

## **Agriculture Network Information Center (AgNIC)**

**URL:** <http://www.agnic.org/>

[AgNIC](#) is a distributed network on the Internet established by the National Agricultural Library in collaboration with several land-grant university libraries to provide a focal point for seamless Internet access to agriculture-related information, subject area experts, and other resources.

AgNIC's customers include the national and international public- and private-sector components of agriculture, as well as private citizens. AgNIC provides an array of value-added services that are summarized below:

AgDB is a database directory of quality agriculture-related databases, datasets, and information systems. It describes and presently links to more than 700 information resources, mainly on the Internet, in thirteen different subject areas. By tightly focusing on the discipline of agriculture, this tool addresses the "information overload," problem which so frustrates Web users. Carefully crafted resources descriptions guide users directly to relevant, quality information resources. AgDB offers an alphabetical index, a list of recently added records, subject-classified access, and full-text search functionality. Its uncomplicated user-interface makes it suitable for Internet-novice and -veteran, alike. AgDB content ranges from "technical" to "practical".

To evolve the AgDB model and make it scalable, AgNIC is currently seeking to collaborate with additional partners so the work of identifying new resources, creating descriptive records, and ensuring the accuracy of existing descriptions can be distributed, perhaps by subject area.

Agricultural Calendar of Events (AgCal). The AgNIC Calendar of Agricultural Conferences, Meetings, and Seminars provides a repository for 'information about' and 'links to' agricultural conferences, with emphasis on those of scientific significance. This resource is proactively and aggressively maintained. Although we are happy to receive input for the calendar, rather than just relying on others to send information, each day AgNIC staff monitor agriculture-related discussion groups and newsgroups for word of pertinent meetings. When necessary, we contact organizers by electronic mail seeking details of the event. Where the conference organizer has already established a Web site for the event, AgCal links to that source. Otherwise, for more important meetings, AgNIC will even create a local Web page for the event. We believe this proactive philosophy makes AgCal preeminent among Web-based agricultural calendars.

AgCal contains information about more than 600 agriculture-related meetings. It also links to 100 calendars maintained by other institutions, under subject headings arranged alphabetically based on the broad subject areas of the AGRICOLA Subject Category Codes.

Online Reference Service Pilot Project. AgNIC has five "Centers of Excellence" that are part of an experiment involving on-line reference assistance. Participating in the AgNIC Reference Pilot Project are: Iowa State University, the University of Arizona, the University of Nebraska, Mann Library at Cornell University, and the National Agricultural Library (NAL). Each center selected a specific subject area to cover as part of the partnership between the project participants. The areas are: Animal Science (Iowa); Plant Sciences (Nebraska); Food and Nutrition (NAL); Rural Information (NAL); Rangeland Management (Arizona); and Reports and Data Sets from the USDA Economics Agencies (Cornell). The focus of some of the broader areas will probably narrow as new collaborators are added.

The centers significantly enhanced their home pages with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), Frequently Used Resources (FUR), and links to other Internet accessible resources. The Internet accessible resources provided by the centers should provide the answer or an excellent link to the answer for most, if not all, questions that visitors to the AgNIC pages will have. If however, there are unanswered questions, a librarian or information specialist will personally assist the AgNIC visitor.

Data Base of the Occurrence and Distribution of Pesticides in Chesapeake Bay. Working with an ARS research scientist during Summer 1996, AgNIC created a Web version of this extensive and important scientific compilation. The initiative demonstrates the viability and value of collaboration between librarians and scientists in bringing scientific information to the public. AgNIC is currently exploring the possibility of creating similar systems for other agricultural datasets.

ProMED-mail: Plant Diseases Announcements. Collaborating with the ProMED Project (Federation of American Scientists), AgNIC has created and maintains a searchable archive of the emerging plant disease announcements posted to the ProMED-mail mailing list.

Directories of Agriculture-related Internet Information Resources. This new AgNIC product facilitates user access by pointing to subject-focused directories of agriculture-related information resources on the Internet. The subject headings are arranged alphabetically based on broad subject areas of the AGRICOLA Subject Category Codes.

Directories of Experts in Agriculture. This directory, which is still in its infancy, presently links to about forty directories of experts in agriculture-related disciplines that are on the Internet. The subject headings are arranged

alphabetically based on broad subject areas of the AGRICOLA Subject Category Codes. Entries range from modest, low budget, narrowly focused efforts, through more technologically sophisticated implementations, to highly ambitious, limited-access projects. As this resource evolves, AgNIC users will, from a single source, be able to identify and contact human experts willing to assist them in specialized aspects of agriculture.