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INTRODUCTION TO THIS ISSUE

How can I get rid of the weed Commelina benghalensis? What are the most effective biological methods of eradicating the sweet potato weevil? These are typical questions asked by farmers in ACP countries. Today, anyone with an Internet connection can find information on ways to control the sweet potato weevil, or any other plant or animal pest. Indeed, the volume of agricultural information available on the Internet is considerable, and is increasing rapidly.

However, few of these online resources are of practical use for farmers in ACP countries – most are written in English, often for a scientific audience and so are not particularly suitable or even intended for farmers. Also, the majority of ACP farmers do not have direct access to these resources, as Internet connectivity is still unreliable and costly, especially in rural areas. This issue of *ICT Update* takes a look at some recent initiatives to bridge such gaps in the dissemination of agricultural information.
Read more: http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/article/view/451

ACP-EU UPDATE

Dorothy Mukhebi reports on the Regional Agricultural Information Network (RAIN), a new network of agricultural information organizations and professionals in 10 countries in eastern and central Africa – Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

Read more: http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/article/view/450/

TECHTIP

A suitcase radio station manufactured by Wantok Enterprises, a Canadian company, consists of a complete FM radio broadcast unit – including a set of two MP3/CD players, two cassette recorders, a six-channel audio mixer and a microphone. In Timbuktu, the suitcase radio station is used during locust infestations and also for the production of agricultural information programmes on location.

http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/article/articleview/456/

ARTICLES

Djilali Benamrane describes how community radio stations in Niger are becoming information centres for rural development.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/article/articleview/439

Luigi Guarino makes the case for weblogs as a means to disseminate news and information about plant genetic resources in the Pacific.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/article/articleview/442/

Henning Knipschild and Vivienne Oguya explain how CTA's web based question and answer service is enabling farmers in ACP countries to obtain advice from agricultural experts.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/article/articleview/443

Doris Matovelo and Egbert de Smet explain why Sokoine National Agricultural Library in Tanzania chose CDS/ISIS software to administer its catalogue and other library operations.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/article/articleview/446/

Theophilus E. Mlaki describes how CABI's Crop Protection Compendium on CD-ROM has helped farmers in Tanzania to eliminate a devastating cassava pest.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/article/articleview/447/

In the Q&A, Jean-François Giovannetti argues that more effective information sharing and knowledge management are essential for agricultural and rural development.

PROJECTS
This issue's list of projects and initiatives related to ICTs and land tenure includes:

Benin: VSAT provides Internet access to cotton growers
Since 2002 the Community Multimedia Centre (CMC) in Banikoara, Benin, has provided essential services to the large but isolated local community of cotton growers, but until recently it was hampered by poor Internet connectivity. In September 2004, however, UNESCO provided the centre with a very small aperture terminal (VSAT) satellite receiver, and use of the CMC has shot up. Radio listeners now have access to online information through radio browsing programmes in three local languages – Bariba, Denda and Peuhl. The presenter surfs the web for information on a chosen theme and explains and comments on the contents of websites, with the help of a local expert.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/link/a/1008

Papua New Guinea NARI Agricultural Information System
In 2000, the Papua New Guinea National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) launched an agricultural information system, which now contains over 19,000 records of books, journal articles, trial reports and other information resources. The system also includes a database of researchers, the staff of NARI and the Coffee Research Institute (CRI), with their expertise, skills and experience. The database can be accessed by scientists and those in search for information from the NARI information centres located throughout PNG and by direct access to a runtime version on CD.

http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/link/a/1011

Peru: Wi-fi web for farmers in the Huaral Valley
A network of community computer centres, linked by wireless technology, is providing a helping hand for poor farmers in Peru. The pilot scheme in the Huaral Valley, 80 kilometres north of the capital Lima, provides vital links between local organizations involved in water irrigation, enabling them to coordinate their actions. The 14 telecentres involved in the project use open source software and affordable computer equipment. One of the key elements of the project is the agricultural information system, where farmers can find up-to-date market prices for their produce, as well as information on topics ranging from disease prevention to new farming techniques.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/link/a/1010

Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA)
AGORA is an initiative of the FAO and leading academic publishers to provide free or low-cost Internet access to over 700 scientific journals in agriculture and related biological, environmental and social sciences to public institutions in developing countries. AGORA makes available high-quality, relevant and timely agricultural information for researchers, policy makers, students and extension specialists, in order to increase the quality and effectiveness of research, education and training.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/link/a/1012

WEB RESOURCES

This issue's list of annotated web resources includes:

African Journals OnLine (AJOL)
AJOL is a service set up by the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) to provide access to African published research, and increase worldwide knowledge of indigenous scholarship in a wide range of academic disciplines. The AJOL website offers access to tables of contents and abstracts (where available) of all articles published in 192 journals. In future, some full-text articles will also be available. All the material on AJOL is free to view, search and browse. Users can order full-text documents, to be delivered either by post or by email.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/link/a/1007

Caribbean Documentation Centre (CDC)
The CDC houses and provides access to United Nations publications, in particular those of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which are available in English and Spanish. The collection includes government documents, journals, reports, and other information resources relevant to the social and economic development of the region. The CDC offers clients a mix of traditional and web-based services, including the Caribbean Digital Library, which provides access to documents on the web, arranged under 27 subject headings.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/link/a/1009

Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK)
IMARK is an initiative of the FAO to mobilize and build upon existing resources to create a comprehensive suite of distance learning resources for the management and exchange of agricultural

information. IMARK learning materials are being developed as a series of modules on CD-ROM, supplemented by an online community via a virtual discussion forum where contributors and learners can exchange views, share information and help each other. IMARK is free of charge, and is available in five languages, in order to reach audiences that might otherwise be unable to access such resources.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/link/a/1013

OISAT Info
OISAT Info is an online information service on non-chemical pest management in the tropics, maintained by the Pesticides Action Network (PAN), that offers practical guidelines for trainers, extension workers and smallholder farmers on how to minimize pest damage in a safe, effective, and ecologically sound way. The service offers information on preventive and curative methods of managing pests with the goal of promoting self-regulatory mechanisms within agricultural systems, and reducing the use of synthetic pesticides.
http://ictupdate.cta.int/index.php/link/a/1014

http://ictupdate.cta.int.

Production and content management: Contactivity bv, Leiden