



www.fao.org

FAO online, knowledge management and more

KEY FACTS

- FAO's main website (www.fao.org) has more than three million pages and was visited by over 42 million users during 2010 alone.
- The FAO website hosts some 300 databases and specialized information systems covering animal health, international statistics, water and agriculture, fisheries, country profiles, emergency prevention systems, plant genetic resources and satellite imagery.
- In October 2010, there were over 4.1 million visits to www.fao.org (out of a total of 102 million hits), up tenfold since December 1999.
- There are almost 40 000 electronic documents available online through the Corporate Document Repository; 4 759 new documents were added during 2010 alone.

Fighting hunger with knowledge and information

FAO is a centre of excellence in the fields of agriculture, commodities, nutrition and sustainable development. The Organization offers an unparalleled collection of online data and information for use by member countries and other interested parties who are striving to build societies free of hunger. FAO's role is to facilitate member access to knowledge and expertise and foster knowledge sharing wherever possible.

Online gateway to a world of data and analysis

FAO and its member countries see information as a priority tool for achieving agricultural development and food security. In 1989, as part of its strategic effort to fight hunger with information, FAO established the World Agricultural Information Centre, a corporate framework for the management and dissemination of high-quality technical information.

This structure included relevant and reliable statistics, texts, maps and multimedia resources as well as tools for integrating and harmonizing standards for the exchange of information. But the enormous advances in information technology since then have made the job of managing and disseminating information in a digital environment increasingly complex. Two tasks in particular have assumed greater importance: using

FAO's information resources to promote partnerships with other agricultural information networks, and assisting FAO members to build their own capacities in managing and utilizing food and agricultural information.



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The FAO website provides useful knowledge around the globe.

FAO website

The FAO website is an entry point to thousands of full-text publications and technical documents in fields including:

- agriculture, fisheries, nutrition and forestry;
- codes of conduct, interactive tools, and early warning and disaster prevention systems;
- country-specific information;
- specialized data, including maps, charts and other multimedia resources.

Economists, trade and commodities experts, universities and research institutes, chambers of commerce and agriculture, agronomists, nutritionists, government planners, development professionals and students have all found the site to be an incomparable resource. But there is more.

Since 2002, the FAO Country Profiles portal has offered decision-makers a fast and reliable way to access FAO's country-

specific information without the need to search individual databases and systems.

The portal's knowledge base has since grown extensively, incorporating further country-based information, profiting from the promotion of international standards, the development of a geopolitical ontology and overall stakeholder involvement.

In 2005, an Ask FAO feature was added to the FAO website and as 2010, more than 8 300 questions had been received and answered by FAO staff. FAO's technical knowledge and content are also being promoted through social media (Twitter, Flickr, Facebook and YouTube) along with sites such as Wikipedia and SlideShare.

In 2008, the FAO home page and other top-level websites were redesigned and modernized. A Russian version of the home page is now online and other sections of the site are being translated into Russian.

E-agriculture and ICTs in rural areas

The lack of access to modern communication technologies in many rural areas – the rural digital divide – in 2003 led FAO to launch a Bridging the Rural Digital Divide programme to help narrow the gap.

In 2005, the World Summit on the Information Society assigned FAO the lead role in e-agriculture, an emerging area of

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) that specifically targets sustainable development in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. In 2007, FAO launched a global community of practice on e-agriculture (www.e-agriculture.org), which now comprises around 7 000 individual members from over 150 countries.

Fostering international partnerships

Another FAO priority is to extend its global reach through the establishment of international partnerships. By creating synergies with its partners, the wealth of FAO's information can be better disseminated and made more effective.

In 2005, the FAO Thematic Knowledge Networks website was launched to

strengthen links between communities of practitioners, allowing individuals to gather and gain access to policy and technical information, to share and exchange the Organization's knowledge. Regular training is provided to FAO staff on the importance of such communities and how they support FAO's evolving role as a facilitator.

Knowledge management and sharing

The FAO Knowledge Strategy was approved in March 2011 with two major objectives:

- improving the balance between the production of information and knowledge and FAO's efforts to facilitate access to such information and knowledge through regular knowledge-sharing events such as thematic and regional share fairs and communities of practice.

- increasing the adoption of information and knowledge-sharing concepts, methods and tools by FAO managers and teams through appropriate training, facilitation, team work, internal networking and the sharing of good practices.

FAO specialized information systems include:

- FAO statistical databases: <http://faostat.fao.org>
- Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases: <http://www.fao.org/empres/>
- Global Information and Early Warning System: www.fao.org/gIEWS
- Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems: www.fivims.net
- FAO Country Profiles Portal : www.fao.org/countryprofiles
- International Information System for the Agricultural Sciences and Technology: www.fao.org/agris/
- FAO Corporate Document Repository: www.fao.org/documents
- Information Management Resource Kit of e-learning materials in various subject areas: www.imarkgroup.org

Improving access to information

As a comprehensive source of information on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, sustainable rural development, economics, food and nutrition, the FAO website gives decision-makers and professionals access to the accumulated knowledge and expertise of the Organization. The website also informs the general public about key issues in agriculture.

Many specialized information systems are also available on CD-ROM. A customized Google search engine is available throughout the site.



Staff signing up for an FAO knowledge fair.

Setting standards for information exchange

Effective information integration, retrieval and exchange require internationally agreed upon standards. For over 20 years, FAO has been a leader in setting standards in information management in agricultural development and food security and is currently working with member countries and other partners to further develop and disseminate them.

