NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

Advancing Access to Global Information for Agriculture

# Collection Development Policy 2012

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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

Advancing Access to Global Information for Agriculture

# Collection Development Policy 2012

## I. Overview

### A. Mission of NAL

The National Agricultural Library (NAL) was established to fulfill the mission given to the U.S. Department of Agriculture "to acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture and rural development, in the most general and comprehensive sense of those terms. (1) and the duty "to acquire and preserve...all information concerning agriculture and rural development.(2)

The National Agricultural Library serves a dual role. It serves as a National Library of the United States for agricultural information, and as the scientific research library of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Filling these two roles requires NAL to consider the needs of two very diverse audiences when developing a collection development policy.

### B. History of the NAL Collection

The National Agricultural Library collection of more than 3.5 million items covers all aspects of agriculture and related sciences. The depth and richness of the collection make it a unique resource, with many materials not available anywhere else in the world. NAL's collection fills over 48 miles of shelves, making it one of the largest agricultural collections in the world.

NAL was established as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Library on May 15, 1862 by the signing of the Organic Act by Abraham Lincoln. In 1863, the library's collection comprised 1,000 volumes that had been transferred from the U.S. Patent Office's Agricultural Division. By 1889, the library's collection had increased to 20,000 volumes, and a librarian from Amherst College was hired to create a classification system for the library's collection. At this time, the library was located on the second floor of the Department of Agriculture's main building. In 1893, William Cutter was hired as Librarian of the Department, and he began a reorganization effort to modernize the library and improve its effectiveness. His primary achievement was consolidating the library's collection of 38,000 volumes into one central library; previously, more than half of the library's collection was held in divisional libraries across the United States. By 1900, the library's collection contained 68,000 volumes.

In 1934, the collection reached 250,000 volumes in size, and the library began participating in the Bibliofilm Service, which, along with the American Documentation Institute and the Science Service, supplied microfilm copies of articles to scientists. This was the first large-scale attempt by a library to provide copies of library materials to patrons rather than the original documents, and during its first year, over 300,000 copies were distributed.

## C. Purpose of Policy

The collection development policy (CDP) of the National Agricultural Library reflects the current information needs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and of the agricultural community, both national and worldwide. The policy is intended to guide selectors in choosing material for the collection; to assist managers in planning and reviewing the development of the collection; and to inform NAL and Department staff, users, and other interested persons or institutions of the nature of the collection and the direction of its development. The policy statements define the scope of the collection and specify the degree of coverage for each area within scope.

The overall goal of the National Agricultural Library is to build a collection to serve the needs of its customer groups and to provide information resources that support agricultural research. The National Agricultural Library has the responsibility for acquiring the agricultural literature in any format deemed appropriate to the fulfillment of its mission.

Given the large number and wide variety of agricultural publications published worldwide, and the cost of obtaining, processing, and storing them, NAL cannot collect comprehensively. However, NAL will make a reasonable effort to collect as thoroughly as possible in certain core subject areas. Greater selectivity will be applied to subject areas only indirectly related to agriculture. Collecting levels will be adjusted periodically in response to changing priorities, customer needs, high interest areas, and technology developments. The Policy does not require disposition of previously acquired material nor preclude acquisition of material not specifically addressed if determined to be necessary.

In its role as a National Library, NAL is funded by public funds to provide information services to the general public. It serves as an archive of printed material produced within the field of agriculture, particularly that produced in the United States. These materials are expected to be listed in a national bibliographic record (database) and made available nationally. Fulfilling the needs and expectations of the taxpaying public requires a very different approach to collection development than meeting the needs of the scientific research community within the USDA.

The nature of a scientific research library is both prospective and retrospective. Providing the widest access to the latest scholarly research and technical developments, it makes available an in-depth collection of material on many subjects. Therefore, collecting material for immediate use is not the sole focus of a research library. To support national level research, NAL must also collect items with low immediate usage that are essential to support historical studies and future inquiries.

The library collection has primary sources and related material, including the major published source materials required for dissertations and independent research, materials containing research reporting, new findings, scientific experimental results, and other information useful to

researchers. The NAL collection contains many important reference works and a wide selection of specialized monographs, as well as a very extensive collection of journals.

Coverage of the scholarly agricultural literature shall be as comprehensive as possible; coverage of other agricultural literature may be more selective. Specific scholarly literature in any subject field may be considered in scope if a reasonable proportion of its contents are relevant to the information needs of the library. The intent is to ensure that the collection represents the intellectual content and diversity of the world's agricultural literature. In determining coverage, NAL will take into consideration its role as the national resource for the provision of agricultural literature not otherwise readily available. NAL prioritizes collecting materials in the English language.

In recent years, NAL has expanded its services to address the researchers and the general public's increased interest in electronic and digital agricultural information. The Library's strategy is to maximize Web access to authoritative information and relevant agricultural research content. Examples of such Web initiatives include DigiTop, AGRICOLA, and NAL's Digital Collection.

- DigiTop (USDA's Digital Desktop Library) delivers to its customers, wherever they are and whenever they need it, quality information resources, many not available through the "ordinary" Web. DigiTop is managed by NAL with financial support from APHIS, ARS, ERS, FAS, FS, NASS, NIFA, NRCS and Office of the Executive Secretariat.
- NAL produces and maintains AGRICOLA (AGRICultural Online Access), the largest bibliographic database of agricultural literature in the world. It contains more than 4.1 million records for publications dating as far back as the 15th century. 78 percent of the records are for journal articles and book chapters, while 22 percent cover full-length books, journals, maps, electronic resources, and audiovisual materials. The database indexes publications from many disciplines related to agriculture, including veterinary sciences, entomology, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries, economics, food and human nutrition, and environmental sciences.
- The NAL Digital Collection, created in April 2006, serves as a digital collection of current and historical USDA publications. The Digital Collection contains over 600,000 pages of digitized texts. Publications contained in the Digital Collection include the issues of the Journal of Agricultural Research from 1913–1949 and the archives of the Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture dating back to 1894.

**D. Coordination**

The NAL CDP takes into account the Library of Congress (LC), the National Library of Medicine (NLM), land grant universities, and other libraries as sources of books, journals, or other material in their prime collecting areas. Some subjects, however, are a central part of

several libraries' collections (e.g.: veterinary medicine for both NAL and NLM and nontechnical agriculture for both NAL and LC). The requirements of USDA staff often extend beyond the prime areas of agriculture into subjects covered by other collections, necessitating acquisition in those subjects. The goal of the NAL is to satisfy the needs of its stakeholders in the most efficient manner. Often needs of users in such areas of shared interest cannot be satisfactorily met by interlibrary loan or copying arrangements due to copyright or restrictions of the other libraries, but require some collecting in the subject to provide reasonable document delivery services. Thus, overlap with other collections may occur in providing the most effective and economical use of available information resources.

The three national libraries have reviewed their respective collection development policies in the areas of Human Nutrition and Food, Veterinary Science, and Biotechnology, and have prepared joint statements in order to clarify the collecting emphasis of each library and, where possible, to minimize duplication of effort.

**E. Currency**

The policy is not intended to be an unchanging law, but must adapt to the needs of the Library's mission and clientele. Library staff involved in collection development must remain cognizant of the priorities, goals, and activities of USDA, reflecting them appropriately in the CDP.

The collection is frequently and systematically reviewed for currency of information. Superseded editions and titles containing outdated information may be withdrawn. Classic or standard retrospective materials may be retained. The ability of the Library to provide complete and current coverage in all areas may be limited by budgetary or manpower considerations.

**F. Consistency**

Adjusting to changing needs does not mean that the CDP should become so fluid that no continuity is maintained.

**G. Definitions**

- Collect: to acquire for inclusion in the literature holdings of NAL.
- Coverage: the extent of the Library's collecting effort, also known as collecting level.
- Literature: organized information in the form of written, printed, or non-print works, including audiovisual materials, computer files, and other electronic formats.
- Scholarly: resulting from professional study or research.
- Scope: the range of subjects which NAL collects or acquires.

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NAL collects information on all aspects of agriculture and related subjects, as defined by its professional partners, USDA subject experts, and the NAL Thesaurus. Agriculture is an interdisciplinary field, with many areas of overlap into chemistry, physics, engineering, and economics as well as biology and medicine. Scope and coverage are determined based on the current and anticipated relevance of a subject to the needs of NAL's customers. Subject relevance is determined in relation to the USDA Strategic Plan and USDA Mission areas and the Core Literature of Agriculture as published by the agriculture experts at Cornell University.

## II. Selection Guidance

### A. General Selection Criteria

1. Steps in the selection process

   A. Identification of the relevant information.
   B. Assessment and evaluation (is the item appropriate for the collection and worthy of selection?)
   C. Decision to acquire.
   D. Acquisition process.

The following criteria are considered when assessing and evaluating an item for addition to the collection. At a minimum, Scope, Accessibility, and Cost must be considered. Other criteria are used as necessary or appropriate, in the judgment of the selector.

2. Essential Criteria:
These criteria must be considered when evaluating resources for inclusion in the collection:

   A. Scope:
      1. The item should fall within the scope of the subject as defined by the CDP. The item's scope is frequently described by the publisher, book reviews, or other libraries that have cataloged the item.
      2. The coverage should be broad or narrow enough to address the needs of the collection as defined by the CDP.
   B. Accessibility
      1. The item should be able to be used by a majority of the library users, and
      2. The appropriate staff, equipment, licenses, permissions, etc. should be available to provide maximum access. These factors also impact cost:

C. Cost:
   1. As well as purchase price (which may be free for donated items), consider how much it costs to obtain (deliver), process, store, maintain, and access the item.
   2. Compare the cost to other comparable sources of the same information
   3. Consider whether alternative formats are more cost effective to collect.

3. Other Important Criteria:

The following criteria may be applied to further evaluate whether to add an item to the collection. There is no specific priority to these criteria. Not all will apply to each item under consideration, but can be used to justify selection decisions:

A. Currency: Some resources have historical value, while in many cases the most recent information is most valuable. The importance of currency varies by subject. Electronic resources are often more current than their print counterpart but may not have exactly the same content.
B. Accuracy: Evaluating the accuracy of a given item can only be done by actually reading the item and comparing it to other known items or relying on the reviews of the item by other experts in the field. The reputation of the author and/or publisher can be an indicator of the likelihood of accuracy of the item.
C. Authority: Consider the reputation, expertise, and credentials of the author, artist, producer, and publisher. A book that is referenced by many others has more authority and credibility than one is less cited.
D. How the item would enhance the existing Library collection through :
   1. Importance of the title when compared with other works on the subject
   2. Importance of the subject matter or point of view to the collection
   3. Improving retrospective and current subject coverage
   4. Improving coverage when there is a scarcity of material published on the subject
E. Uniqueness: Consider whether the item offers something no other resource offers or contains information not previously published elsewhere.
F. Usage/Usefulness: Consider whether the item would be likely to receive use and how useful that might be relative to other items in the collection.
G. Organization: Well-organized resources are more easily used due to having appropriate access points, indexes, and cross-references. A clear layout increases ease of use. Evaluate clarity, accuracy, and logic of presentation.
H. Format: Print materials should have high quality binding and ideally be on acid-free paper to withstand use and storage for many years. Consider readability of the print (font). The specific digital format must be supported by NAL or user applications. Consider whether the digital format uses open

source or proprietary software and whether it requires special equipment when determining whether the item is worth adding to the collection.

I. Special Features: Special features such as illustrations, models, etc., are often described in the sales literature. These can add value to a given item
J. Impartiality: Impartiality, like accuracy, can only be determined by reading the item itself or reading trusted reviews of the item. While NAL prefers impartial works, each item does not need to be balanced so long as the overall collection on the subject counterbalances itself to represent all sides of the subject.
K. Prominence: Items included in standard bibliographies, webliographies, or indexes are preferable.

**B. Selection Criteria for Print Monographs**

The CDP is the most important tool in the selection process. It establishes the range and intensity levels of subjects collected by NAL, specifies material types and publication genres included or excluded, and defines NAL's responsibilities in its cooperative collection development agreements.

Monograph publications are defined as works intended to be complete treatments of a specific topic. They comprise an important and varied segment of the scholarly literature as primary and secondary sources, and are also written to present a wide array of information and practice to specialist and general audiences. NAL's broad mission to acquire and disseminate useful information related to agriculture requires the collection of a diverse array of monographs, spanning various audiences and types of treatment.

Since it is impossible to be a domain expert in every topical area, the following guidelines, in conjunction with the CDP, will provide practical guidance in making final selections for items that fall into subject areas collected at a less than Core level. These guidelines are based on the scope, audience, role of the monograph as a communication medium, publication type, and entity responsible for publication. They are not meant to exhaustive. There will always be exceptions that must be considered on a case by case basis. However, these factors, taken together, will provide a rationale on which to base a selection decision.

**1. Scope:**

In many cases, although not all, the author(s) of a work will explain their intention or purpose for writing the work and place it in the context of other publications on the same topic. This information, generally found in the prefatory matter, can be critical to understanding the scope of the work, the intended audience, the complexity of the ideas presented in the work, and where the work fits into the literature of its topical domain.

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**Audience:**

NAL serves the global agricultural community. Monograph publishing trends across that broad community vary based on the intended audience. To focus selection decisions, the following breakdown into three sub-communities will provide context in which to consider the role of the monograph as a communication medium relative to audience and publication type.

**a) Scholarly / research community**

Monograph publications are an important medium for scholarly communication and form a significant part of the scholarly record. Scholarly and scientific monographs are generally produced in small runs and go out of print quickly. To enhance NAL's research-level collections, the following publication types should be added.

1. Works that present the results of scholarly research
2. Edited volumes (chapters are individually authored)
3. Applied topics (specialist)
4. Technical/Professional reports
5. Taxonomies
6. Conference proceedings
7. Reference works / manuals
8. Textbooks (Graduate level)

**b) Policy and regulatory community**

Monographs are an important communication medium for this community. To serve the policy and regulatory community, the following types of publication should be added.

1. In-depth analyses of issues
2. In-depth policy reviews
3. Analyses of laws and regulations
4. Standards
5. Statistics

**c) Education and general user community**

Monograph treatments of topics for this community are widely published. The following publication types must be compared against the current holdings for coverage, currency, and uniqueness before they are added.

1. Popular / non-specialist treatments
2. Works of journalism
3. Curriculum materials
4. Applied topics (general)

5. Textbooks (undergraduate)
6. Guidebooks (plants and animals)

**2. Publisher type**

Publishers often provide substantial editorial support and review to insure the quality of the books they publish. The publisher's reputation and standing in the market place are important factors to use in evaluating a monograph.

a) Established commercial publisher
b) University press
c) Learned societies / Professional associations
d) Government/Nongovernmental Organization

**3. Additional considerations:**

a) Geographical/Chronological coverage: refer to the CDP for any restrictions based on geographic or chronological coverage of a topic.
b) Language of work: prefer items in English. Refer non-English language materials to the Head of Monograph Acquisitions for further review.
c) Condition: items in poor or incomplete condition should not be added.

**C. Selection Criteria for Serials**

The selection process for serial subscriptions is similar to that of monographs, but there are a few additional considerations, since a serial subscription represents an ongoing commitment of space, manpower, and financial resources in order to maintain complete serial holdings. The following aspects should be considered when evaluating a potential serial subscription for addition to the collection:

1. Is it in scope?
2. Is it still being published?
3. Is it "substantial" – not just a brochure or ephemeral newsletter or agendas?
4. Is it authoritative? Is there peer review of contents?
5. Is it suitable for the intended audience?
6. Is it organized in a usable fashion? Table of contents, index, citations?
7. Has it been identified as "core" in the subject area? What is its Impact Factor?
8. Is it rare, unusual, or special in some way?
9. Can it be used in a library environment? Are there restrictions on usage?
10. Does the library have the ability to?
    a. catalog it,
    b. access it (are articles indexed), and

c. house it indefinitely? (storage space)

11. Is it reasonably priced? Is it a good value for the cost?
12. Is it in a format the library can use?
13. Has it been reviewed or recommended by a reliable source?
14. Has it been requested by significant (or a significant number of) users (directly, or through ILL requests)?
15. Are backfiles available?

**Selection Models for Serials:**

1. Annual Cost = acquisition cost + processing cost + maintenance cost + storage cost + use cost + subscription price
2. Citation analysis – how frequently is the journal cited in other publications?
3. Worth or use (Cost/benefit ratio); usage statistics
4. Polling – comparing lists of recommended titles created by subject experts
5. Core lists created by agricultural organizations

NAL subscribes to journals and other serials in appropriate subject fields, avoiding redundant formats and duplicate subscriptions whenever possible. For journals, indexing and abstracting resources, and reference works, web-based electronic format is preferred over print format. When a journal is published in both print and digital/electronic versions, the NAL will subscribe only to the digital/electronic version unless one or more of the following situations exists:

1. The print version contains significantly more material than the digital/electronic.
2. The quality of images or graphics is demonstrably poorer in the digital/electronic version.
3. There is no reliable guarantee of digital/electronic archiving for long term access.
4. Publisher restrictions prohibit institutional access and/or sharing of content

**D. Selection Criteria for Digital and Electronic resources:**

Digital and electronic resources have become essential to and a key means of doing research and scholarship. These include indexing and abstracting tools; full text serials and monographs, images, and sound; reference works; and specialized scientific and technical databases. The Library provides a selection of digital and electronic resources, balancing needs as articulated in the CDP, anticipated use, and available budgetary resources. The selection of digital and electronic resources calls for careful weighing of factors, including:

1. Content:
   a) The importance of the resource for its discipline and the expected level of use.

b) The comprehensiveness, currency, durability and accuracy of the database.
c) The extent of overlap (if any) with other databases and the relationship to the Library's print and other holdings.

2. Interface:
   a) Design and ease of use of the interface.
   b) Platform availability.
   c) Functionality, including links to the online catalog and to other databases, integrated Interlibrary Loan request capability, and output formats.

3. Technical:
   a) NAL strongly prefers web versions of digital resources.
   b) NAL's digital resources must conform to current computing standards.
   c) Obsolete formats and platforms are not generally supported.

4. Cost:
   a) The cost of the database or collection.
   b) The actual and or projected cost per download.
   c) The availability and cost of computer storage space.

5. License conditions, Archiving, and Management:
   a) Appropriateness of licensing conditions reviewed by the Library's Electronic Resources Librarian. NAL pays particular attention to its rights to continuing access to information paid for and to the archiving of information.
   b) Availability and content of usage reports.

For more on digital collections, see the *Collection Policy for Digital Collections*.

**E. Recommendations and Purchase requests**

NAL welcomes requests and suggestions from its users for the acquisition of materials in support of their research and programs. NAL's subject specialists review requests and assign them a high priority for purchase, if they are within subject scope and format as defined by the relevant CDP and they are fiscal resources permit.

**F. Preservation policy**

The National Agricultural Library is committed to ensuring the preservation and long-lasting availability of its research collections and resources in all formats.

NAL's Preservation Program is accomplished through a variety of item- and collection-level

approaches and strategies. Actions are taken to prevent or slow down the deterioration of library materials, improve their condition, or provide access through reformatting to preserve intellectual content and to protect fragile originals. Proper storage environment and housing, careful handling, binding, and treatment of individual items (conservation) are methods used to protect and improve conditions to extend the useful life of materials in original form. Digitization of materials at risk can prevent further damage from use and ensure that unique content in obsolete formats is not lost.

In accordance with copyright provisions, digitization of paper-based materials and the conversion of media to current formats also provide wider availability and enhanced access to collections and resources. The Digitization Unit works in close consultation with subject selectors and other Library staff members to identify assess and prioritize materials needing preservation attention. Preservation decisions are made within the context of the Library's collection development policies, balancing costs and the limitations of resources, historical and scholarly value of the materials, and the needs of users. Also see the *Collection Development Policy for Special Collections of the National Agricultural Library* and *Collection Policy for Digital Collections*.

**G. Donated Materials and Gifts**

NAL welcomes donations of books and other materials when these are within the subject scope defined by the CDP. NAL's holdings have often grown through the gifts of collections assembled by those whose specialized knowledge of an agricultural subject or amateur devotion to it has enabled them to gather materials that NAL has not. Donations are an important avenue for NAL to collect out of print titles that are otherwise difficult to acquire. Donations can be used to complete holdings, fill gaps, and supply replacement copies (for worn materials) and to obtain materials that are not available for purchase or prohibitively expensive.

Donated materials are not free. Donations require substantial staff time to sort and review title by title in to decide whether to add each to the collection. Given the size and diversity of NAL's collections, a substantial percentage of potential donations duplicate existing holdings and the subject specialist needs to decide whether use and demand would justify adding a second copy. Cataloging, labeling, and shelf space have associated costs. With rare exceptions, gift materials must be in good condition so that NAL does not need to conserve them.

Unsolicited donated materials that do not complement NAL's research needs will be discarded. It is recommended that donors contact NAL and provide a list of items prior to sending items to the library.

**Gift Review Process**

NAL has an active gifts program and receives offers from government agencies, private organizations, and individuals. When NAL is contacted about a donation, the Acquisitions Branch will ask for a detailed list of titles being offered. If the donor provides a list, and the items appear to be within the general subject scope of the CDP, acquisitions staff will search the list against AGRICOLA and the NAL Dictionary Catalog to determine if the items are already owned by NAL. Any duplicate titles on the list are indicated as such and the appropriate Section Head (Monographs or Continuing Resources) will examine the remaining items to determine which material(s) should be sent to NAL for item-level review. When the materials arrive, the appropriate Section Head (Monographs or Continuing Resources) will review the item(s) in hand and make a final selection determination.

If no list is offered, NAL may decide to accept the donation based on a detailed description or a representative sample of titles and proceed to an item-level review when the materials arrive and are unpacked. Offers of manuscripts, rare books, or other historical materials will be referred to the Head of Special Collections for review. Consult the Special Collections CDP for additional guidance.

**Selection Guidelines for Gifts/Donations**

Use the same criteria as purchased items, as well as the following:
1. Any special conditions imposed by donor (use, housing, or treatment)
2. Handling of acknowledgment versus valuation for tax purposes

Footnotes:
(1) R.S. 520, as amended by Pub. L. 92-419, title VI, sec. 603 (a), Aug. 30, 1972, 86 stat. 675 (7 U.S.C. 2201, 1970 ed. suppl. V).
(2) R.S. 526, as amended by Pub. L. 92-419, title VI, sec. 603 (b), Aug. 30, 1972, 86 stat. 675 (7 U.S.C. 2201, 1970 ed. suppl. V).
(3) Comments and recommendations on this policy from USDA staff and other interested persons will be welcomed. Address them to: Head, Acquisitions & Collection Development Branch, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD 20705.

## III. Types of Material Collected

Agricultural sciences information is published in a variety of formats. The Library collects information in assorted formats for the advancement of agriculture. Increasing use of various media for communicating important agricultural information necessitates that NAL acquire and make these formats available to the agricultural community to insure the successful accomplishment of its mission. The material types the library collects are:

Annual Reports
Artwork and Portraits
Audiovisual Materials
Bibliographic Works
Biographical Works
Catalogs
Conference Publications
Datasets
Dictionaries and Encyclopedias
Directories
Dissertations
Drafts
Educational Materials
Environmental Impact Statements
Ephemera
Extension Publications
Fact Sheets
Fiction, Poetry and Music
Forms, Form Letters, Etc
Government Publications
Grey Literature
Handbooks and Manuals
Journals
Juvenile Materials
Kits and Games
Laws and Legal Materials
Limited Distribution Materials
Looseleaf Service Publications
Manuscripts
Maps and Atlases
Market Research Reports
Microforms
Monographs
Newspapers and
Newsletters
Pamphlets
Patents
Photocopies, Printouts, and Clippings
Popular Literature
Posters
Press Releases, Transcripts and Speeches
Prints and Photographs
Rare Books
Realia and Models
Reprints and Facsimiles
Standards and Guidelines
Statistical Works
Technical Reports and Working Papers
Translations
USDA Publications

The number of relevant agricultural resources published in digital/electronic format is steadily increasing and the selection and purchase of e-journals, electronic back files of journals, and e-books is considered a high priority.

**Duplication:** NAL does not acquire multiple copies of titles unless there is clear evidence of very heavy ongoing use or some other justification for the exception. When the same information is available in multiple formats, the format selected will be based upon the most efficient and cost-effective method of access.

## IV. Selection Guidelines by Subject

The National Agricultural Library subject descriptions are based on a current understanding of the trends in agricultural research and associated issues. These descriptions are organized alphabetically, using National Agricultural Thesaurus (NALT) terms for each subject field. The NALT and its associated glossary are produced by the National Agricultural Library, USDA, and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture through the Orton Memorial Library, and is a standard tool for agricultural and biological concepts and terminology. The thesaurus has arranged terms in a structured format to help find terms of possible interest.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive description of every subject collected, nor has there been any attempt to establish mutually exclusive subject categories. Since it would be impossible to discuss all topics that fall within the Library's collecting scope, this section focuses on subjects that:

- represent emerging disciplines,
- present complex selection challenges,
- require additional elaboration as to the Library's collecting interest, or
- constitute an especially large body of literature.

Each subject term is described by a Scope Note that includes the following information:

1. **Definition** - The definition is derived from the NALT, from USDA subject specialists, or subject specialists within the field.

2. **Collecting level** (coverage) - The Collecting Level is either “Core” or “Related”:

CORE subjects are integral to the study and practice of agriculture. All aspects of these subjects are at least indirectly related to the study and practice of agriculture, and will be included as thoroughly as possible in the NAL collection.

CORE subjects directly correlate to USDA Strategic Plan objectives or USDA Mission Areas, and are represented by the USDA National Programs.

CORE subjects may not require a Scope and Emphasis statement, as these subjects are collected as exhaustively as practical.

RELATED subjects are those areas that have some relationship to the study and practice of agriculture, but are not integral to agriculture, and/or have broader applications not directly related to agriculture. NAL is generally only interested in those aspects of “RELATED” subjects that can be applied to the study or practice of agriculture.

RELATED subjects often do not directly correlate to a USDA Strategic Plan objective or USDA mission area, but have some supporting connection to CORE subjects.

RELATED subjects require a "Scope and Emphasis" statement to define which aspects of the subject will be included in the NAL collection.

Since a Core subject is collected as exhaustively as possible, narrower subjects in the NALT hierarchy will also be collected exhaustively. However, a broad topic may be collected selectively, with only specific narrower terms collected comprehensively. Related subjects are generally collected selectively. Narrower terms to these related subjects may be collected more exhaustively than the broader term in the NALT hierarchy.

**Core Subjects:**

Agricultural Economics
Agricultural Education
Agricultural Products
Agriculture
Agrochemicals
Agronomy
Alternative Farming
Animal Science and Animal Products
Animal Welfare
Aquaculture
Biomass
Botany
Crop Production
Entomology
Farms and Farming Systems
Fertilizers
Food Safety
Food Science
Forest Science and Forest Products
Horticulture
Invasive Species
Irrigation and Drainage
Mycology
Organic Production
Pesticides
Plant Science and Plant Products
Range Management
Rural Development
Soil Science
Sustainable Agriculture
Veterinary Medicine

**Related Subjects:**

Biochemistry
Bioinformatics
Biological Sciences
Biotechnology
Chemistry
Engineering
Economics
Family and Consumer Science
Genetics
Governmental Programs and Projects
Human Health and Safety
Information Science
Laws and Regulations
Meteorology and Climatology
Microbiology
Natural Resources
Nutrition
Physics
Statistics
Water Quality
Zoology

3. **Scope and emphasis**: This section defines the NAL's collecting interest in a subject, and the level of intensity at which it is applied. For subjects that present selection difficulty, this section will provide additional context to the NAL's described collecting interest. It may include representative subtopics which provide additional guidance to the selector.

4. "**See/see also**" references – refer to related subject areas

The following factors were considered when determining scope and collecting level/coverage:

A. USDA Strategic Plan and USDA Mission Areas
B. USDA National Programs and ARS CRIS (Current Research Information System) projects
C. Cooperative agreements with NLM, LC, and other partner organizations
D. Legislative mandates
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