
Livestock Research for Rural Development: An open-access online journal that disseminates research information for developing country scientists

T R Preston
TOSOLY Ecological farm

This presentation will defend the thesis that needs for information, and mechanisms available, in developing countries differ markedly from those in industrialized countries:

Subsidies to research:

Most industrialized countries subsidize their agriculture either in direct benefits to farmers or through research institutions supported by their governments. This facilitates both the conduct of research and its dissemination as funds are more readily available for this purpose in the industrialized countries.

Agricultural systems:

Agricultural production systems are very different as between industrialized and developing countries. In the former, large scale, energy-intensive systems predominate. In the latter, family-based small scale systems with low energy inputs are the dominant model. The research and information needs of the former are quite different from those of the latter model.

Use of information:

Measures of the impact of research through publications in industrialized countries are used widely as a means of evaluating the research outputs of scientists (eg: the "impact factor" of a journal based on citations). The quality of the "science" is often strongly emphasized. In developing countries, research publications play a more practical role in informing local scientists of recent developments in their respective fields. The emphasis is also much more on "science for development".

Finance:

The research budgets of scientists in developing countries are usually small and emphasis must be put on financing the practical aspects of doing the research. It is therefore invariably difficult to find funds to support the publication of their research, especially as the sums involved are considerable, of the order of USD 1,000 per publication.

The medium of publications.

The media constantly emphasize that paper comes from trees and we need to save the trees (eg: a typical signature of an email message :Please consider the environment before printing this email. ". Most journals in industrialized countries produce a "print" version, indeed this is a requirement to be registered by the ISI system, and hence eligible for assessment of the "impact factor". Online publications are the preferred medium for scientific publication in developing countries. Search engines such as "Google" now play the major role in the search for, and dissemination of, research information. Online publications are obviously the most appropriate medium for presentation of data.

Formats:

The two major formats for online publications are "PDF" and "HTML", The former plays a dual role in facilitating the "protection" of scientific content. This is an important issue in industrialized countries. In many respects, it is a barrier to free and easy dissemination of information. The HTML format, on the contrary, is designed to facilitate dissemination, searching and free movement of information. It is the appropriate format for sharing sources of information in developing countries.

The actors:

Researchers in developing countries have different needs in the light of the above considerations. They need to learn how to " referee" scientific content. This is usually a prerogative of scientists in developed counties. They need to learn how to plan and execute research which will have an impact on the social and agricultural development of their country; this is not necessarily synonymous with "good science".

Financial support:

In developing countries, scientific institutions have a major reliance on Government and more so on Funding Agencies to finance their research and publications. Societies and Associations of scientists are common in industrialized countries, and are frequently the source of funds for supporting publication of scientific journals. Such institutions are rare in developing countries, where there is a much greater need for "voluntary" contributions, in time and effort, to support the publication of their data.

Conclusions:

The needs and ways to support dissemination of information in developing countries differ markedly from those in industrialized countries. It is not appropriate to transfer

Livestock Research for Rural Development (LRRD) is a peer-reviewed online international journal for sustainable livestock-based agriculture in developing countries.

It was first published as a stand-alone program on a 3.5in diskette which was distributed freely with the support of International Aid agencies (FAO, IFS and CTA). In 1996, the format was changed to HTML language and dissemination was on the web site (<http://www.cipav.org.co/lrrd.org>) hosted by CIPAV, an NGO in Colombia. In 2009, the web site was changed to <http://www.lrrd.org>

At the present time the LRRD web site receives 2500 visits daily. In 2010, 250 papers were published – 98% of them from researchers in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin-America

LRRD receives no financial support and is voluntarily managed by an editor (preston@lrrd.org) and two assistant editors (lrrdrs@wanadoo.fr and segura52@hotmail.com). The web site is hosted by CIPAV (<http://www.cipav.org.co>).

"models" in common use in the latter to the former. It is also necessary to promote autonomous initiatives to disseminate information in developing countries. The impact in their own institution and country, of research produced in a developing country, is much less if that research is published in a journal in an industrialized country, as compared with dissemination in a national media that is free access and with no charges for publication.

Contact:

T R Preston
TOSOLY Ecological farm, AA48 Socorro, Santander, Colombia
Email: preston@lrrd.org