



2005/1116/DD/SE/GIC

Circular

Subject: Development of the CORAF/WECARD sub-regional information system for agricultural research and rural development

Dear Sirs/Madams,

During the 6th General Assembly of the CORAF/WECARD held from the 18 to May 21, 2005 in Dakar, the discussions in the working group "Reinforcement of the capacities in information and communication of the NARS members of the CORAF/WECARD" has led to the development of a 'road map' for the reinforcement and further development of the sub-regional information system for agricultural research and rural development. The road map comprises several main activities that will lead to the development of the system until April 2006. These activities are as follows:

1. Consolidation of the network of the national correspondents (NC) of CORAF/WECARD and creation of a 'think tank' at the sub-regional level to follow the evolution and to take part in the development of the information system (June - September 2005)
2. Creation of a development Web site to reinforce the dialogue with the users during the process of development of the system. This site is already accessible at: <http://www.isicad.org/coraf>. (June 2005)
3. Conception of the NARS Web pages and the sub-regional page (June - July 2005)
4. Development of a prototype of an integrated system (August - September 2005)
5. Test and Feedback of the national correspondents, task force and other national actors concerning the prototype (at the end of October 2005)
6. Distance training of NARS actors (November 2005 - DEC. 2005)
7. Collection of information and entry of basic data in the prototype. The data will be transferred in the final version (as from October 2005)
8. Development of version 1 of the Web page for all the 21 countries and of the sub-regional version (November 2005 - February 2006)
9. Campaign of promotion and sensitising (at the beginning of 2006).
10. Evaluation of the development process and impact of the program (April 2006)

The special objectives of the development of the sub-regional information system are as follows:

- To create sub-regional data bases on the Internet on the results of agricultural research, research projects, institutions, human resources
- To equip each NARS with an Internet portal for the diffusion of information, the access to the data bases and the data-processing tools
- To set up an electronic communication system with several tools adapted to the needs and the working conditions of the users to facilitate the exchanges and the management of information and to reinforce the team work (toolbox).

Components of the system

The system will be composed of various tools which were developed and tested in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The principal components will be:

- A decentralised system to index the assets of agricultural research with the option to have the whole on CD-ROM
- A decentralised system to index the actors, the project and the organisations of agricultural research for development (InfoSys+).
- An open system of electronic journals which makes it possible to any actors to easily publish and at low cost on the Internet with the option to have the whole on CD-ROM. (RUN)
- A groupware (extranet) to facilitate the communication and the management of information in the frame of research and development projects that are carried out in a decentralised way (PhProjekt)

Structure of the system

The structure of the system envisages the creation of various Web sites to allow a sub-regional view and national views for each Member State. The national pages and the sub-regional page will be inter-connected.

Development Approach

The system will be programmed on the basis of open source software. On the basis of the applications which were developed and tested before, the system will be developed in a iterative process by involving the users. This project remains a dynamic process whose future development will depend on the feed-back of the users.

In this context a training and planning workshop was organised by the CORAF/WECARD from 19 to July 21 with Brazzaville in Congo, with the support of the CTA. At this workshop the representatives of 8 countries worked out a list of activities that have to be carried out in close collaboration with the NARS in order to achieve the development of the national information systems and the sub-regional system. The following activities were defined:

1. Consolidation of the network of the correspondents of the CORAF/WECARD

- To identify a national correspondent in each NARS
- To identify new people who will belong to the 'think tank' set up during AG of the CORAF/WECARD in May 2005

2. To index the actors of the NARS

- To identify resource persons of the network at the national level
- To prepare a list of the actors and institutions of the NARS

3. Promotion

- To inform the persons in charge in the countries about the development of the information system
- To inform the other actors of the NARS through a circular letter (model of letter to be repaired by Secretariat CORAF/WECARD)
- To organise meetings to present the system and promote its use by researchers and other NARS stakeholders

4. Development of the contents

- PhProjekt:: To create working groups for each country
- InfoSys+: To identify and register all actors (human resources), projects and institutions of the NARS
- Research Result data base: To collect and enter the results of research of the NARS in the data base

5. Development of the system

- To make suggestions for the improvement of the system
- To collect information to contribute to the creation of the NARS Web page

6. Training

- To identify and register NARS actors who want to take part in the distance training
- To initiate the actors with the use of the various tools

In the frame of this project, the CORAF/WECARD benefits from the technical collaboration with the information system of the European Forum for the agricultural research for development EARD-InfoSys+ (www.infosysplus.org). EARD-InfoSys+ was developed and managed by the ISICAD working group (www.isicad.org) at the German Centre of Documentation and Information for Agriculture (ZADI www.zadi.de).

To this end, Mr. Marc Bernard of the ZADI will contact you during the following days in order to launch the planned activities.

We thank you in advance for your participation and your collaboration.

CC. National Correspondent

Dady DEMBY
Information & Communication Manager
CORAF/WECARD
BP 48, Dakar RP, Senegal
Tel +221 825 39 63 / 825 96 18
Fax +221 825 55 69
E-mail: dady.demby@coraforg