

Web Based Tools to Facilitate Agricultural Extension and Education

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Abstract

The Internet has drastically changed the way of information dissemination especially in the field of agriculture, life sciences and natural resource management. The relatively small investment required to set up a website has enabled a great many institutions to become instant information providers. After the initial rush to get online, the challenge faced was to develop an efficient methodology to facilitate knowledge management and sharing with emphasis on catering to local requirements.

Moreover, the need for extension professionals to have access to the latest localized information at village level encouraged ICRISAT to experiment with many tools to create, represent and disseminate knowledge as well as for collaboration. Learning Management Systems (LMS) were one such application. LMS are not alternatives; they supplement the traditional learning methodology and are fast becoming an integral part of any learning. In the context of agricultural extension they have potential to acquire wider scope.

In the present agricultural scenario, agricultural extension education is not being given much priority. ICRISAT has been experimenting with innovative methods of imparting extension education to farm communities through the use of web based tools such as LMS and by training semi-literate rural women folks to act as intermediaries in this knowledge flow chain.

Whilst many agricultural content are initially focused on researchers, developing later down the road towards a practitioner-focus; LMS will play a greater role in bringing quality and highly localized content in a more presentable way for agricultural extension functionaries. The availability of many open source Learning Management Systems have made this exercise cost effective for greater impact.

Keywords: LMS, Agricultural Extension, Extension Education, Open Learning, e-Learning

Remarks: The full paper may be found in www.elearningap.com