



NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

Advancing Access to Global Information for Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Library (NAL) is the world's largest and most accessible research library focused on agriculture. From its headquarters in Beltsville, Maryland, near Washington, D.C., NAL serves the world with information germane to agriculture and its related sciences. Many of the Library's services and information resources are available to customers worldwide via the NAL Web site (<http://www.nal.usda.gov>).

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NAL was created with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1862, and established by the Congress as a National Library and the primary agricultural information resource of the United States.

The Library's expert staff, leadership in delivering information services, collaborations with other agricultural research and information organizations, extensive collections, AGRICOLA bibliographic database, and advanced information technology infrastructure contribute to its reputation as one of the world's foremost libraries.

NAL operates with an annual budget appropriated by Congress of about \$22 million (in FY 2007), and staff of 215 Federal employees and contractors.

Extensive Collections and Information Resources

NAL collections contain nearly 4 million items in many languages. The Library subscribes to more than 16,000 current periodicals, and has access to nearly 4,500 journals and newspapers in electronic formats, as well as about 50 other specialized electronic resources. These NAL resources provide access to billions of pages of information and data covering all aspects of agriculture and its related sciences, dating from the 16th century to the present--an immense array of scientific literature, books and journals, audiovisuals, reports, theses, software, laser discs, artifacts, and images in agriculture. Some highlights:

- Comprehensive collections in plant and animal sciences, agricultural economics, statistics, chemistry and engineering, agronomy, forestry, forest products, food, and nutrition.
- Extensive materials in biology, physics, natural history, wildlife ecology, pollution, genetics, natural resources, meteorology, and fisheries.
- The most extensive set of materials anywhere on the history of agriculture in the United States.
- The most complete collection of U.S. Department of Agriculture publications.
- Special collections of rare and unique materials documenting the history of agriculture and its sciences, dating from the 1500s to late 1900s.
- Agricultural publications acquired since the mid-1800s through international exchange arrangements with over 5,000 partners from 106 countries.
- A broad array of reference databases and other bibliographic tools.
- A growing amount of agricultural information available digitally, including full text, which is easily portable, transmissible, and usable throughout the world. Since the mid 1990s, NAL has increasingly collected, created, and distributed information in digital formats, making a transition towards a future "National Digital Library for Agriculture."

Augmented by Networks of Cooperation

NAL collections and information resources are further augmented by extensive networks of cooperation with other U.S. national libraries, with agricultural libraries at U.S. land-grant universities and in other countries, and with libraries of international organizations. NAL and its information centers are active participants in the Agriculture Network Information Center (AgNIC) Alliance (<http://www.agnic.org>), a group of more than 60 institutions which maintains a distributed network of discipline-specific agricultural information Web sites.

Reference and Document Delivery Services

Each year, NAL answers thousands of reference requests received online and from walk-in customers. NAL customers can request and receive materials online, and can check on the status of their requests via the Web. NAL also delivers documents to customers through fax, mail, courier, and other requested means.

The reading rooms in NAL's Beltsville facility and at USDA headquarters in downtown Washington, DC are available 8:30 to 4:30 Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

Specialized Information Services NAL operates eight information centers, each with its own Web site, as reliable sources of science-based information in key areas of American agriculture:

- Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC) (<http://afsic.nal.usda.gov>)
- Animal Welfare Information Center (AWIC) (<http://awic.nal.usda.gov>)
- Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC) (<http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/>)
- Food Safety Information Center (FSIC) (<http://foodsafety.nal.usda.gov>)
- National Invasive Species Information Center (NISIC) (<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov>)
- Rural Information Center (RIC) (<http://ric.nal.usda.gov>)
- Technology Transfer Information Center (TTIC) (<http://ttic.nal.usda.gov>)
- Water Quality Information Center (WQIC) (<http://www.nal.usda.gov/wqic/>)

The Information Centers collaborate with other organizations to provide timely, accurate, comprehensive, and in-depth coverage in their specialized subject areas.

USDA Digital Desktop Library NAL's DigiTop digital desktop library provides USDA employees and contractors worldwide with at-their-fingertips online access to thousands of full-text scientific journals, hundreds of newspapers from around the world, bibliographic databases, and digital reference resources, 24 hours a day. In 2006, USDA workers used DigiTop to download 685,000 full-text articles.

Useful tools

AGRICOLA (AGRICultural OnLine Access) is the online catalog and index to NAL collections, encompassing all aspects of agriculture and allied disciplines, and covering materials in all formats. AGRICOLA is searchable free of charge on the NAL Web site (<http://agricola.nal.usda.gov/>), as well as on a fee basis through several commercial vendors. Tens of thousands of AGRICOLA records contain links to full-text resources on the Web.

The **NAL Agricultural Thesaurus (NALT)** is a hierarchical vocabulary of agricultural and biological terms (<http://agclass.nal.usda.gov/agt/agt.shtml>), also available in a Standard Spanish version. Updated annually, the NALT broadly defines the subject scope of agriculture, organized according to 17 subject categories and with 2,418 definitions. Originally prepared to meet the needs of ARS scientists, the NALT is now used extensively to aid retrieval in agricultural information systems within and outside USDA.