About EASYPol

The EASYPol home page is available at: [www.fao.org/easypol](http://www.fao.org/easypol)

This presentation belongs to a set of modules which are part of the EASYPol Training Path Policy Learning Programme – Module 2: Specific Policy Issues, Session 4: Knowledge management in FAO.

EASYPol has been developed and is maintained by the Agricultural Policy Support Service, Policy Assistance and Resource Mobilization Division, FAO.
From Information to Knowledge

Two types of knowledge:

• Explicit knowledge is “captured” in documents, databases, websites
• Tacit knowledge is not “captured” and exists in people’s heads and is reflected as insight, judgement, craftsmanship, and creativity.

80% of an organization’s knowledge is tacit: effective knowledge management taps into tacit knowledge by supporting communication between people.

Two main knowledge management arenas: internal and external
FAO knowledge assets

**Staff** – primary asset in tacit knowledge

**Knowledge networks** – individual specialists in thematic areas

**Partners** – Member States, international agencies, NGOs, etc

**Information systems** – vast wealth of explicit knowledge

combine into

**FAO as a Centre of Excellence**

*The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.*
Knowledge Management in FAO

**FAO: a knowledge organization in the information age**

**Learning Organization:**

FAO staff represent the organization’s primary knowledge asset.

Organizations should “learn” from staff and incorporate their tacit knowledge and experience, as a key element of effective knowledge management.

Note: Role of knowledge in FAO Strategic Framework, Medium Term Plan and Reform Proposal
Knowledge Management in FAO

FAO: a knowledge organization in the information age

Knowledge sharing:
Effective knowledge organizations support free flow and sharing of knowledge and information in all activities.

through

Knowledge Networks and communities of practice – promote partnership, teamwork, with the free exchange of knowledge and Best Practices between the organization and Member States and international agencies.
The FAO Web Site

www.fao.org as a large explicit knowledge-base:

• Over 3 million web pages indexed in the corporate search engine
• More than 36,000 Documents (pdf and doc)
• Around 100 major databases

…in all FAO Official Languages

• 90 Million hits (7 million in 2002)
• 3-4 Million Visits (323,000 in 2002)
FAO’s Knowledge Forum

- Ask FAO
- Best Practices
- Thematic Knowledge Networks

http://www.fao.org/KnowledgeForum/
Knowledge Exchange – “Ask FAO”

• Establish tools, standards and methods to facilitate the exchange of knowledge
• The underlying problem:
  – FAO’s information services are mainly supply-oriented, and user needs do not always coincide with the way information is made available or organized on a website
  – Much of an organization’s knowledge assets reside in the heads of individuals (i.e. “tacit knowledge”)
Knowledge Exchange – “Ask FAO” (continued)

• “Ask FAO” - one mechanism to provide access to FAO’s “tacit knowledge” based on user needs
• Launched in December 2005
• Two basic components: the Web site, and the Question-and-Answer service
• During the first year of operation in 2006, 2000+ questions received and answered by “Ask FAO”
Best Practices

• Learn from the Organization's experience, both successes and failures
• “Best practices” are provided in a summary format with the following considerations:
  – grouped by theme
  – adopted successfully in more than one region
  – interdisciplinary in nature, reflecting the complex nature of the problems addressed
  – emerged from consultation with staff in field and HQ
Why Virtual Networks?

Geographically dispersed individuals can work together across different time zones
• Knowledge networks can exist “virtually” without any physical meetings.

Online environments provide users with new ways to share and generate knowledge and information
• Knowledge and information can be generated and captured from the community’s electronic communications and collaborative work.
Thematic Knowledge Networks

Functions

• Share (one-many)
• Store / Retrieve
• Collaborate / Interact
• Decide
• Learn
• Notify
• Support
• Monitor
Web based tools

Some common web based tools for online communities are:

- websites and portals
- web based discussion forums
- online directories
- blogs
- wikis
- FAQs and Q&A websites
- scheduling tools / calendars
- online decision support tools
- content management systems
FAO Thematic Knowledge Networks

- Definitions
  - Problem
  - Purpose
  - Benefits
- Guidelines
  - Categories
  - Functions
  - Resources e.g. TKN Support Group
- Corporate Workplan
  - Tools and methodologies
  - Pilot network selection
  - Training
  - Implementation and analysis
  - Upscaling
Training

- IMARK Module on “Building Electronic Communities and Networks” (April 2006)
- Virtual Workshop (May/June 2006)
- After-action Review (July 2006)
TKN Pilots in FAO

- Agricultural water resources
- Avian Influenza
- Plant protection
- Bio-energy
- E-agriculture

Membership from HQ & Decentralized offices
Thematic Knowledge Networks

Case Study 1

“Solution Exchange”
Virtual Community in India
“Solution Exchange”
Virtual Community in India

- UN Country Team platform with 8 virtual communities
- Food & Nutrition Security Community facilitated by FAO
- 1,000+ professionals - individual specialists from government, civil society, NGOs, academic and policy institutions
- around 50 diverse “topics” discussed in 12 months

www.solutionexchange-un.net.in
How the knowledge network functions:

1. Member sends the Community a query via the Moderator
How the knowledge network functions:

2. Community offers the Member solutions from their experience plus desk research on the topic.
How the knowledge network functions:

3. A Consolidated Reply is prepared, sent & archived
Thematic Knowledge Networks

Case Study 2

“One UN” Forum

km-internal.fao.org/oneunforum/
KM Future Challenges

Overall areas of intervention:
• Expand ways in which information and data are disseminated, using explicit and tacit knowledge to solve practical problems
• Learn from current experiences to scale-up activities and to continue to innovate
• Build communities of practitioners
• Embedding KM in FAO’s budgeting and human resources processes, and specifically linking these to a limited set of FAO priorities
KM Future Challenges (continued)

More specifically, during 2007:

- A corporate Knowledge Management Strategy for FAO will be developed
- Additional TKNs to be established/strengthened
- Staff skills in KM to be further developed
- New collaborative tools to be investigated and deployed where appropriate
- KM will be more systematically included in programmes of FAO HQ Departments and decentralized offices
**FAO Policy learning programme**

**Module 2: Specific Policy Issues**

- Session 1: Agrifood
- Session 2: National Regulatory Systems
- Session 3: Water Resource Management
- Session 4: Knowledge Management in FAO