The Agriculture Network Information Center Initiative:  
Using Technology and Partnerships to Link People to the Information They Need  
[http://agnic.org]

What is AgNIC now? A Web gateway providing immediate access to a cross-section of evaluated 
agricultural, food, and environmental information and resources, and to a distributed network of subject 
experts.

What is the Vision for AgNIC? A “one-stop-shopping” portal utilizing the most advanced information 
technologies to deliver reliable, value-added, and broad agricultural information, full-text resources, 
primary data, and learning /decision-making tools to users in the U.S. and throughout the world.

Who is AgNIC? Currently 42 institutions and organizations including the National Agricultural Library, 
land-grant university libraries, Cooperative Extension units, and other institutions, centers, and 
organizations in the U.S., Canada, Latin America, and Europe.

When did AgNIC begin? The concept was first discussed at meetings sponsored by the National 
Agricultural Library in 1994 which involved participation from land-grant universities as well as USDA 
and NSF officials.  AgNIC became operational in 1995.

How does AgNIC work? As a voluntary and democratic “alliance” using a “centers-of -excellence” 
approach whereby each partnering institution takes responsibility for developing Web site(s) based on 
topic(s) in which they have expertise and specialized resources. The AgNIC home page links to these 
Web sites and offers both keyword searching and individual site browsing functions.

What is the Technology behind AgNIC? The AgNIC Alliance has implemented guidelines [e.g. 
controlled vocabulary, metadata standards, and database structure] that facilitate the exchange of digital 
information within a distributed system. New applications include a calendar of events as well as 
discussion boards, news items, collaborative work space, and the ability to handle multi-media formats 
and multiple languages.

How is AgNIC currently funded? NAL provides a small amount of support to operate the AgNIC 
Secretariat and to Cornell University to advance the system’s technical foundation. Partners provide their 
own operating expenses primarily as a cost-share. Competitive grants are regularly pursued by partners.

What are the issues AgNIC faces for the future? To obtain stable core funding to develop and maintain 
server and user applications and to provide incentives for membership; to expand coverage of content 
areas; and to provide a richer variety of content within the topics covered.

What are the Benefits of AgNIC for the USDA and for the Public? Currently, AgNIC offers fast, 
anytime access to reliable agriculture-related information and subject specialists at no cost to the user. In 
the future, AgNIC will provide a broad range of tools to facilitate learning and decision-making.

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