

# When journalists think

As part of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary last July, the North American Agricultural Journalists (NAAJ) group surveyed its members about changes in agriculture since 1953, based on a prepared list of events and changes. Here's the Top 10:

1. Hybridization and other crop improvements.
2. Genetically modified crops.
3. The discovery of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), the chemical building block of heredity, in 1953.
4. Norman Borlaug's 'Green Revolution' which developed high yielding dwarf wheat varieties.
5. The agricultural debt crisis of the 1980s, provoked by higher interest rates, forcing many family farms out of business.
6. Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring* on the impact of DDT insecticide on the environment, mammals and birds.
7. The use of antibiotics for livestock and poultry.
8. Tie. There were equal votes to two developments: the adoption of no-till farming, and the fact that farm populations dropped below 2% of US population.
9. (In fact, the tenth!) The adoption of anhydrous ammonia fertilizer, a cheap source of nitrogen fertilizer made by using natural gas.

Source: NAAJ

## What do you think?

How about organising a survey among Ampacta's current and potential members, on changes in developing country agriculture since the 1960s? Write in to the convenor's address on the right.

## The World Summit Task Force of Agricultural Media Professionals (AMPs) – Ampacta

### Vision

To empower AMPs in developing countries to utilise a full spectrum of resources so that resource poor farmers can fully contribute to national, regional and global food security

### Objectives

- To empower AMPs in developing countries to enable resource poor farmers to contribute fully to local, national and regional food security
- To build the capacity of Agricultural Media Professionals (AMPs) within developing countries, enabling enhanced provision of appropriate information to farmers within developing countries through:
  - The development of regional training workshops for AMPs – with especial focus on maximising outreach both geographically and linguistically.
  - Increasing collaboration and networking

opportunities between AMPs within developing countries, through the creation and expansion of the Task Force of Agricultural Media Professionals (AMPs) This Task Force is mandated to raising the profile and capacity of Agricultural Professionals - through the adoption of an action plan/ work programme with assigned responsibilities, targets and time frames, a code of conduct, and a defined strategy for resource acquisition

### Work Programme

- An initial research programme to produce an inventory of current AMP practitioners
- Produce and distribute a quarterly newsletter
- Develop of a communication network and knowledge management resource for the Task Force
- Create a web-site and member list-service for communication and information exchange, including newsletters and the AMP inventory
- Organise and host regional capacity building, training workshops for AMPs
- Explore linkages and potential scope for collaboration with Ecoagriculture partnership initiative, with regard to provision of relevant 'Ecoagriculture' information.

### Founding members

Arid Lands Information Network - Eastern Africa, Mediateurs (The Netherlands, Uganda and Malawi), The Agriculturalist (Jamaica), Farmers Weekly (South Africa), CropLife International, Pro-Spec Media (South Africa), Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future.

Agreed in Johannesburg, August 2002  
With acknowledgements to the Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future

## Contributions

for issue 5: by  
15 November 2003

*Agriculturally* is the regular bulletin of the World Summit Task Force of Agricultural Media Professionals. The working title of the Task Force is Ampacta. The shell motive used in this publication is an illustration of the shell *Epitonium ampacta*.

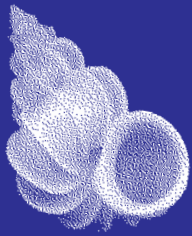
*Agriculturally* is compiled from members' contributions by the Convenor/ Chair of Ampacta:  
Paul Osborn  
Mediateurs  
Willem-Alexanderpoort 46  
1421CH Uithoorn  
Netherlands  
Fax: +31 297 540 514  
pro@mediateurs.org

Design and technical production:  
Bernard Favre  
Louma productions  
3 rue Neuve  
34150 Aniane  
France  
Fax: +33 467 57 0180  
bernard@louma.fr  
www.louma.fr

Cover illustration:  
Terri Andon

**Membership**  
Apply now!





## Shifty paradigms

In the build-up to September's Cancun trade talks, the likes of *Le Monde*, *New York Times* and *The Economist* engendered a massive wave of understanding for the predicament of Southern farmers faced by a subsidised and spoilt Western agro-industry. They are even in part accountable for the impasse at which the caretaker turned off the lights in Cancun. Who would dare face that wave?

The build-down has been less positive, a blend of demagogy and naivety. Yes, that night, as Southern partnerships grew in their new-found power, the Earth did move, but only a smidgen. Power sharing takes longer than a Saturday night with the smoothies.

As it is in the street-fighting of world trade talks, so it could be in the parlours of agricultural journalism. As we globalise our professional bodies, with associated reforms and attitude changes, we may sorely need some mediation. Kofi, might you be free in a year or two to give us a hand?

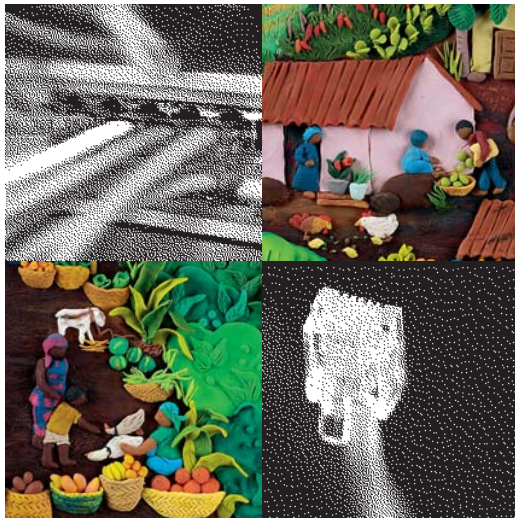
# #4

October 2003

**Ampacta** WORLD SUMMIT  
TASK FORCE OF  
AGRICULTURAL  
MEDIA  
PROFESSIONALS

## The virtue of being virtual

Granddaddy of scientific endeavour, Pa Agriculture seems to be invisible to that new baby-face on the block, the ICT Kid. But there's more synergy than meets the eye, and it could be our job to explain it, now that the Kid has got its own World Summit.



It took 30 years for sustainable development to be granted its first United Nations World Summit, in 2002. Agriculture was around for 13,000 years before Summits (first World Food Summit: 1996), and as for Women (first UN World Conference: 1975), well, let us hang our heads.

Come the Kid, and the rules change. Still a teenager in 2003 – the term Information Society was created as a EU ploy in the late-1980s – s/he is getting a full World Summit now: the first part of WSIS is set for Geneva in December 2003; a second chapter in Tunis in early 2003.

Is Grandpa Agriculture being left out of the

WSIS, or are there new opportunities to revitalise the sector? Some people, afflicted by agro-pessimism, moan that our sector is under threat. Not so, if the tea leaves in WSIS' tea cup are talking true.

Thanks to astutely organised regional meetings, and expansive PrepComm committees in Geneva, with civil society involvement, the WSIS is likely to pass a Plan of Action brimming with new perspectives.

It's just that you have to look for other terms than 'agriculture' or 'farming' or 'rural' – in this sense, Google-think has reduced our ability for subtlety.

Seek, mind ye, and ye shall find. In the midst of the Action Plan's inevitable remarks about capacity and diversity, you will find a stream of E-consciousness: E-government, E-business, E-learning, E-health, E-employment, E-environment, E-agriculture and E-science.

Let your eyes dart from section to delectable section: microfinance and loan analysis to promote marginal groups' take-up of ICTs; girl schools and preferential equipment allocation; village libraries and online rural clinics; safe (tele-)work; early warning systems and environmental monitoring; recycling of disposable ICTs. It all happens in villages.

And then the *moment agricole suprême*, a let-down. E, what a let-down.

"In E-agriculture, decisions are due to ensure the systematic dissemination through ICTs of information ... ready access ... comprehensive ... information, particularly in rural areas."

No matter, the battles are being won in other sectors to the benefit of all – and without food, none work.

- q.E.d.

[www.itu.int/wsis](http://www.itu.int/wsis)

## Resources

### First Voice

Some of the long-expected changes in the WorldSpace constellation of satellite digital broadcasting have finally been made. The WorldSpace Foundation, the not-for-profit arm which broadcasts educational programmes and data files on such channels as the African Learning Channel, has metamorphosed into FirstVoice International, and is based in the same Washington DC offices as before.

Among the data files and programmes now being transmitted by FVI are the works of our founder member the Arid Lands Information Network (including *Baobab* magazine), *Spore*, and the Developing Country Farm Radio Network.

[www.firstvoiceint.org](http://www.firstvoiceint.org)

## Resources

### Gateway to UN

The Rural Development and Food Security network brings together the various United Nations agencies working in these fields. Their bi-monthly online newszine is a lively set of backgrounders on agencies, project reports, network trends and interviews with outside partners. The June 2003 issue carried an interview with Ampacta's chairperson.

[www.rdfs.net](http://www.rdfs.net)

## Resources

### Digital literacy

They're not designed exclusively for communicators, but you can learn a lot from the online courses of *Digital Literacy for Agricultural Professionals*. Elementary Internet and Web etiquette, best practices, search strategies, you name it, and in a six-week course you could develop quite a toolbox of skills. Their regional origin at the Asia-Pacific Regional Technology Centre (APRTC) does not detract from their universal value – they're good for anywhere and everywhere. The courses come through the agLearn programme, which was formally launched at the same workshops at the Johannesburg World Summit as Ampacta.

[www.aprtc.org/aglearn/aglearn.asp](http://www.aprtc.org/aglearn/aglearn.asp)

## Resources

### Safe to tell

The key role of communication was heavily emphasised in the September meeting on Safe Work in Agriculture, organised by the Workers' Activities section (also known as ACTRAV) of the International Labour Organization in Geneva.

Whether passing on practical information on worker safety for use in the field, on the farm or in the food factory, or background information to help advocacy and lobby campaigns aiming to get ILO Safety and Health Conventions ratified and implemented by member states, our messages are seen as essential.

[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)



## news

# Making merry with MEAD

From 19 to 21 July, a seminal meeting was held in Nairobi to advance effective communication in environmental and agricultural journalism. Marcel Chimwala reports.

The meeting was a follow-up to an earlier one for environmental and agricultural media professionals, held in Lusaka, Zambia in November 2002, where it was agreed to launch a network for environmental and agricultural media professionals for sub-Saharan Africa.

The overall aim of the Nairobi meeting was, therefore, to strategise on the idea of forming the network hatched in Zambia.

The Nairobi meeting was organised with support from the Netherlands-based Centre for Information on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture (ILEIA), the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) task force for agricultural media professionals (Ampacta) and a London-based NGO FARM-Africa.

The meeting attracted a number of media workers from different countries and organisations in both Europe and Africa, who are involved in facilitating exchange of

information between resource-poor farmers and communities and the media, scientists and decision makers.

### Network of networks

The meeting agreed that the name of the network should be Media for Environment and Agricultural Development (MEAD), and that the network will work through local, regional and sub-regional environmental and agricultural media networks, which will be affiliated to the major network.

The participants therefore agreed to strengthen environmental and agricultural media networks in countries where they exist and to facilitate the formation of networks in those sub-Saharan African countries where there are no such networks.

At the meeting, the participants also came up with a mission statement for the network. It reads: "We are a network of agricultural and environmental communicators in sub-Saharan Africa. We aim to empower local communities and households in the region to improve their livelihoods and manage natural resources around them sustainably. We will do this by committing ourselves to addressing the imbalances in the flow of, and access to, information between the North and South, rich and poor, and urban and rural areas, promoting positive practice, enhancing the capacity of members in development communication, and building positive partnership for sharing experiences and information on natural resource management across the region."

## Communication plans

The meeting also agreed on a number of activities which the network will carry out. These include creating a news/press site for agricultural and environmental news items for sub-Saharan Africa, publishing an e-news update every two months, and introducing radio programmes to support sustainable agricultural development in the region.

Marcel Chimwala, as an associate of *Médiateurs*, is a founder member of Ampacta. He writes regularly in national and international media, including *Spore*.

The report of the Nairobi meeting will be announced in *Agriculturally* # 5.

The 88-page report of the Lusaka meeting

Agrobiotechnology and food security in Southern and Central Africa is available in digital form from [m.minderhoud@ileia.nl](mailto:m.minderhoud@ileia.nl) and in hard copy for 10 euros from:

M Minderhoud – PO Box 2067

3800 CB Amersfoort – The Netherlands

## news

# SARD Initiative: Act Two

The announced Design Process for the SARD Initiative, due to take place last April at FAO headquarters in Rome, turned out – on the spot – to have about as much value as a coin tossed into a Roman fountain. You couldn't see it properly; to reach it took some daring, and you had to put more of your own effort into it to have any hope of getting any value.

The wait – essentially for donors – could be over, one year later. There are hopes of SARDi (an informal name for the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative launched, with modest Ampacta involvement, at last year's Johannesburg Summit) having a presence at the Sustainable Development Fair being organised in March 2004 by the UN at the FAO. As well as heightening its visibility and impact at the 2004 meeting of the FAO's Committee on Agriculture.

In the meantime, with some human resource support from a northern Government or two, the FAO staffers involved, and SARD's tireless and unseen civil society leadership, are developing tools to evaluate what was proposed several years as best SARD practice and is now, with all this waiting, ready to be reviewed. Watch several spaces. And be at that Fair. Ampacta will.

## news

# IFAJ congress: another South African first

The next annual meeting of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists will be held in South Africa from 12 to 20 March 2004. Under the general theme of *Hope for the Millennium*, the Tenth World Congress of the IFAJ will follow the traditional pattern of IFAJ moots: normal conference-style sessions with workshops and some top-level speakers; study visits to commercial farmers and small farmer projects and some keenly researched tourist trips which always serve to maximise participants' opportunities for networking. All this across a wide swathe of the country, from the Transvaal to the Cape. The first time that IFAJ is meeting on African soil, with an agenda like that, there will surely be many crossroads to negotiate!

Hosted by the South African Agricultural Writers' Association, the Congress is expected to cost around 1,000 euros for registered members, plus the cost of travel.

[www.ifaj.org](http://www.ifaj.org)

## Resources

### Many bridges to come across

There are perhaps a tad too many organisations with the name Bridge or Bridges, even in our narrow profession of communication for development, but this new Bridge is quite a find. Based, or hosted as e-linguists say, at Sussex University's Institute of Development Studies in England, this BRIDGE is the Gender and Development Information Service (clearly!). The BRIDGE team operates an active, and well-fed, database of gender and development materials under the name *Siyanda*, which means "we are growing" in isiZulu. A good part of their data embraces, or is rooted in, agriculture and rural development.

[www.siyanda.org](http://www.siyanda.org)

## Resources

### Agriculture and ICT-jis

You'll find new angles on how information and communication technologies (ICTs) can serve our professional needs at the South Asia-oriented Asia and Pacific Network Information Centre (APNIC).

[www.apnic.net](http://www.apnic.net)

## Resources

### Trading tips

Want to keep up-to-date on trends in ICTs for rural development, and on those highly complex multilateral trade negotiations, as in WTO and Cancun? Go to the CTA Website and sign on to the email newsletters *ICT Update* and *Agritrade*. As a member of Ampacta, you are no doubt already signed up to the *Spore* email service, right?

[www.cta.int](http://www.cta.int)

## Resources

### ILEIA moves, LEISA grows

Finally, a real expression of their being an independent organisation. ILEIA, the Information Service on Low-Energy Input Agriculture, has moved, even if just a few kilometres.

ILEIA

street: *Zuidsingel 16*

3811 HA Amersfoort

and PO Box 2067

3800 CB Amersfoort

The Netherlands

tel: +31 33 467 3870

fax: +31 33 463 2410

Excerpts of the English LEISA magazine are now available through ILEIA's new ezine E-LEISA; order it online, and/or read the full edition online. The Spanish version of LEISA – *Revista de agroecología* – is at [www.leisa-al.org.pe/revista/indx-vol.html](http://www.leisa-al.org.pe/revista/indx-vol.html)

And the French version, to be known as *Afridape* and published by IIED in Dakar, Senegal, is coming soon. Details by end-2003 on the ILEIA site.

[www.ileia.org](http://www.ileia.org)