





## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is AgNIC?

AgNIC is the Agriculture Network Information Center – a voluntary alliance and partnership of 60 + member institutions and organizations working to offer quick and reliable access to quality agricultural information and sources. AgNIC is supported, in part, by the USDA’s National Agricultural Library (NAL) through provision of the AgNIC Secretariat and other program support. A list of partners and subjects is available on the [AgNIC site](#).

### 2. What are the beliefs of the AgNIC Partners?

AgNIC members recognize there is a “global” context to agriculture and that agriculture impacts the lives of individuals and communities around the world. AgNIC members believe the need and importance of a broad array of knowledge-based information enable sustainable and prosperous communities.

### 3. Who are AgNIC Customers?

AgNIC customers are citizens, government, associations, education, research, students and most anyone who needs access to current and historical information in a variety of topics about agriculture and those areas related to agriculture such as rural sociology, business, food safety, and others.

### 4. What is on the AgNIC portal?

AgNIC partners select important information sources that are readily available on the Internet for inclusion in the AgNIC system. These selections are based on quality and significance to AgNIC customers. AgNIC partners also create resources and tools to assist customers in accessing key information on selected topics. These topics cover a full range of agriculture, environmental, and food related disciplines. Members offer concentrated [subject sites](#), and they monitor search term logs and usage (or site) statistics to evaluate and modify services.

Specifically, the AgNIC portal is a gateway for presenting selected content through specific services. These services are:

- a. Resource database – this database contains selected web sites, image collections, lists of publications, documents, databases, and institutional repository resources
- b. Calendar of events – this service includes meetings, seminars, and conferences in the agricultural and related sciences ranging from local events to international congresses

c. News – this service relays selected news items impacting the related communities

## **5. What is NOT included in AgNIC?**

AgNIC partners make every attempt to *limit* links to proprietary, predominantly commercially supported information, fee-based, or highly sensitive public or private information that may impact national security.

## **6. Is AgNIC a credible site? How do I know?**

AgNIC resources are selected according to standards determined by the members. They identify resources that are objective and authoritative. The partners represent a range of academic institutions and organizations with the expertise and experience to select quality information available on the Internet.

There are a few for-profit, commercial sites and fee-based services linked within the AgNIC portal; however, members use discretion in selecting commercial information. The majority of information found within the AgNIC portal is openly and freely available to the public.

## **7. When you search in the search box, what are you searching?**

The AgNIC search box searches AgNIC selected resources, full-text and citations in the AgNIC portal. Each AgNIC partner institution/organization has identified resources and added those into the databases. In some cases, the “search” is searching across other AgNIC databases at partner sites.

## **8. How do partners select “calendar events”?**

Anyone may suggest an event; however, AgNIC partners reserve the right to determine the suitability of each event submitted. Events must meet certain criteria which are similar to those for selecting resources for the AgNIC resource database. Events are selected for credibility and relevancy to agriculture and to the topics related to agriculture and rural communities.

## **9. What are the standards for providing reference and expert services?**

AgNIC partners are comprised of professional librarians, extension experts, and information specialists with advanced degrees in specific subjects. At the time of this writing, the alliance members are reviewing a draft standard for AgNIC reference and expertise. Those standards include: providing unbiased information responses, turn around time of no more than 3 business days, and meeting the user’s needs as determined by feedback.

## **10. Can I suggest a resource/link?**

AgNIC is focused on building a customer-centered system. We encourage our customers to suggest links to information in a variety of formats. Customers may recommend a resource or

link by sending a message to [agnicinbox@gmail.com](mailto:agnicinbox@gmail.com), or by clicking on the feedback form found at the bottom of the portal pages.

### **11. What is the difference between AgNIC and other agricultural information sites?**

The AgNIC alliance is made up of professionals and subject experts from institutions and organizations from around the world. The AgNIC membership continues to expand both in institutional members and in subject coverage in the AgNIC portal.

The core practice within the AgNIC community is to provide customers with a broad range of quality information. Other sites often “harvest” information from the Internet with no real assessment or review of the quality of the information or the reliability of the source. The AgNIC members do not attempt to be comprehensive, nor do they limit selections to a set number or from a specific community. AgNIC partners select information and links to content which provide significant and unbiased information representing a full range of research and practice.

### **12. Who are AgNIC partners?**

AgNIC members represent primarily universities and research institutions, government agencies, and a non-profit organization. AgNIC partners are voluntary members of the alliance with the common goal of providing quality information to customers through a common gateway. Each partner maintains its own identity and resources. There is, however, a synergy gained through these collaborations that could not be achieved by individual effort.

### **13. What are the membership requirements?**

A primary membership requirement is that the institution or organization must have the capacity to fulfill the expertise requirement in a particular topic area. Potential members must have the “willingness” to become a partner in this alliance. AgNIC requires that all member institutions/organizations make every effort to attend the annual meeting held throughout the U.S. each spring. Every partner institution or organization also must display the AgNIC logo on their institutional AgNIC web site.

Currently, there are four levels of membership: sustaining, strategic, sponsoring, and emeritus. The requirements are fully covered on the [AgNIC web site](#)

AgNIC has begun a mentoring program to help build capacity among those institutions/organizations that would like to participate, but either are not quite sure how to participate, or would like to increase capacity for participation.

### **14. How do you join AgNIC?**

If you represent an institution or organization that may be interested in joining AgNIC, it is recommended that you first -

- a. Examine the AgNIC web site;
- b. Review several AgNIC partner web sites;
- c. Determine the subject(s) where your institution or organization has the capacity to contribute;
- d. Contact the AgNIC Secretariat at [agnicinbox@gmail.com](mailto:agnicinbox@gmail.com) to express your interest; and
- e. Work with the AgNIC Secretariat to develop a proposal for the AgNIC Executive Board.

## **15. What are the benefits of AgNIC partnership?**

As a voluntary partnership, AgNIC members do not receive regular extramural or external funds for participating. The unique nature of the alliance allows collaborations and synergies across geographic areas that would be otherwise difficult. The result of networking across such a diverse and global collaborative effort is -

- Improved ability to meet customer needs
- Shared learning
- Open technologies
- Collaborative content development
- Synergies to find solutions for common problems
- “Ready-made” grant teams
- Expanded awareness of topics on information management and information access globally

## **16. What is the technology supporting AgNIC?**

Primary AgNIC server support and resources are distributed among the National Agricultural Library (NAL), Cornell University’s Mann Library, Michigan State University Cooperative Extension and Purdue University Cooperative Extension.

AgNIC uses the NAL Agricultural Thesaurus (NALT) to classify and group information and to assist with retrieval. The NALT is used to determine subject terms for metadata records [modified Dublin Core], and to assist the AgNIC SEARCH operation as a “Web Service”.

The technologies behind the AgNIC site are Open Source applications to keep costs low and sustainability possible.

## **17. What are the plans for AgNIC’s future?**

AgNIC technology is in perpetual development in order to improve functionality, services, and ease of use for our customers.

## **18. Is the information found in the AgNIC portal copyrighted?**

Links from AgNIC to trade, firm, or corporation sites are for the information and convenience of AgNIC users. These links do not constitute official endorsement or approval of any product or service to the exclusion of others, or which may be suitable by institutions and organizations participating in the AgNIC Alliance, including the U.S. Federal Government. Materials created

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