

CAISNews

“To facilitate improved access to agricultural technology and marketing information to support competitiveness in the agricultural sector”

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Introduction

It has been one of the objectives of the CAIS to launch a newsletter for some time. While we have been placing selected articles in the PROCICARIBE News we want to focus CAISNews on activities and solving problems associated with facilitating the development of capacity in information and communications. In the Caribbean region, activities in the area of information and communications, have moved to a new threshold level and the importance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is being recognised and incorporated into the plans and programmes of member states. CAIS activities at the local level will now be intensified and we at the CAIS Secretariat look forward to working more closely with information professionals and technical staff as well as national network coordinators, to implement the key programmes identified by stakeholders as priorities.

Please remember that CAISNews is also available on the CAIS website www.caisnet.org. Based on feedback from you our clientele we have changed the layout of the newsletter so that it is easier to read online. Many thanks to the readers who sent us feedback and remember your contributions are important in making this our newsletter. Happy reading.

News from the CAISIN Moderator

Much is written on the role of information in improving research and development activities, however while this is generally accepted in principle, many circumstances within individual countries militate against making the delivery of information at the right time to the right persons to ensure that the right decisions are taken. As a result, there is the need to look, examine and

find solutions to such issues as they apply in local situations. One very effective mechanism to achieve this is the sharing of these local problems/circumstances with colleagues/peers who work in similar situations and have similar experiences in other countries.

This is one of the roles that CAIS envisages for CAISIN, an electronic forum that links persons and institutions involved in the delivery of agricultural information at the national level in Caribbean States. One huge hurdle appears to exist, however, that is, how to get people talking about their experiences to a faceless audience? Has this been your experience in sharing information to date? We would like to get your views and encourage you to write the CAISIN Moderator P Thompson (humbird@tsst.net.tt)

Management of a Question and Answer Service (QAS) – A Poem

In this issue we would like to highlight a poem that was composed by Mr Eric Evelyn of St Kitts and Nevis, in the QAS workshop held in Kingston, Jamaica during 24 September – 5 October 2001. The CTA flagship publication *Spore*, Number 96 featured a few lines of the poem under the tagline “Him a poet and boy he know it”

A Question and Answer Service

Establishing a Question and Answer Service
Is an opportunity we should not miss
It could provide us with information
That would allow us to make so many decisions

It may or may not be formal
But to have it is oh so crucial
That was the message from day one
And it remained with us through hard work and fun

You must analyze the needs of your users
And identify stakeholders and partners
Networking could be the key
To answer your questions effectively

Information resources you must try to find
When building your workflows, keep this in mind
To promote your QAS, proceed with care
But with quality control, you have nothing to fear

So now we have come to the end of the course
To establish or QAS, lets proceed with full force
The personal touch, remember to share
And we'll agree it was worth being here.

Research on Information Policy

A review of electronic sources of information on information policies in general as well as those developed for the agricultural sector has been completed. The result of this review is a list Internet sources which will be available by the 30 April 2002 in print and on the CAIS Website www.caisnet.org. This research work is part of a project to prepare templates for the development of information policies for use in the agricultural sector of the Caribbean region, identified as a priority project for CAIS. The initial phase of work also involve the use of surveys in the region with a view to incorporating the Caribbean experiences with that of existing policies in the international arena.

Highlights of CTA's Strategic Framework 2001-2005

Since 1987, the ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) has played and continues to play a major role in developing capacity in the area of information and communications management as well as the dissemination of technical information in agricultural and rural cooperation in the Caribbean Region. The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute has functioned as the Regional Branch Office for the Caribbean since 1987.

CTA, which now operates under the Cotonou Agreement, is currently implementing a new strategic framework, developed as a result of ongoing feedback from its stakeholders from the public, private and NGO sectors in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific States. Following are the highlights of this framework:-

Mission:

To strengthen policy and institutional capacity development and information and communication capacities of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states agricultural and rural development organizations.

Beneficiaries:

Farmers' organisations, women's groups, training institutions, exporters, chambers of commerce, researchers, extension services, ministries, policy makers and rural broadcasters, youth.

Operational Focus:

CTA's Programme will focus on the following areas:

- Provision of information products and services (publications relating to priority information themes, information and communications technology and information and communications management and related topics;
- Provision of access to communication channels and services (promoting the use of all media)
- Development of information and communications skills.

A summary of the 2001-2005 Framework is available on request from ic@cardi.org.

CTA Work Programme

2002 – During 2002 the CTA will support a number of activities in the Caribbean region including its support to the Regional Branch Office for the Caribbean, the implementation of selected aspects of CAIS, the Devolution of the QAS, Commodity Studies in Sweet Potato, Dasheen, Golden Apple, the development of the Caribbean Agricultural Marketing Intelligence and Development Network.

Please note that individual requests for funding to publish technical materials, as well as support for conferences and seminars may also be submitted for review on a case by case basis. In the case of conferences and seminars – at least 6 months advance notice is required.

2003 - The 2003 Work Programme is currently being prepared for submission to CTA by 15 April 2002. The proposals will cover activities highlighted by stakeholder groups in the public, private and NGO groups such as, support to development of local CAIS networks, training and sensitisation workshops, support to the development of QAS. Please submit any special projects for consideration to ic@cardi.org or to Fax 1 868 645 1208, for the attention of Claudette de Freitas.

CAIS in the Countries

Jamaica

- A QAS promotional calendar has been completed to highlight the services of the Jamaica QAS called Agricultural Services of Knowledge (ASK).
- The focal point for ASK is the Ministry of Agriculture Jamaica by virtue of being the focal point for the Jamaica Agricultural Documentation and Information Network.
- Comments are invited for the recently launched ASK website , which is now online www.askonline.info
- A one day seminar for JADIN network members was held in February with 20 persons in attendance. Presentations included – the concept of QAS, the role of the CTA, CAIS, SIDALC, and in particular members of JADIN. There was also a question and answer session
- Promotional activities will include the above mentioned calendar along with posters to be prepared to highlight ASK at national and district agricultural show, and an exhibition booth at a regional conference in May/June. The promotional activities are being supported by CTA as part of the 2001 and 2002 work programmes.

Source: Project Proposal submitted to CAIS for ASK and telephone conversation with C. Milford-Allen, CAIS National Coordinator Jamaica.

St Lucia

- The St Lucia Ministry of Agriculture features a Question and Answer Service which was developed following a CTA/CAIS Pilot which ended in 2000.
- The local network is currently being developed around the QAS, and the group agreed that network meetings to be held quarterly
- To presentations on the QAS were done for network members as well as the junior management team of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
- A presentation on Priority Setting in Information Themes is planned for the local network and senior management of the MoA
- Meanwhile, cataloguing and classification of materials has continued with plans underway to expand this activity to cover the Fisheries and Forestry Divisions in 2002. This will be included in the 2002 proposal for CTA

Source: QASNetwork e-mail from St. Lucia and telephone conversation with Marie Louise Reid, CAIS National Coordinator St Lucia

St Vincent

- The Information and Training Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture St Vincent and the Grenadines is currently the focal point for CAIS and the QAS.
- A recent development which will support the delivery of information services is the assignment of full responsibility for the library by the Information and Training Unit has full responsibility for the library.
- Work in developing services at the local level includes the development of an internal network within the Ministry. Two meetings have been held to date.
- The QAS website is being designed. The basic pages have been completed and are currently under discussion by the Ministry of Agriculture
- Terms of reference for a policy to support the delivery of information services has also been completed. The Ministry has been working in collaboration with the local National Documentation Centre
- Future plans include the development of a focal point and steering committee for QAS as well as the upgrade of the library and this will be included in the 2002 CTA proposal.

Source: Email and telephone conversation with Winston Georges, CAIS National Coordinator, St Vincent

Rural Development Network (RUNetwork) Project – Phase II

Discussions are ongoing between the CAIS Regional Coordinator – C de Freitas and the RUNetwork Project Manager, Marc Bernard, of the German Centre for Documentation and Information and Agriculture (ZADI). The discussions are aimed at the development of a Phase II of the RUNetwork Information Café project. A pilot phase examined the experience of taking a bottom-up approach to providing information services and opportunities to rural communities through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The pilot project was carried out in Jamaica and Phase II envisages expanding activities to other Caribbean countries.

Publications and Websites (*These may be of interest to you*)

Publications

AJOL

Provides access to research undertaken and published in Africa, increases knowledge about African scholarship, strengthens African journal publishing. <http://www.inasp.info/ajol>

INFORMATION REVOLUTIONS

How information and communication management is changing the lives of rural people.

By P Mundy & J Sultan, CTA 2001

This publication can be downloaded in PDF format, free of charge, in chapters, or in full file of 1.9Mb from the CTA website www.agricta.org/pubs/infoev/index.htm

TOWARDS FINANCIAL SELF-RELIANCE

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Websites

www.web-agri.com A new search engine specifically for agricultural topics worldwide.

www.adobe.com If you don't already have a copy, go to this site to download the Acrobat Reader to print material from our (or any other) website.

www.organic-research.com A website dedicated to organic farming launched by CABI Publishing

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