

AFITA / EFITA / PanFITA

Memorandum of Understanding for International Cooperation on the Utilization of IT for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment

We, internationally active associations and organizations with a pronounced interest in the utilization of Information Technology (IT) and its potential for Agriculture, the Environment, Food Related Industries, and International Agricultural Development, agree to cooperate within an International Network for Information Technology in Agriculture to promote international communication and cooperation in the design and development of IT-based support systems and in the management and use of digital knowledge and communication networks.

1. The network builds on scientific and professional associations and organizations whose primary focus is on the network's line of interest (core members) and associations and organizations with a profound but secondary interest in this engagement (affiliated members). Members are the initial founding members and any other association or organization admitted thereafter by a two-thirds majority vote.

2. The network may identify itself by any name approved by a two-thirds majority vote of its members. In the absence of any other decision, the network is referred to as International Network for Information Technology in Agriculture (INFITA).

3. The network delivers its activities through its members, through individuals nominated or endorsed by members or the governing of the network itself, and through an international council of experts. The cooperation involves, but is not limited to

- a) the promotion of electronic communication through newsletters, e-journals, video communication, internet sites or similar developments,
- b) the organization of outreach initiatives of various kind including conferences, workshops, or training initiatives, and
- c) the provision of advisory services on an international level in the network's areas of interest and activities.

4. The members agree to support the organization of 'World Conferences on IT in Agriculture' (WCCA) by its core members to have no competing international conference activities during World Conference period, to act as Conference co-sponsors, and to provide organizational support for the conferences. A linkage of World Conferences with regular conferences of core members is preferred. The conference organizer and conference date will be determined by a majority vote of network members at least 2 years before conference. World Conferences should be scheduled at least every 2 years. The first World Conference was organized in March 2002 in Brazil in conjunction with the conference of the Brazilian Association for IT in Agriculture (SBI-Agro), the second one is scheduled for 2004 in Thailand in conjunction with the conference of the Asian Federation for IT in Agriculture (ACFITA), the third one for 2005 in Portugal in conjunction with the conference of the European Federation for IT in Agriculture, Food, and the Environment (EFITA).

5. The members agree to support the publication of an international scientific and peer-reviewed electronic 'Journal on IT in Agriculture'. The advisory and editorial board is to be determined by its members but should represent the major continents and the diversity of IT applications in the network's areas of interest and activities.

6. The Network supports the establishment of an International Council of Experts (International IT-Policy Council) as an international policy advisory body on IT developments in agriculture. The council acts through seminars, reports and statements to guide policy representatives of governments and institutions in the design of IT policies. The council develops its own statutes and work program. The advisory body should not exceed a maximum of 30 members who have a proven international standing and appropriate in council meetings in person or through video communication. The presidents of member associations are ex-officio members of the council and are not counted towards the maximum number of members. The council meets at least in conjunction with the World Conference. New candidates are proposed by the council or by member associations or organizations and confirmed by the network's governing group. Membership in the council lasts for 3 years and can be renewed.

7. The activities of the network are coordinated by a coordination group with 2 representatives from each of the member organizations. Membership in the coordination group is from World Conference to World Conference. A renewal of membership is possible. The chairmanship rotates among representatives of core members on an annual basis. The group may invite additional persons to join the group as non-voting members. The group meets at least in conjunction with the World Conference. The coordination group is referred to as the 'Board' of the Network.

8. Participation in the Network involves no financial obligations by members if not agreed upon by a two-thirds majority vote.

9. Founding members include as core members: AFITA (Asian Federation for IT in Agriculture), EFITA (European Federation for IT in Agriculture, Food and the Environment), and PanFITA (Panamerican Federation for IT in Agriculture). CIGR (International Association of Agricultural Engineers) and IAALD (International Association of Agricultural IT Specialists) may assume the status of a founding member when joining the network at a later stage.

Prepared and signed during the 4th Conference of the European Federation for IT in Agriculture, Food, and the Environment (EFITA), Debrecen, Hungary.

Debrecen, July 2003