

ABSTRACT

An opportunity to provide the information generated by the research funds of the Sugarbeet Research and Education Board of Minnesota and North Dakota to a broad audience through the Internet was initiated in 1996 through the Agri-industries telecommunications and information technologies project of the USDA funded Red River Trade Corridor. This project provides the design and installation of a "gateway" which serves as an entry point to global and regional networks. This sugarbeet project was the first of its kind on the Internet, allowing the Sugarbeet Research and Education Board of Minnesota and North Dakota to 'lead out' in implementing such a resource in the sugarbeet industry.

The homepage was initiated in April 1996. The Red River Trade Corridor helped establish a program of hardware and software and personnel resources to establish and maintain this database. The initial home server of the database was located at the Trade Corridor, but is currently in the Experiment Station on the campus of the University of Minnesota, Crookston, MN. In the first nine months, 11 years of research reports and nine bulletins and circulars were provided to the users of the Internet. These were scanned from the report books that had previously been printed. In February 1997, the homepage was registered with the address of '<http://www.sbreb.org>', and listed on a number of major search engines. An additional 16 years of research reports and 4 bulletins and circulars were provided in 1997. Computer files of the written reports were requested from the submitting authors beginning in 1997 to reduce the time required for scanning the reports. In addition, the 1997 Sugarbeet Production Guide was made available and is updated each year to provide for the changes in pesticide recommendations. Links to other homepages containing sugarbeet research and information are also provided. Current event listings of grower seminars and other meetings, sugarbeet radio program schedule, as well as the Planter Test Stand schedule are also available. During the summer of 1998, streaming audio of the weekly 'Grower Tips' radio program was made available and archived. This media provides for an in-depth regular update on recommendations (fertilizer, herbicide, root maggot, cercospora, etc.). The entire database available is keyword searchable on any topic.

During the first full year of existence, there were approximately one thousand hits per day. These were global as well as national. During 1998, the daily hit average was approximately 1100, with the average user session 12 minutes in length. In addition, numerous e-mail requests for information relating to the production and processing of sugarbeets in eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota as well as the rest of the United States are received regularly.