

STDF WORKING GROUP PROJECT STATUS REPORT

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| STDF project number | Title Quality information on SPS issues - a pre-requisite for capacity building; support to the International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health |
| Date of Working Group approval | September 2005 |
| Date of start of implementation/supervision activities | June 2006 ¹ |
| Overall status report | <p>Status</p> <p>Work is underway on STDF 79 to improve the underlying architecture of the international portal on food safety, animal and plant health, to minimise the long term cost of maintenance of the system. The main efforts have been carried out by the programmer (Viparthi) and the webmaster/content specialist (Poulos) over the past 9 months, with some input from the project manager (Robson, to be assisted from June 2007 by Jackson).</p> <p>Of the 44 “pools” of data used by the portal, the updating of contents has been automated in all but 5 cases.</p> <p>The major areas where work is still required are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The European Food Safety Agency’s technical opinions, where discussions have begun with EFSA about the possible adoption of structured metadata on the EFSA website, to enable automatic harvesting. At present EFSA opinions are being issued at a rate of 5-10 per month; • The OIE weekly disease reports, where it is hoped to improve automation now that the OIE has launched its new world animal health information system (WAHID) to replace the previous Handistatus II. An initial proposal has been made regarding “syndication” of OIE content (such as the use of RSS feeds), which is very much in line with the principles of the tripartite (FAO-OIE-WHO) Global Livestock and Early Warning System (GLEWS) initiative – portal manager (Robson) will take part in GLEWS-related discussions in early July • The WTO Trade Concerns where the portal team is still required periodically to manually keyword the annual document; there is hope that the portal will be able to access this data through the new WTO notifications, concerns, etc database; this will need to be linked to the new WTO SPS database/docsonline service which is due to be launched to external users in the second half of 2007; • The Codex JMPR recommended uses, and Pre-Harvest Interval data, where we are designing a simple database to store the existing data, transferred from PDF documents, to subsequently |

¹ This was the first project implemented by FAO which required a full project proposal – given the funding amount, this resulted in some bureaucratic and administrative delay in becoming operational (previous smaller projects had been done as fast track Letters of Agreement)

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| | <p>be maintained by the JMPR secretariat as part of their ongoing efforts to improve the use of information systems and technology in their work, and which will act as an automatic feeder to the portal; similarly work is needed to include systematically data queried from the Codex General Standard on Food Additives system;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data from the US – discussions have recently re-opened with USDA APHIS and FSIS on the possibility to improve automation in linking with US data, following a new web services and open government initiative within the agencies. <p>As planned, the opportunity has also been taken to continue to improve the user interface and introduce features requested by users to add to the usefulness of the system. These have included low bandwidth versions, the previous CD version having proven to be of limited use; updating the pre-defined searches on the home page; allowing users to register for updates on particular subjects, etc.</p> <p>Comparison to progress against timetable and budget</p> <p>Progress against timetable has been slower than expected; this is also reflected in slower spending than anticipated (spend as at May 2007 around 40% of the total allocated). Essentially, the “easy” modifications have now all been completed; those remaining ones now required are either technically more difficult or will take collaboration with other partners. A number of external feeder system changes described in the project documentation are outside the team’s direct control.</p> <p>For instance, there are dependencies with other projects (eg WTO), or with organisations experiencing competing priorities (eg OIE where a major concern for the period 2005-2007 has been the global Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza – HPAI - situation).</p> <p>Implementation problems encountered and actions taken to resolve them.</p> <p>The system manager, being only partly allocated to/funded by this project has resulted in delay in setting direction, obtaining and mobilising resources in a number of cases – due to distractions associated with setting up the FAO Crisis Management Centre, and the FAO HPAI response throughout the period 2006-07. Although programmer and webmaster have made significant progress, this situation will be eased with the hiring of an assistant project manager (Jackson, due to start June 2007).</p> <p>A second concern remains the slow progress of work with OIE – for instance, we are still awaiting a response to an e-mail sent on 6 February regarding suggested ways of accessing the OIE website via the portal – despite the fact that funding can be made available, and technical advice from FAO can be provided. The intention of this work, it should be recalled is to simply allow the portal to act effectively as a pointer to OIE data, and so should be seen as further supporting OIE’s role as the official reporting channel. It is hoped that any issues of concern will be addressed at the forthcoming GLEWS meeting (Paris, July 2007).</p> |
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| | <p>Describe project activities in the past six months and any relevant outputs</p> <p>Activities funded by this project mainly concentrate on programming and systems design; the International Portal project has also received funding for other activities, from the FAO Norway PCA – and the use of the portal is actively promoted through the Objective D.1 Biosecurity Capacity Needs Assessment component, as well as FAO's Regular Programme, having conducted additional promotional activities with the Codex secretariat in a number of instances (Moscow, Bangkok, Brazzaville workshops). Unfortunately planned involvement in a workshop in Sri Lanka in March 2007 - related to STDF 19 on information exchange at national and international level - had to be cancelled due to last minute unavailability of the person involved.</p> <p>Outputs in the case of this project tend to be systems releases, which progressively include new mechanisms for including 'harvested' data, as well as additional features requested by users.</p> <p>User statistics remain stable, but with increasing proportions of visits leading to documents being downloaded, which indicates a greater proportion of traffic being from people interested in the content of the site.</p> |
| Achievements / Impact | <p>Outline any impact which the project may be having. Impact can be quantitatively measured or qualitatively judged:</p> <p>The purpose of the project was to render the International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health more easily maintainable. This is being achieved, in that the workload has already reduced from approximately 2.5 persons full time equivalent (divided between programmer, webmaster and content specialist), to around 1.5, with content specialist doubling up as webmaster as needed.</p> <p>It is hoped to reduce this still further over the coming months.</p> |
| End date | <p>State the project end date: May 2008</p> <p>Delay in setting up the project, the critical dependencies on other projects/other partners, and the non-availability of key resources (now addressed) indicate that the project will be delayed beyond the initially agreed.</p> |