

USING THE INTERNET AS A DEALER INFORMATION SOURCE

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Finding Information

The internet has become a very valuable means of accessing agronomic information. There are so many sites in fact, that most people do not visit any one of them regularly. Most people looking for specific pieces of information use internet search engines. These tools are so powerful that all a user has to do is enter a few key words, and the search engine looks through a large portion of the internet for web pages that provide the best match. Perhaps one of the most frequently used search engines is Google (www.google.com). Addresses of other commonly used search engines are provided below:

AlltheWeb (www.alltheweb.com)
AltaVista (www.altavista.com)
Dogpile (www.dogpile.com)
Gigablast (www.gigablast.com)
Webcrawler (www.webcrawler.com)
Yahoo (www.yahoo.com)

There are, however, some sites that are establishing themselves as standards for certain kinds of information. A categorized list of some of these sites starts on the next page. The sites listed focus on educational materials currently available and represent only a sampling of the many sites that exist. All addresses have been verified as of 12/31/2002.

Storing Information

Once users find the information they seek, they must store it for future reference. The easiest way is to print a hard copy and save the information in an appropriately labeled file. However, many users want to store their information electronically. There are several ways of doing this.

One option is to save the link as a bookmark in a web browser. This helps you organize links to important information and requires very little disk space. This option does carry some risk, since web addresses can change and content is sometimes removed from websites. So a link to useful information stored today may not be a valid address in the future. Also, some information is the result of database queries, with no direct address. If you choose this option, you must always have an internet connection to view the web page from the bookmark.

An easy way to store web pages for future reference is to save them as web pages. Choose either **File | SaveAs** (Internet Explorer) or **File | Save Page As** (Netscape) then choose **Web page, complete** in the **Save as type** field.

Screen captures create an image of the active window. They can be performed in Microsoft Windows by pressing and holding the Alt key then pressing the Print Screen key (Alt + Print Screen). You probably won't notice anything has happened when you do this. However, an image of the active window is placed in the clip board. To view the image you created, open an application, such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Microsoft Photo Editor, and choose an option that includes the word Paste. If you want the image to be clear in an application (not fuzzy or blurry looking), do not resize it after pasting it. Resize the original application window to the desired size first before capturing. You can use image editing

software (like Microsoft Photo Editor) to delete parts of the image you don't want to keep. Such software also may offer ways of compressing the file so that it doesn't require as much storage space.

An excellent and very affordable screen capturing tool is SnagIt (www.techsmith.com). This tool allows you to customize how much of the screen you capture and how the file is stored. It also allows you to capture frames of movies and interactive applications, like Shockwave.

Adobe Acrobat is a very powerful application that can capture web pages and store them as pdf files. Adobe offers Acrobat Reader, a free application that can display pdf files but cannot create them (www.adobe.com). If you buy Adobe Acrobat, you can copy the desired web address from your browser and paste it into the application. It then downloads the content of the website plus pages from the links (if you specify that option) and creates a single pdf file that can be stored on the computer and given to others who can view it with the free Acrobat Reader software.

Website Partial Listing

Agricultural Economics

Center for Farm Financial Management (Univ. of MN)

www.cffm.umn.edu

(FINPAK software, publications, costs of production surveys, custom rate surveys)

Illinois Farm Business Farm Management Association (Univ. of IL)

web.aces.uiuc.edu/fbfm

(Costs of production surveys, custom rate surveys, land values)

North Dakota Farm Management and Financial Analysis (ND State Univ.)

www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/finance.htm

(Projected crop budgets, costs of production surveys, market advisories)

USDA Economic Research Service

www.ers.usda.gov

(Briefing rooms and publications on crop and animal production, including agricultural inputs)

Agricultural Information Gateways

Agcentral.com

www.agcentral.com

Agricultural Network Information Center

www.agnic.org

AgriSurf

www.agrisurf.com

Agronomic Links Around the Globe

www.agry.purdue.edu/links

@griculture Online

www.agriculture.com

(News, discussion groups, links with ratings)

Agricultural Information Gateways (cont'd)

Agronomic Links Around the Globe

www.agry.purdue.edu/links

@griculture Online

www.agriculture.com

(News, discussion groups, links with ratings)

Agricultural Statistics

FAOSTAT

apps.fao.org

(International agricultural statistics maintained by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, searchable database with current and historical information)

USDA Economics and Statistics System

usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/usda.html

(Agricultural and economic reports and data)

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service

www.usda.gov/nass

(Links to crop and livestock statistics, links to state statistical information)

USDA World Agricultural Outlook Board

www.usda.gov/agency/oce/waob/waob.htm

(World agricultural supply and demand estimates)

Commodity Specific Websites

Forage Information System

forages.orst.edu

(A listing of forage information resources)

KingCorn.org

www.agry.purdue.edu/ext/corn

(Newsletters, publication database, experts, links)

National Corn Growers Association

<http://www.ncga.com>

(News, publications, teacher resources)

Soybean.org

www.soybean.org

(News, FAQs, discussion forums, statistics, links)

StratSoy

www.stratsoy.uiuc.edu

(A listing of soybean information resources)

Commodity Specific Websites (cont'd)

United Soybean Board

www.unitedsoybean.org

(News, research reports, guides, links)

Wheat Foods Council

www.wheatfoods.org

(News, photos, media kits, polls, publications, PowerPoint presentations)

Wheat Industry News

www.wheatworld.org

(News, links)

Management Information

Back-to-Basics

www.back-to-basics.net

(News, Quick Tips, articles)

How a Corn Plant Develops (IA State Univ.)

maize.agron.iastate.edu/corngrows.html

(Illustrations with accompanying text)

How a Soybean Plant Develops (IA State Univ.)

www.agron.iastate.edu/soybean/beangrows.html

(Illustrations with accompanying text)

Natural Resources Conservation Service

www.nrcs.usda.gov

(Farm Bill, conservation programs, field office technical guides, plants database, photo gallery, technical resources)

Pesticide Wise (Univ. of CA, Riverside)

www.pw.ucr.edu

(Water quality risk assessment tool for pesticides)

Plant Management Network International

www.plantmanagementnetwork.org

(Crop Management online journal, Plant Health Progress online journal, image gallery)

Potash & Phosphate Institute

www.ppi-ppic.org

(Publications, tutorials, chloride crop nutrition web page, research database)

The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

www.reeusda.gov

(News, links to state publications and other government programs)

The Twelve Soil Orders (Univ. of ID)

soils.ag.uidaho.edu/soilorders

(Description of soil orders, distribution maps, keys to soil taxonomy)