



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
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the
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Nations

Organisation
des
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Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

Food and Agricultural Information Programme - World Agricultural Information Centre

The WAICENT Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean

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I. Background Information

The World Food Summit Plan of Action held in Rome, Italy, in 1996, highlights information as one of the priority areas in achieving food security. In direct relation to this undertaking, FAO has established WAICENT as its strategic programme for agricultural information management and dissemination.

At the Hundredth and Twentieth Session of the FAO Council in June 2001, the Committee on Agriculture supported the continued development of the World Agricultural Information Centre as an integrated information system, in all FAO languages, including the use of fast-changing technologies for the benefit of member Countries.

The WAICENT programme on information management and dissemination provides a platform to enable Member Nations to access agricultural information that is essential for achieving food security and sustainable rural development.

WAICENT carries out three key roles for the Organization:

- A mechanism to dissemination and exchange quality information through the establishment of norms and methodologies, the development of standardised categorisation schemes and the implementation of metadata for an efficient and effective storage, search and retrieval of information.
- Co-operation with Members, as well as technical assistance, by identifying the information needs of FAO stakeholders and the international community associated with agricultural development and food security; this includes capacity building through the transfer of WAICENT "best practices" in information management systems and tools development to national and international information providers.
- An inter-governmental forum for Members through the Consultation on Agricultural Information Management (COAIM) to discuss issues and decide policies on information

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management, thereby reinforcing FAO normative and operational programmes and the participatory efforts of Members in working towards the goals of the World Food Summit.

II. The WAICENT Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean

WAICENT Outreach Programme

The goal of the Outreach Programme is to enhance the ability of individuals and communities in Member countries to improve the efficiency, quality, and relevance of information and knowledge exchange among the various stakeholders groups involved in agricultural development and food security, with a focus on the most vulnerable and deprived groups.

Activities

The following activities have been implemented:

- A project was developed in collaboration with Government of Venezuela to assess the country's food and crop situation and the need for rehabilitation and emergency assistance as part of the technical assistance provided by FAO during the last flood in Venezuela.
- An emergency intranet network was created by WAICENT in order to have immediate access to crucial information, such as damage to crops, anticipated harvest and price data, as well as satellite images of affected areas during natural disasters events.

Needs

- To develop the Internet access of the emergency network in collaboration with the Ministry of Production and Commerce of Venezuela.

Capacity Building for Agriculture and Food Information

This programme covers primarily technical assistance to national information centres, regional co-operation through a decentralized information specialist post and the biennial Consultation on Agricultural Information Management (COAIM) as a major inter-governmental forum.

Activities

The following activities have been implemented:

- Creation of an International Consortium on the Use of Tools for Agricultural Information Management, ACHIRA (Consortio para el Apoyo a la Capacitación en Herramientas de Información Rural Agrícola). The members of this Consortium are key players in agricultural information management in the region. WAICENT has taken the leading role for the implementation of the Consortium' activities and a web site has been created as a mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of information (<http://waicent.fao.org/ACHIRA/>).
- A CD-ROM training package was prepared containing relevant information and materials delivered by participants trainers under the framework of the workshop on the electronic dissemination of publications jointly organized by the Universidad Nacional Agraria de la Molina and WAICENT held in Lima, Peru from 27 November to 1st December, with the participation of twelve Latin American countries including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile,

Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. This package will be used by trainees in their countries to multiply the effects of the training received.

- Technical assistance to Government of Peru for the development of a strategy for the creation of a National System for Agricultural Information.
- In collaboration with the Government of Cuba, a WAICENT training laboratory has been established in La Havana with the purpose of facilitating training activities regarding agricultural information management in the Caribbean region. A first training activity was carried out during March 2001 and was attended by 20 Cuban experts.
- The First Consultation on Agricultural Information Management, COAIM was held in Rome, Italy, in June 2000, with the participation of 161 representatives from 91 Member Nations of FAO, including the participation of twelve Latin American and Caribbean countries. The general aims of the COAIM were to bring policy issues related to management and access to agricultural information to the attention of the inter-governmental process, and to establish a global framework for the normative work of the World Agricultural Information Centre, WAICENT.
- A web page was created for the Consultation on Agricultural Information Management (<http://www.fao.org/coaim>).

Needs

- To organize the Second Consultation on Agricultural Information Management to be held in Rome, Italy, early June 2002.
- To actively promote the incorporation of regional institutions, NGOs, the private sector and other organizations involved with agricultural information management into the Consortium to achieve the objectives expected.

III. Co-operation Mechanisms

- An Inter-agency Advisory Group will be created with the objective of orienting the programmed decisions of FAO on food and agricultural information management and dissemination. The proposed mechanism of co-ordination will be discussed, revised and eventually approved during the Second consultation on Agricultural Information Management to be held in Rome, Italy, in June 2002.
- Technical Co-operation Programmes will continue being a major instrument for technical and financial support from FAO to improve the access to agricultural information through WAICENT to Member Countries and other stakeholders, taking full advantage of the opportunities provided by the new generation of information and communication technologies.

IV. Future Perspectives

- WAICENT will promote the establishment and implementation of National Systems for Agricultural Information among Member Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean region.
- WAICENT will continue providing the core technological know-how and resources for the design, development, maintenance and enhancement of key international information systems, training tools and related activities. Specific collaborative programmes will be established in Member Countries to enable agencies to implement these systems at the national level, and also with international agencies.

- FAO through WAICENT will play a key role in the establishment of co-ordination mechanisms with relevant international agencies in order to promote effective collaboration in capacity building efforts with Member countries in the agricultural information management, and to ensure economically viable access to information and communication technologies.
- Through WAICENT, FAO will continue providing its institutional capacity to promote policy dialogues on issues as access to agricultural information, capacity building, standards and guidelines through inter-governmental fora such as the Consultation on Agricultural Information Management, COAIM.
- A Network of Information Management specialists to support the Outreach Programme will be established and will include staff from WAICENT headquarters, decentralized offices and field projects.