





# **Agriculture Network Information Center (AgNIC)**

## **Recommended Guidelines and Procedures**

Revised, April 2006

AgNIC Reference Policies

AgNIC Web Page Standards

AgNIC Content Selection Policies

Metadata Requirements

The policies and standards contained herein are recommendations to the AgNIC Partners by the AgNIC Coordinating Committee. The documents are to be regarded as separate from the Governance Document of AgNIC and may be revised at any time by the AgNIC Executive Board or the AgNIC Coordinating Committee.

## **Agriculture Network Information Center (AgNIC) Reference Policies**

- AgNIC reference guidelines will be available on each partners site via hyperlink (along with institutional specific policies, i.e., on lending)
- AgNIC partners agree to provide response to all questions regarding that institution's subject area(s)
- Responses will be provided within 5 work days or less
- Responses will be provided by professional librarians or subject experts
- Partners will agree to answer on the average of up to 10 questions per week
- Questions that fall out of scope for the partner subject will be forwarded to NAL reference, or to other partner institutions as agreed upon
- Responses should be as full as possible, referrals to search a web site are not considered adequate
- Comments regarding the customer's satisfaction with the response should be encouraged and allowed
- Each partner will monitor quality of responses to AgNIC customers

## AgNIC Web Page Standards

1. All AgNIC partners are strongly encouraged to display the AgNIC logo prominently on relevant institutional or organizational websites. The current logo can be copied from the AgNIC Website or requested from the AgNIC Secretariat.

In cases where the use of the logo is prohibited, a statement of AgNIC membership may be included by using these words: *[Name of institution] is a [sustaining, strategic, sponsoring] partner of the AgNIC alliance, a leading collaborative provider of access to quality food, agriculture, and natural resources information and expertise.*

2. If possible, each AgNIC web page should include meta tags in the head section of the HTML. Information about meta tags can be obtained from a number of websites including <http://www.philb.com/metatag.htm>

The minimum required tags would be:

*name=description:* the term "AgNIC" should be included in this tag. In addition, the information in this tag should be as descriptive as possible since many search engines weight this tag over the keywords tag.

*name=keywords:* the terms "AgNIC" and "Agriculture Network Information Center" should be included in this tag. Subject keywords should be selected from the NAL Thesaurus. Additional keywords can also be included.

Recommended meta tags would be:

*name=author:* this would generally be the name of the person responsible for the content of the page

*name=publisher:* this would generally be the name of the institution sponsoring the site

Other meta tags can, of course, be included. All meta tags should conform to Dublin Core standards.

If you use a Dublin Core meta tag generator such as <http://vancouver-webpages.com/META/mk-metas.html>, the site will create metadata tags that you can cut and paste into your page. They will look something like this:

```
<HTML LANG=en>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>AgNIC</TITLE>
<LINK REV="made" href="mailto:agnic@agnic.org">
<META NAME="keywords" CONTENT="agriculture">
```

<META NAME="description" CONTENT="Agriculture Network Information Center (AgNIC) is an alliance of voluntary partners who provide access to quality electronic information in agriculture and related topics.">

3. The an email link connecting the user to the person responsible for the content of the web page should appear on each page. That link can be in the form of “comments,” “feedback,” “assistance,” etc.

4. Links and content should be checked and updated at least once a year. Each page should include the date it was last updated.

5. Sustaining Partners (Libraries) who provide reference service must report monthly statistics to the AgNIC Secretariat (NAL) on an annual basis, preferably based on the federal fiscal year of October 1 to September 30.

6. Partner institutions must be able to provide combined monthly "hit counts" for their AgNIC pages.

## AgNIC Content Development Policies

- I. Scope
  - A. Mission. The AgNIC Alliance is a leading collaborative provider of access to quality food, agriculture and natural resources information and expertise.
  - B. In striving to achieve the mission of AgNIC, the Sustaining Partners are involved in many activities whose purpose is to identify, evaluate, create, and make accessible quality, science-based electronic resources to a variety of audiences. These activities may include
    - i. developing and maintaining a website of selected resources covering a vertical subject area
    - ii. collaborating with other AgNIC Partners on a subject website or information resource
    - iii. contributing metadata records to the central resource database maintained on the AgNIC portal
  - C. The subject scope of AgNIC covers agriculture and related subjects, broadly defined as including basic, applied, and developmental research; extension/outreach; and teaching activities in a broad range of agricultural topics including food, natural resources, forestry, and aspects of the physical and social sciences.
  - D. These policies apply to websites maintained by AgNIC Partners and identified as AgNIC sites, and to information resources submitted to the AgNIC information resource metadata database, the AgNIC calendar, and AgNIC news. AgNIC Partners have no authority over electronic resources that are outside their control; however, the Partners commit to linking only to evaluated information resources that include science-based information that is substantially available for free. Partners will review sites regularly in case linked resources change their address, purpose or accessibility. (See also AgNIC Web Page Standards)
  
- II. Selection Criteria
  - A. Authority/credibility
    - 1. Of paramount importance is that the information resources present information that is accurate, science-based, and objective.
    - 2. The authorship of the information should be readily determined.
    - 3. The information resources should be works of acknowledged authorities, educational institutions, publishers, associations, commercial suppliers or government agencies.
  - B. Currency
    - 1. The information resources should present information that is current and the creation or revision date should be readily determined.

2. The information resources should be updated frequently enough to be useful, whenever currency of information is important to the subject of the information resource itself.

C. Reliability

1. Access to the information resources should be relatively stable and reliable.
2. There should be evidence that the links are checked and kept up-to-date.

D. Quality of delivery

1. The information resources should reflect high quality production and design.
2. The information resources should have demonstrated accessibility, usefulness and adequate functionality for the intended use.
3. The information resources should be free from typographical, grammatical, and link errors.

III. Metadata Guidelines

A. Standards for resource description

1. The Dublin Core Metadata standard is the accepted standard for information resource description in the AgNIC resource database. The AgNIC Coordinating Committee recommends the following interpretations.
2. **Titles** should be in upper and lower case as indicated by the official title from the information resource. Initial “The”, “A”, or “An” should be dropped.
3. **Descriptions** should be succinct and should represent an unbiased description of the information resource or object so that a user can decide to go to the resource or not.
4. **Subjects** should be added to indicate 40-50%, or more, of the content. Do not add a subject for information that accounts for less than 40% of a resource’s content.
5. When in doubt, email the AgNIC Secretariat with the question.

B. NAL Thesaurus (NALT)

The NALT is the only approved controlled vocabulary used in AgNIC. Terms not found in the NALT may be proposed to the NALT for future consideration for inclusion. Terms and concepts not found in the NALT may be added in the KEYWORD(s) field.

C. Metadata requirements for AgNIC websites (see AgNIC Web Page Standards)

D. Procedures for adding metadata records to the information resource database may be found on the AgNIC portal.

## Metadata Requirements for the AgNIC Resource Database

### A. Required metadata fields

1. **Title:** [free text] taken from the resource as it appears.
  - a. Further description for “generic” titles such as “Publications” can be made by adding a QUALIFIER in parentheses.
  - b. (*Example – Publications (University of Maryland Cooperative Extension)*)
  - c. Where there are two or more titles in multiple languages, add = [equal sign] between each title in each language.
2. **Description:** [free text] use *unbiased* description. Do not use copyrighted descriptions.
3. **Subject Descriptors:** chosen from NALT - <http://agclass.nal.usda.gov/agt/agt.htm>. Can use multiple subjects. Do not use top level categories in this field.
4. **Top Level Category:** choose one of the top level categories from a drop down list.
5. **URL:** Please use only one if multiple found.
6. **Type:** Unqualified Dublin Core set is a multiple selection (dropdown) list.
7. **Language:** Select from multiple selection list with default set to English.

### B. Optional metadata fields

1. Most fields accept multiple values, or variants. In some cases, there is a multiple selection list (as with Type and Language). In other cases, indicate multiple values by entering additional text on a new line - Each RETURN is pressed, the system accepts an additional value.  
(*Example - Two individuals names in “Creator” for Julia Child and Patrick Mould. Enter “Julia Child” press RETURN then enter “Patrick Mould.”*)

2. Coverage-Date refers to any date or date range that might be particularly appropriate in describing time periods for which the resource is applicable.
3. Date-Created and Date-Modified refers to the date when the particular resource (web site) was created or most recently modified.
4. Note is for internal use only. It is never displayed to the public, but is available for those creating and editing records as a place to include information for others typically pertaining to decision-making in the record.