

eGov@USDA - eDeployment

A monthly update from the **USDA eGovernment - eDeployment Team**

October 2003

In this Issue:

- **Web Presence and USDA.gov Initiatives Move Ahead**
- **Online Taxonomy Standards Set**
- **eDeployment Product Assessment Update**

Web Presence and USDA.gov Initiatives Move Ahead

USDA currently has approximately 70 official Web sites representing its various agencies and staff offices. Many of these Web sites organize their content very differently, have distinct Web structures, and present their Web pages in their own unique ways. In an effort to overcome these challenges, the cross-agency team working on the Web Presence initiative is defining and instituting consistent guidelines and standards for the look, feel, and navigation of USDA's Web sites and Web-based applications. This initiative will create a Web environment that is "citizen-centric" and meets the goals of the President's Management Agenda as well as USDA's eGovernment Strategic Plan.

The Web Presence team, comprised of representatives from most USDA agencies and staff offices, examined business best practices to establish these Web standards and guidelines. Based on this research, the team developed initial "blueprints" of screen designs to define common design elements and layouts. In the coming weeks, the Web Presence team will develop HTML design templates and style guidelines that USDA agencies can leverage.

USDA's Web site, www.usda.gov, will be the first site to adopt the new Web Presence standards as well as the content management and portal technologies that USDA cross-agency teams are selecting through the eDeployment initiative. The Web Presence team is redesigning USDA's Web site with an emphasis on customer intentions and service needs rather than the current agency-centric approach. Using existing data about USDA customers, the team conducted an audience analysis to better understand the characteristics, capabilities and informational needs of the Department's diverse stakeholders who use our Web sites. Following the development of a composite picture of key Web users and their preferences, the team designed the presentation layer and initiated development of HTML templates. These templates will be used in usability testing this month. Customer feedback obtained from usability testing will be incorporated into the final design of usda.gov as well as USDA's evolving guidelines and standards for the look, feel and navigation of agency Web sites.

Online Taxonomy Standards Set

What good is having excellent online resources if users can't find them? The Taxonomy Development team is addressing precisely this issue. Since early September, representatives from USDA agencies and staff offices have worked to create a consistent framework to organize online content, enhance search capabilities and, most importantly, get USDA Web users to the content they seek in a quick and intuitive manner.

The team is holding a series of educational workshops and working sessions with agencies and offices throughout USDA to

assist Web content managers build the best organization for their content. The team will present the first version of the Taxonomy Model in mid-November.

The eGovernment Taxonomy Development team, uses an adapted version of OMB's Federal Enterprise Architecture's Business Reference Model (BRM) Release 2.0 (<http://www.feapmo.gov/feabrm2.asp>) as a basis for top-level, broad categories. Additionally, the eGovernment Taxonomy Model, which centers on services and functions, seeks to incorporate terms from recognized standards, such as the National Agricultural Thesaurus (<http://agclass.nal.usda.gov/agt/agt.htm>) created by USDA's National Agricultural Library and the Harmonized System Code of Commodities (<http://www.foreign-trade.com/reference/hrcode.htm>).

eDeployment Product Assessment Update

The eDeployment initiative is creating a set of enterprise services that will help USDA and its agencies transform the way they manage and deliver information. Agencies will leverage these services to deliver information and services in a citizen-centric manner while promoting efficiency and effectiveness of agency and staff office processes. Cross-agency teams are conducting a market study of products in the portal, web content management and document/records management arenas to define these enterprise services.

As part of this assessment process, the agency teams identified the functional and technical Evaluation Criteria derived from requirements gathered through an Enterprise-wide effort. Specific questions regarding each of the selection criteria were then compiled into a Product Questionnaire distributed to a list of market leading product companies in these spaces. Product questionnaire responses, in addition to information collected through product demonstrations currently in progress will give agency participants a full understanding of capabilities that are offered. Through this cooperative effort, agencies are quickly moving to define a set of enterprise services that will support the next generation of agency, cross-agency and enterprise-wide information and service delivery functions.

For more information or questions, contact the eGovernment – eDeployment Team at:

- **Phone:** (202) 720-6144
- **eMail:** egov@usda.gov
- **Web:** www.egov.usda.gov