise, predictably structured, and appealing to someone clicking on the link. This allowed visitors to more effectively understand how the land-grant system is solving the problems facing the United States.

Website

- Researched and drafted 45 blog posts highlighting the land-grant system's achievements and news, with six longer-form features, including four press releases and two interviews with land-grant experts, garnering over 2,000 quarterly page views

Social

- **Facebook:** 58 daily posts garnered over 50,000 views and 1,000 engagements
- **Twitter:** 112 tweets garnered over 185,000 views



Media Relations

We know that the media can be a powerful ally for the land-grant system. In addition to educating the general public, Ag Is America platforms provide reporters with a trusted place to find information on the land-grant system, its impacts, and its available resources. Ag Is America offers both traditional reporters and online thought leaders and bloggers a steady stream of proactive information via social media, press releases, and story pitches.

Press Releases

Press Release	Total online pickup	Total social pickup	Total potential audience	Social media impressions
LGUs bolster the US Potato Genebank impact	196 outlets	4	87.5 M	10,206
21 LGUs create animal feed database	213	5	88.3M	8,896

- Drafted and submitted two press releases on land-grant universities' impact on the US Potato Genebank (September 13) and the animal feed database created by twenty-one land-grant universities (August 9).
- *Chicago Business Journal, Arizona Republic, The Olympian, Yahoo!*, and local news outlets in New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Florida all picked up the release.

Community Activation

Ag Is America leverages the power of traditional grassroots and grassroots activists, as directed by Cornerstone, to reach new audiences and to amplify our education efforts. As we plan ahead for 2017, a large component of our digital engagement efforts are focused on priming our digital communities for calls to action. kglobal remains in close conversation with Cornerstone on this issue.

Internal Communications

Our team attended the 2016 Joint Meeting of the Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Sections in Jackson Hole, Wyoming in September. There, we presented on AgIsAmerica's 2016-2017 communications plan, and participated in additional relevant communication sessions.

In an effort to make our communications with internal audiences more effective and efficient, in Q3 kglobal combined the monthly "news hooks" email into the monthly "Why Ag Matters" newsletter. This streamlined approach ensures our university contacts are receiving not just our requests for specific project support, but are also able to concurrently view real examples of how we will use those stories and shared resources on the Ag Is America platforms.



In addition, we updated the newsletter template to a cleaner and more visually impactful format. This format allows us to organize content based on priorities, and showcase specific news and updates to communicators.

Newsletters

- In Quarter 3, Ag Is America sent out **three newsletter communications** to internal audiences on July 6 (July newsletter), July 26 (August newsletter), and September 7 (September newsletter).

Month	Opens	Open rate	Click rate
July newsletter	145	31.52%	19.31%
August newsletter	127	33.16%	12.6%
September newsletter	141	31.06%	11.35%

- AgIsAmerica's open and click rates remains extremely high, compared to the industry average of 24.07% and 3.12%, respectively.
- AgIsAmerica's original content, typically the press releases, are consistently the most clicked link in the newsletter.

