

The joint media network is an open network of information systems and services for rural development in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.



rural radio

The main purpose of the network is to develop strong regional, national and transnational mechanisms to facilitate the use of, and access to, information in order to contribute to sustainable agriculture, rural development and food security.



web based question-and-answer services

first step

- join the existing national market price information systems into one transnational information tool
- provide a demand driven question-and-answer service on a shared platform

second step

- use the network to
 - collect relevant development statistics
 - improve the marketing of agricultural products
 - strengthen civil society organisations



farmers newspapers



information services via SMS & telephone

ACP joint media network for agriculture and rural development

pooling competence from web based question-and-answer services, rural radio, farmers newspapers and SMS-market price information systems

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ACP joint media network for agriculture and rural development

1. The Project

ACP joint media network for agricultural and rural development

Strengthening Civil Society Organisations in Agriculture and Rural Development by Regional Integration of Information Systems and Services in ACP countries

Background: provide information for improved decision-making

Due to population growth and environmental change food security and rural development can only be achieved if production and distribution systems are constantly intensified and improved. This depends to a large extent on a society's capacity to generate and transfer knowledge and know-how, to provide information for improved decision-making, to acquire resources and to motivate change. Food security and rural development is at risk if the innovation process is too slow.

Objective: linking information and communication services

The aim of this project is to speed up the innovation process by developing and linking various ACP information and communication services to support producers, traders and policy-makers involved in production and distribution systems.

Approach: regional integration of a price information system to form an active network

Price information on commodities is essential to all parties involved in the agricultural sector. Therefore most countries have established networks to monitor prices. As a first step, the project will work to join these national systems together in order to provide regional price information to ACP civil society (producers, NGO's etc) and small scale traders. To achieve regional integration, the project will seek to harmonise procedures between countries and to improve the efficiency of national systems by exchanging and upgrading technology for data collection, processing and dissemination via SMS, Print, Rural Radio and the Internet.

As a result of the regional integration process, a network of rural nodes will emerge. This network will be used to establish a common online platform for the existing question and answer services in the regions. Subsequently, the network will be used to develop and provide additional services for collecting and disseminating development statistics, marketing agricultural products and inputs and strengthening civil society organisations.

The project will be demand driven, with a broad network to respond to the needs of the target group. The project will be based on an "open source" philosophy - the technologies, services, content and network developed by the project will be accessible to the public. Service providers and development agencies in particular will be encouraged to support and use the network.

To lower transaction costs and to assure that the services provided are driven by demand, the project will use an innovative funding mechanism - the "voucher system". The Voucher System is the means by which the beneficiaries will gain access to information services (questions and answers, market prices and analysis etc.) through various media (radio, internet-based platform, SMS). The voucher system has been tested in a pilot project in Benin and has had successful results. It assures equitable access to services, facilitates verification of outputs and favours the development of networks that have a decentralised and dynamic organisational structure.



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Initiators

Organisations in ACP countries will play the central role. As operators of the price information and the question and answer services, they will be the driving force to achieve regional integration of the two services and to promote the project through their networks. CTA will facilitate co-ordination and networking activities, support capacity building and provide technical information for the question and answer services. The German Centre for Documentation and Information in Agriculture (ZADI) will provide technical and conceptual support to develop and improve services, provide training, assist southern partners during the establishment phase and assure technical co-ordination. The Global Forum on Agricultural research (GFAR) will contribute to awareness-raising and to assuring effective linkage to other projects.

You are most welcome to join our project and to support the network. Please feel free to contact us for additional information or to discuss opportunities for collaboration.

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2. Initiators

Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA)

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The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) was established in 1983 under the Lomé Convention between the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) Group of States and the European Union Member States. Since 2000 it has operated within the framework of the ACP-EC Cotonou Agreement.

CTA's tasks are to develop and provide services that improve access to information for agricultural and rural development, and to strengthen the capacity of ACP countries to produce, acquire, exchange and utilise information in this area. CTA's programmes are organised around four principal themes: developing information management and partnership strategies needed for policy formulation and implementation; promoting contact and exchange of experience; providing ACP partners with information on demand; and strengthening their information and communication capacities.

German Centre for Documentation and Information in Agriculture (ZADI)

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The German Centre for Documentation and Information in Agriculture (ZADI) is the scientific information institute of the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture. Among its tasks are information services like the development and maintenance of information portals, scientific information systems and databases, advising for the institutes associated with the Ministry, the execution of national co-ordination tasks and related research and development in the field of information sciences. A working group at the ZADI has specialised on Information Systems for International Cooperation in Agricultural research and Rural development (ISICAD).

The ISICAD team is

- adapting and programming tools and services for internet communication to ensure efficient collaboration between researchers, institutions and farmers
- developing concepts to support the building of sustainable networks in Agricultural Research for development and rural development
- co-ordinating decentralised information networks.

In collaboration with GFAR the ISICAD-team supports regional and national initiatives.



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3. Advocating the network

Global Forum on Agricultural research (GFAR)

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The Global Forum on Agricultural research (GFAR) is a multi-stakeholder initiative that contributes to eradicating poverty, achieving food security, and conserving and managing natural resources. It enhances national capacities to generate, adapt and transfer knowledge and promotes cost-effective partnerships and strategic alliances among ARD stakeholders.

GFAR was founded by representatives of the national agricultural research systems in developing countries (NARS), advanced research institutions (ARIs), regional and sub-regional organisations, universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), farmers' organisations, the private sector, international agricultural research centres (IARCs) mostly belonging to the CGIAR, and the donor community.

In order to improve information flows among stakeholders and facilitate access to knowledge by end users GFAR aims to ensure that the opportunities of ICM are available and used at the global, regional and sub regional level. This has led to the development of Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS) and global agricultural information systems (EGFAR).



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4. Project Partners for question and answer services

QAS Librarian, Agricultural Information for Development of Eastern Africa (AGRIDEA)

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The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) launched the pilot phase of the Question and Answer Service (QAS), in Eastern Africa in 1999. Today the Agricultural Information for the Development of Eastern Africa, (AGRIDEA), has got four partners: The National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) of Uganda, the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), the Ethiopian Agricultural Research Organisation (EARO), The Division of Research and Development (DRD) and the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) both in Tanzania. The Agricultural Research Information Service (ARIS), a unit of NARO is the coordinating centre of the service.

AGRIDEA is meant to have a regional appeal, and this partnership sets the platform for collaboration among the different stakeholders in these Eastern African countries. The success of AGRIDEA has been attributed to a close collaboration among the partners in order to achieve the objective of providing information on demand to the stakeholders. Requests for information are received and processed at the different nodes in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Some requests are channelled from the nodes to the coordination centre at ARIS in Uganda. ARIS may also channel some requests to the nodes for processing and dispatch to the requester. In achieving this, the partners are mindful of providing information on demand.

The Ghana Agricultural Information Network System (GAINS)

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The Ghana Agricultural Information Network System (GAINS) was established as a component of the erstwhile Government of Ghana/World Bank supported National Agricultural Research Project (NARP) in 1991 to revitalise the library and information system in the agricultural sector of the economy. The rationale was to make information more accessible to research scientists, policy makers, extension agents, etc. to support sustainable agricultural development.



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Under a new initiative, ie. the Agricultural Services Sub-sector Improvement Programme (AGSSIP), GAINS is being strengthened to provide the necessary information support for research activities.

GAINS links the libraries and information centres of all the agricultural research institutes of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the faculties of agriculture of the public-funded universities and the ministry of food and agriculture.

The objective is to establish a coordinated network system that seeks to collect, process, share and repackage for dissemination, agricultural information generated in Ghana or elsewhere in any format to support agricultural research and development in Ghana.

GAINS activities are organised around the following themes:

1. Strengthening libraries and information centres of the network
 - capacity building
 - resource strengthening
 - promoting the use of ICTs4D
2. Providing information on demand
 - inter-library lending and document delivery service
 - Question and Answer Service (QAS)
 - SDI service
 - creation and updating of databases
3. Promoting contact and exchange of experiences with regional and international institutions in agriculture and related disciplines

SQR régional Afrique Centrale (Central Africa Regional QAS)

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SAILD is an international non profit NGO funded by Switzerland. Among other services SAILD is publishing a Monthly Publication on News and Discussions on the Rural World called "The farmers voice" and is managing a documentation centre called CDDR which is becoming an excellent trade point for farmers

Created in 1986, the "*Farmer's Voice*" is a monthly magazine, for information, training, debate and exchange on the rural world. It is published in English, Arabic and French.

In addition to activities such as exhibitions, debates, trade fair, CDDR has put in place, in collaboration with CTA, a personalised question and answer service composed of statistical file, technical slips, economic synthesis, etc.



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Institute for Research, Extension and Training in Agriculture (IRETA)

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IRETA was established in 1983 as an institute of the University of the South Pacific, a regional university with 12 member countries. The Institute is located together with the School of Agriculture at the University's Alafua Campus in Samoa. In addition to the 12 member countries, IRETA also provides a service to Papua New Guinea as well as to other island nations in the Pacific. IRETA also hosts the regional branch office of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), which serves the 11 Pacific ACP member states.

Research: together with national departments of agriculture, IRETA conducts applied agricultural research to increase food production and productivity in its member countries. Its main area of research is root crop breeding, tissue culture (root crops in particular), farming systems (especially on atolls and in Polynesia), local livestock feeds and post harvest technology.

Extension: IRETA's outreach programme includes national agricultural liaison officers (usually staff of national departments of agriculture), audiovisual media, and library services and publications. Through the Agriculture and Rural Development Information Network (ARDIN) Centre, IRETA is able to respond to requests for information and assistance from its member countries. Placing an ALO in nearly all member countries brings access to these services closer to national institutions and individuals. IRETA has an extensive catalogue of technical manuals, extension leaflets and brochures (many in local Pacific languages), a newsletter (IRETA's South Pacific Agriculture News), the peer-reviewed Journal of South Pacific Agriculture, and other publications including conference proceedings, workshop reports and annual reports.

Training: IRETA has set up a training centre (with accommodation) to facilitate the hosting of formal and informal training courses, workshops and seminars. The five to seven workshops held annually cover a range of topics, including crop and livestock production, crop protection, floriculture, agricultural research, and information and communication skills.

IRETA's services and resources are designed specifically for its member countries in the Pacific, but on application they may be available to other developing countries. A website, currently being developed, will provide further information and contact details



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5. Project partners for market price information systems

Office National d'Appui à la Sécurité Alimentaire (ONASA)

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The Benin government has created the National Bureau for Food Security (ONASA) in 1992. Special emphasis was put on the role of the ONASA to assist decision making of all actors involved in agricultural trade, especially the private sector.

The main tasks of ONASA are :

- monitor agricultural production
- manage an information system on prices and display the flow of agricultural products
- strengthen commercialisation of products by the private sector
- give advice to the government regarding food security and support the government to improve efficient institutional coordination.

ONASA is a parastatal organisation.

To improve information on the latest developments ONASA has build up an observatory that covers 64 out of 180 markets in Benin. Prices are evaluated at the level of producers, traders and consumers. Production is monitored in collaboration with the national Extension Service. Information is disseminated via 18 rural radio stations.

AMIS network / Observatoire du Marché Agricole (OMA)

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Observatoire du Marché Agricole (OMA) is an agricultural market information system which covers all the agricultural products markets and inputs markets in Mali. OMA collects, processes and diffuses the information to producers, traders, processors and consumers as well as to decision makers. This information allows these actors to make reasonable decisions to sell or buy products.

The agricultural market information systems (AMIS) network has been set up to facilitate the trade of agricultural products within the west african sub-region. It covers 8 countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinée, Niger, Sénégal, Bénin, Togo). The AMIS network is working closely with an agricultural products traders network to strengthen the ag products exchange within the sub-region.



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Caribbean AgriBusiness Marketing Intelligence & Development Network (CAMID)

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The Caribbean Agribusiness Marketing Intelligence and Development (CAMID) Network was established in May 2001 as the requisite mechanism to develop and implement the Marketing Development component of the Regional Transformation Programme for Agriculture within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

It is comprised of national and regional, public and private sector agribusiness entities that have responsibility for marketing development and who have agreed to collaborate in the provision of marketing development services to the agribusiness sector in the CARIFORUM region.

The Network is directed by a Regional Management Committee, whilst day-to-day management is carried out by the Secretariat located at Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) Headquarters in Trinidad & Tobago.

CAMID has developed a Regional Integrated Marketing Development Strategy (RIMS) designed to optimise agricultural marketing operations at the domestic, regional and extra-regional levels through increasing information flows between sellers and buyers, facilitation of product exchange and reduction of transaction costs.

The RIMS is aimed at putting in place systems, mechanisms and arrangements that will allow for the integration of the major services including marketing intelligence, trade facilitation, quality assurance and the supporting infrastructure.

Specifically, producers and traders will benefit from the following support services:

1. Agricultural marketing and production database
2. Product supply and demand forecast service
3. E-commerce trading facility
4. Quality assurance protocols for the major traded products
5. Freight availability database
6. Extra regional joint marketing programme
7. Industry and enterprise development services



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6. Project partners for rural radio

SADC - Communication Centre

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In 1993 a new strategy for the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) sector was endorsed by the Council of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The major objectives of this strategy are:

- to increase agricultural productivity
- to foster the efficient development, utilisation and conservation of natural resources
- to improve the standards of living of rural populations.

Realising the vital part that Communication was to play in this plan, SADC, assisted by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and funded by the Government of Italy, created the SADC Centre of Communication for Development.

The Centre promotes the sustainable and systematic use of communication in the development process. It aims to ensure people's participation and sense of ownership to identify and implement appropriate development programmes, technologies and policies for the reduction of poverty. Communication for Development is an innovative approach that helps to make development programmes successful and lasting. It is the use of communication approaches and media to help stakeholders to share knowledge effectively. It enables participation, ownership and empowerment within their development programmes. It applies to all development sectors where success depends on the positive choices and actions of people, particularly at the grass roots level. Further, it aims to "elevate the organisational location of Communication for Development to the highest policy levels within the region and ultimately outside it to ensure community building that is directed and controlled by people themselves".

Through its activities the Centre is proving that Development Communication is not just an "add-on", "support" or "subsidiary component" to development projects but an integral and central component to strategic planning. And that Communication can be effectively used to galvanise people at grassroots level to ensure their total participation in running their own affairs and consequently contribute to strengthening democratic systems and values at various levels and improve people's economic well-being at household level.

The SADC Centre assists clients with Communication for Development advice, training, linkages, and other services.



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URTNA Training Centre (C.F/URTNA)

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Further to a decision taken by the General Assembly of **URTNA** held in **Banjul** in **June 1999**, the CIERRO (Inter African Centre of Studies in Rural Radio) that was created in **1978** by the URTNA (Union of National Radios and Televisions Organisations of Africa) now became the Training Centre of URTNA. The ambition of the Training Centre of URTNA is to fulfil the training needs required by the broadcasting Institutions and to enlarge its activities field in all training domains as regards communication: rural radio, journalism, communication; New technologies of information, Audiovisuals; etc.

After twenty years of existence, the Training Centre of URTA (former CIERRO) came up to the crossroad. It has provided long term training for many communicators and technicians in rural radio who came from different African Institutions of broadcasting radios. The training Centre of URTNA (former CIERRO) organised also many training sessions and/or short terms recycling courses including programmes and techniques for media men in general and rural radio communicators in particular.

With the new upheaval of the media scene in Africa and with the strong will of the members organisms of URTNA, the Training Centre will extend its activities to all works relating to communication. In the same dynamism, the Centre will be equipped with logistic means so as to provide training in television.

Ministry of Agriculture: Information and Communication Section

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Fiji	

The Information and Communication Section of the Ministry of Agriculture began in 1946, when the Department of Agriculture realized the need to have an informed agriculture Sector. It was started with rural broadcast programs in collaborations with the Fiji Broadcasting Commission. The move was to assist the Extension Services Division in informing the farming sector of the activities and services of the Department. The program began with weekly broadcasts in the Fijian and Hindi languages and fortnightly broadcasts in the English language.

The Information and Communication Section proper was established in 1964. The Section was designed to liaise between offices of the Department, the press and the public and to disseminate information to the Staff of the Agriculture Department. Its main objectives were to provide press releases for the daily newspapers, produce rural broadcasts and to produce printed materials. In 1965, the Section included showing agriculture related films and managing agriculture shows as part of its growing activities.



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7. Project partners for Geographical Information Systems

The Belize Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

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The Belize Citrus Growers Association (CGA) was established under the Citrus (Processing & Production) Ordinance of 1967 under Chapter 225 of the 2000 Revised Laws of Belize. CGA is in its 34th year of serving growers in Belize.

The Mission of the Citrus Growers Association is to ensure the highest possible production of the best quality citrus and sell at the highest possible price in order to improve the welfare and quality of life for citrus growers in Belize.

To achieve its Mission, CREI's work is focused on the following top-three priorities:

1. improved grove nutrition
2. the provision of healthy planting material
3. the provision of information

Work in these priority areas is accomplished through three main programme areas:

1. Extension & Education
2. The Belize Citrus Certification Programme
3. The Belize Citrus Information Unit

The Information Unit works to document and disseminate relevant industry information. It maintains a database to store reliable grower and industry data. The unit is also responsible for producing the national forecast and other statistical data. All CGA publications come under the charge of this unit. The monthly newsletter, CitroScope, documents the experiences gained through the Citrus Village Groups. The quarterly news magazine, CitriNews, deals with issues in greater depth. Additionally, the unit produces a number of topic-specific brochures and manuals, maintains the Belize Citrus Library (which holds a collection of books and periodicals on citrus production), and maintains and continues with the development of this website.