

Enhancing the common Information Space for Open and Distance Learning and Animal and Fisheries Production.

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There is a rapidly growing animal and fisheries production industry in the country. This industry, at present, is technically and information wise supported by its innovation system that has a dispersed set of multiple stakeholders, which include the State Agricultural and animal sciences Universities, Department of Animal Husbandry (DAH), the livestock products processing Industry, Feed Industry, Pharmaceutical Industry, Farmers etc. There is an urgent need the enhance the information space for the information needed by the innovation system that supports this industry so that it can further develop, do not only satisfy the future animal products needs of the State and but also effectively and efficiently participate in the increasing global market for animal products. This also should serve as a media for continuing education to the farmers, as a part of L4 (Life Long Learning for Livelihood) and the others as ODL.

New information and communication technologies, such as the Internet, Wireless Telephony, linking radio and television with the Internet, can be effectively used to enhance the existing information space so that it can effectively and efficiently support the information and knowledge needs of this Industry.

The core institutional structures to develop this information space would be:

1. Pashusoochnalaya
2. MAFSU Digital Information Repository
3. Public Information Access Points

Pashusoochnalaya

The core of the enhanced information space will be a Web portal that will support sharing and exchange of livestock production and fisheries related information through.

1. Services
 - Web based information
 - ❖ Market prices and forecasts for animal products, commodities and inputs for livestock and fisheries products.

- ❖ Weather conditions and forecasts particularly related to agriculture and livestock production including disease forecasts at state, district and taluka levels.
- ❖ Technological information related to
 - Farming systems
 - Crop and Livestock Production
 - Post Harvest Processing, Packaging, Storage and Transportation
 - Food and Bio-safety, including Phyto-Zoo Sanitary Standards.
- Agricultural News
- Directory Services and Yellow Pages for:
- Livestock, Veterinary and Fisheries Research Institutions
- Research Projects
- Institutional Resources such as laboratories facilities, experimental resources, costly equipment
- Veterinary experts and consultants.
- Suppliers, Market Intermediaries
- Veterinary services including disease and pest diagnostic services, soil and feed analysis, veterinary services, farm equipment mechanism etc.,
- Veterinary (Digital) Library and Information Services
- Internet Services for hosting:
- E-mail
- Discussion Lists
- Community of Practices for scientists, farmers and other agriculture related domains.
- Usenet/Newsgroup
- Chat/IRC
- Video and Audio Streaming
- Suitable courses for the stake holders.

2. Products

- Knowledge based systems for animal diagnostics
- Herd and Flock Health Management Models
- Decision Support Systems for small holder farming and livestock production
- Spatial and Reference Database including digital maps for diseases and production potential
- Collation of graphics, Audio and Video Clips
- Radio Scripts and Television Storyboards

3. Tools

- Search Engines and Finders
- Catalogues and Indexes
- Language Thesauri

MAFSU Digital Information Repository

A digital information repository to be created by MAFSU will support the Pashusoochnalaya. The development of information repository for information objects is critical to the Pashusoochnalaya for various reasons:

- To support generation of contents effectively and efficiently at least cost for the entire country. Content generation, including disease surveillance and monitoring database, without a centralized information repository would be very costly.
- To support development of products such as knowledge based systems that may require these objects.
- To create a valuable information asset for MAFSU in future with Maharashtra and India having to be a responsible member of World Trade Organization with phyto-sanitary information and patents on data and information bases can become an important asset.

Public and Private Information Access Points

The MAFSU information repository will be responsible for collection, collation, storage and access of digital data and information objects related to agriculture research in initially in Maharashtra.

At the user end, the portal site will be accessed through public information access points that provide not only agriculture information but also information from other sectors and ministers such as health, education and governance. These information kiosks may be a form of rural entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs and Industry could also access this information space through private connections.

The information and knowledge, thus available can serve the purpose ODL courses, along with the framed courses, for field veterinarians, Para veterinarians and also the farmers/animal holders willing to offer them. MAFSU has successfully launched 4 such courses for the field veterinarians and one for farmers. Looking towards the number of stake holders in the state (about 3000 field veterinarians, 15000 Para veterinarians and millions of farmers) this can be the only way to cater their learning needs and updating the knowledge and skills. This will give them the choice for selecting the courses as per their need. The programme can further be expanded in other states and at International level. Presently few veterinarians, from other states, have already registered for the ODL courses.

Making these courses online within the information space, will help in updating the learning material from various sources.

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