

ADLib - The Agricultural Document Library

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Introduction

The Agricultural Document Library (ADLib) is a premier information resource for the agricultural and horticultural industry. It provides a single access point for important regulatory and best practice documents. ADLib aims to provide the agricultural and horticultural industries with the information they need to push forward the sustainability of the industry, in line with evolving public desires and legal demands. ADLib is managed by the Agriculture and Environment Research Unit (AERU) at the University of Hertfordshire and hosted by TLR/EverySite Ltd.

Project detail

The origins of ADLib can be traced back to 1994 when the development of the award winning Environmental Management for Agriculture (EMA) software began. This software was funded by numerous organisations (including Defra, the Scottish Executive, the Milk Development Council and the Horticultural Development Council), and comprised a suite of auditing and decision support tools to aid farmers and advisers improve their environmental performance. At the outset of development, it was recognised that related documentation and literature was vital to support the auditing and decision support systems; so a process of converting key best practice documents into an electronic format was started and is ongoing to this date.

The base ADLib resource now contains over 1600 individual documents (32000+ pages - as of January 2008) including Government codes of practice, industry guidelines, information and topic sheets, as well as a vast amount of supporting material, such as legislation/regulation summaries, glossary items, photograph galleries and a contacts directory. A few of these documents are not available anywhere else, either due to them being out of print, there being no electronic version elsewhere or both. The documents are cross-referenced using hyperlinks to individual pages or paragraphs ('deep-linking'), thus taking the user to the most relevant information within a document or related documents. There are also extensive searching and bookmarking facilities, including a keyword search facility that will search down to individual pages. By having all this information in one place and in a common electronic format, it becomes a very powerful and flexible knowledge base that can be utilised in a number of different ways. Firstly, it can simply be used to construct various electronic libraries designed to suit the needs of different user



groups. Secondly, it can be used to support other more interactive applications, such as audits and appraisals.

A number of different libraries have been constructed based on the ADLib resource, each with its own particular focus. These include the full EMA Library (£50 per annum), and its spin-off libraries for Cross Compliance; Crop Nutrition and Soil Management; and Pest and Disease Management (£25 per annum each). There are also libraries exclusively for members of the Horticultural Development Council (HDC) and British Potato Council (BPC). These libraries contain HDC and BPC publications (respectively), complimented by a selection of publications from the base ADLib resource. People who are members of FACTS (Fertiliser Advisers Certification and Training Scheme) can access a nutrient management library supplied by ADLib as part of their website (www.factsinfo.org.uk). Finally, there is a library available to members of Assured Produce.

ADLib has also been used within Defra's Whole Farm Approach (WFA - www.defra.gov.uk/farm/wholefarm). The WFA is designed to lighten the regulatory burden on farmers and growers, and consists of a number of elements including online services, on-farm inspections and the Farm Advisory System. The online services include a web portal and the "Appraisal", an electronic self-assessment questionnaire. ADLib is used firstly to support this questionnaire and secondly as a searchable resource within the portal. When a farmer is completing a questionnaire each question is accompanied with help and guidance including links to appropriate documents within ADLib. It presents users with highly tailored, relevant and up to date information on the issue they are considering at the time.

In an information laden age, agricultural businesses are bombarded with information from every direction. They also have to comply with an increasing number of European and UK regulations and meet the ever-changing demands of the market place. ADLib is key to helping businesses manage their access to information and evolve in a more sustainable direction.

For more information visit: www.adlib.ac.uk.