

## **Report**

### ***Development of Thematic Networks in the CEE Region***

#### ***Based on State of the Art Agricultural Information Standards & Tools***

#### ***Expert Consultation and Video Conference***

19-21 July 2006  
FAO SEUR Premises, 34 Benczur utca  
Budapest, Hungary

AgroWeb CEE Network has been acknowledged as a centrepiece for Web based agriculture related communication in the CEE region since 1998. It has contributed to the localisation of FAO WAICENT outreach programme by:

- strengthening partnerships and participation, building horizontal and vertical links as well as shared ownership among communities and organisations,
- strengthening the capacity of organisations and people to provide and get access to information in more appropriate ways,
- improving effective communication among partners involved in the capacity building process.

During the evolution of the AgroWeb, thematic networks had been launched upon request of participating professional organisations and experts. These thematic networks are sometimes also called sub-portals. Network coordinators along with individual national web experts and IT developers have been successfully developing and operating several separate thematic networks, however, there has been no opportunity, until now, for the most active and advanced network coordinators to meet up for a joint session, in order to share their views, exchange experiences and propose new initiatives.

Well experienced and operational coordinators, representing the Veterinary (Centaur), Education (AgroEdu), Library & IC, Animal Genetics (AnGR) networks, and also new network candidates like AfroWeb (AfricaInfo CEE Initiative) and FAO SEUR information management specialists worked together during the three days of the expert consultation to focus on further collaboration with each other, and with FAO experts from the GIL.

## Agenda

### **19 July 2006, Wednesday**

Opening of the Consultation and adopting the work agenda.

#### **Presentations:**

Current information activities in the CEE region. *Michal Demes, Laszlo Papocsi*

Localisation of information and building expert networks. *Michal Demes*

New AgroWeb service recommendations, the Hungarian Example. *Laszlo Papocsi*

CEE depositary library network development, logistics, web and administrative support. *Michal Demes*

Information management survey by online questionnaires. *Laszlo Papocsi*

#### **Discussion:**

- The use of standard solutions to facilitate more effective information management.
- EU member states' project experiences, collaboration and harmonisation strategies with the FAO.

### **20 July 2006, Thursday**

#### **Presentations:**

AgroEdu Network development in collaboration with Eastern Europe Centre, University of Hohenheim. *Cosmin Salasan, Tomaz Bartol*

Providing contact database (as a tool) for Higher Education Institutions transversal to AW; maintaining the education-databases as a part of AW Edu, and bridging Agroedu.net and AW Edu. *Cosmin Salasan, Tomaz Bartol*

#### **10-12h: Video Conference**

10:00-10:30 Educational Thematic Portal in AgroWeb: *S. Rudgard, H. Stuempel*

10:30-10:40 AfroWeb concept proposal: *S. Rudgard, W. Ejalu*

10:40-11:15 Possibilities for obtaining grants from European Commission: *J. Keizer, S. Rudgard*

11:15-11:45 Use of Information Management Standards in AgroWeb applications, including AGROVOC, web services etc: *S. Katz, J. Keizer*

Further recommended topics for discussions:

- Introducing “AfroWeb” initiative and contribution to the World Food Day celebration
- FAO-EU common project experiences and perspectives

***CENTAUR Veterinary Network:***

Distance learning experiences and lessons learned. Development in collaboration with AgroEdu Network. *Karel Hruska*

***Animal Genetics Network:***

ERFP CEE Network Development Program - the 2nd AnGR PHOTO CONTEST – 2006. *Ekaterine Tsursumia*

**Discussion:**

- Implementation and testing exercise, IT solutions, use of CMS, exchange of views and best practices.
- Bilateral discussion of concept for the Regional Forest Sector Country Profiles for CEEC (hereafter RFCP/CEEC), *D. Pfeiffer, E. Tsursumia*.

**21 July 2006, Friday**

**Discussion and workshop:**

- Web based implementation of ideas and recommendations
- Follow up activities, proposals
- Formulating the conclusions and recommendations of the meeting
- Summary, wrap-up

### List of participants

Name	Contact	Expert Field
Cosmin Salasan	<a href="mailto:cosminsalasan@xnet.ro">cosminsalasan@xnet.ro</a> <a href="http://management.usab-tm.ro/awsee">http://management.usab-tm.ro/awsee</a>	AgroEdu Network AgroWeb SEE
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## Conclusions and recommendations

1. FAO has started to elaborate new concept to maintain AGRIS database services in order to meet new user requirements by state of the art technology and by new approach to data management. One first step is the opening of a new AGRIS/CARIS query interface. New strategies must be developed and tested how data will be collected, processed, migrated, accessed, disseminated etc at the national level. Such “experiments” are already taking place in several parts of the world, with exception of the CEE region. FAO GIL Rome proposed that one CEE country (they named Georgia) could try to formulate a TCP project to finance such experimental activity. Mr Demes recommended to first of all considering Belarus as possible candidate for this project. Discussion is to be initiated with the AGRIS centre in Belarus.

2. Localisation and adaptation of FAO AIM tools and standards have been already playing important role in several projects raised and managed at the European or member state level, mostly coordinated by institutes also functioning as WAICENT or AgroWeb national focal points. The possibility for FAO to directly participate in European Union projects is therefore considered as an interesting and attractive idea, both for FAO and for professional fellow organisations in an imaginary consortium. For the FAO such project participations can be beneficial to generate external resources for activities otherwise would not be possible to conduct. For other participating institutes there is also a great benefit to share membership with a global organisation which develops and facilitates standardised, interoperable information management in the agricultural and food domain. It is already possible that FAO participate in FP6 (EU research and development framework programme 6<sup>th</sup> call) projects. It is to be soon investigated if FAO is eligible for currently running eContentPlus projects, too. Mr Papocsi volunteered to clarify this position.

3. Collaboration between AgroWeb CEE and WISARD programmes has been recently proposed in the form of a common project proposal, to be submitted to the Dutch government. It was proposed that WIZARD project organisers will be invited to Budapest for further evaluation of future cooperation in the beginning of August 2006..

4. “Ask FAO” new information module recently offered by the FAO was discussed in detail. GILW proposed that AgroWeb CEE network members might play certain role in this activity. Because the whole concept and operation model was not yet perceived in full transparency by the meeting participants, more information is asked from GILW to ascertain what kind of mechanism can be applied to implement this service on expert level (both inside and outside FAO).

5. Collaboration between FAO and Eastern Europe Centre in Hohenheim in the field of information management in relation to education activities was discussed during the videoconference.

6. Bridging of AgroWeb Edu and AgroEdu Net; Enhancing the collaboration between the two platforms and providing network based information sources and services (AW Education) together with a working platform (Agroedu.net) based on complementarities; diversifying the education services to a broader public:

possibilities for non-students. Mr. Salasan will inform about the follow up of the matter.

7. Exploration of possibilities by using iMARK modules as teaching tools was discussed. Due to current unavailability of localisation interchange format, complexity of translation and uniqueness of Flash presentation solutions, the idea of iMARK localisation was dropped in the short term. At the same time meeting participants expressed their preference for more readily reusable educational content developed by FAO in the future.

8. FAO GIL highlighted the necessity for positive feedback regarding the use of FAO AIM tools and standards at the member state level. Mr Demes will provide regular feedback to demonstrate best implementation practises in the CEE region.

9. Running example for the use of FAO AIM tools and standards is consuming FAO RSS (real simple syndication) feed on AgroWeb CEE national portals. Hungarian FAO RSS page is already put in place. The AGROVOC translation, the use of AGRIS AP in electronic repository metadata management, the use of iMARK modules in curriculum, etc. are possible other examples for successful national (member state level) adoption and utilisation.

10. Search for possible workarounds in order to invoke collaboration and support for AgroWeb Georgia was recommended. Further negotiation with GFAR in the CAC region has been found necessary in order to improve communication.

11. Publishing information about expert meeting and video conference in AgroWeb news/highlights section was recommended.

#### **Related links:**

1. AnGR Photo Contest (<http://www.agrowebcac.org/farm/qnaap/photocontest06>)
2. Africainfo (<http://africainfo.hu/eng/index.html>)
3. Agroedu.net (<http://www.agroedu.net>)
4. Photo documentation of the consultation: (<http://www.vri.cz/centaur/DOCS/album/fao060719/index.html> )