

PigTrop Website <http://pigtrop.cirad.fr> : an Internet Portal Dedicated to Pig Production Research and Development in the Tropics

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Abstract

Because a wide access to updated and relevant data is a key point for livestock development and research improvement in the tropics, the PigTrop website is dedicated to pig production and pork commodity chains in developing countries. It mainly addresses stakeholders involved in the pig commodity chain, but also researchers, students or development agencies with an interest in tropical pig breeding. It is run by the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD).

Introduction

CIRAD is a French agricultural research centre working in developing countries and the French overseas regions. Most of CIRAD's research is conducted in partnership. One objective of CIRAD is sustainable development in tropical and subtropical zones, and there is considerable emphasis on farming and agrifood systems, commodity chains, natural and man-made ecosystems, stakeholders and territories. Research is carried out with an integrated, multidisciplinary approach, especially on production, storage and processing, biodiversity, natural resource, and environmental management, quality and risk management, organisations and societies. One main operating principle is partnerships. Projects are built and implemented in developing countries jointly with local research and development institutions.

CIRAD activities in pig sciences include animal husbandry, epidemiology and disease surveillance, nutrition and animal feeding, hygiene and food safety, food processing and technology, socio-economy of pork meat commodity chains and environmental issues, through mathematical modelling of waste management and technology in waste treatment. Projects are mainly located in Vietnam, Réunion and Guadeloupe Islands (French and European overseas territories), and France.

A major part of the CIRAD mandate is human-resource development, through training, teaching and information broadcasting to beneficiaries in Southern countries. E-learning and websites, i.e. "Web des Savoirs" Initiative, have been designed to support this essential mission. A series of websites aim at promoting the agronomic experiences of CIRAD; the PigTrop website is included in this programme to promote research activities in pig science in the tropics (Porphyre *et al.*, 2005).

Methods

The PigTrop website is a French-English worldwide web portal (Figure 1); its aim is to gather several institutions within a tropical pig e-network in order to gather relevant data and scientific references for Southern researchers, students, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), development agencies, and farmers; the contents of its pages are so designed to

facilitate access to specific information, support sustainable development of pig production in Southern countries and improve international visibility of North-South research in swine.

The pages dedicated to the general public allow visitors to know more about pig rearing in tropical conditions, its specific constraints and challenges. “The Wild Hogs and Peccaries Encyclopaedia” introduces the numerous wild pigs and related species (i.e. warthogs, peccaries and hippopotami). Visitors are introduced to quizzes, leaflets, posters, and flash animations to test their knowledge of pigs; portfolios gather pictures and images that could display easily the real situation on farms; the list of web links allows visitors to identify the main institutions and organisations implicated in the domain. Internal and web search engines help rapidly find complementary information.

Through continuously updated pages (blog) and thanks to news headlines in Really Simple Syndication (RSS) format, the news pages give new publications, special issues, past and upcoming events; a monthly newsletter is also sent to inform subscribers about the new updates on the website.

As an information database, the scientific pages gather research issues, topical reviews or reprinted papers from various disciplines applicable to pigs and of importance for beneficiaries. These multidisciplinary pages cover:

- Animal health, including disease surveillance, epidemiology, diagnosis and vaccines
- Animal nutrition, including alternative raw materials and by-products, nutritional requirements under tropical conditions and economic feeding strategies
- Genetics and biodiversity, including resistant genes, adaptation to a hot climate, local breeds and conservation of wild hogs
- Environment and natural resources protection, including animal waste management, alternative treatment technologies, etc.
- Socio-economics of the pig production sector, including producer organisations, market relationships, quality of product and food safety
- Animal husbandry and sustainable practices, including tropical pig production systems, technical and economic performance, productivity and reproductive efficiency.

Environmental issues and protection of biodiversity are regarded as major scientific issues, as is the conservation of wild pigs and related species. Of major concern are linkages between livestock, human health and food security.

The pages allotted to world-wide projects give details of current projects focusing on swine and wild pigs; they provide a presentation tool to identify and describe the various organisations and their projects focusing partly or totally on swine.

The publication pages contain an overview of publications on pig production in tropical areas; full text articles and on-line documents (training material, reports, etc.) are available for downloading.

Results

After the 16 first months, logs analysis has highlighted that 65,597 visitors have consulted our pages; monthly visits are constantly increasing (Figure 2) with an average of 287 pages visited per day; more than 1100 subscribers in dozens of countries have received the regular updates, and numerous contributions have been published from European and Southern

research institutions and universities, journals, e-networks and development agencies. General scientific pages are the most preferred part of the website, with 16.3 per cent of the total visits, followed by the information pages (13.4 per cent) and the project presentation pages (5.8 per cent). The most popular topics in the scientific pages are nutrition and environmental protection.

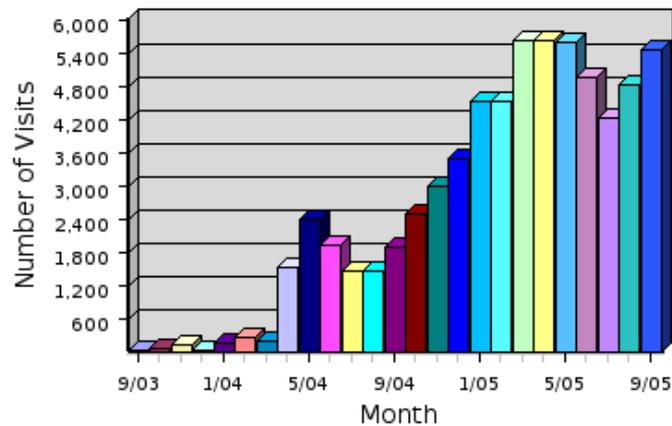


Figure 2 Number of monthly visits to the PigTrop website (source: NetTracker Lite, 2005)

Conclusion

This worldwide-web information system is the sole website specifically for pig production in the tropics; it provides relevant information for focused beneficiaries in this field. The large and interested feed-back from institutions and individuals strongly suggests it could be the base of a more formal network as a major tool to define research programmes and development policies, disseminate results and improve the visibility of actions in Southern countries.

Acknowledgement

We thank the Communication and Information department in CIRAD, especially Mrs Christine Nouaille, Thierry Erwin and Cyrille Gourment for their support from the beginning. We are also extremely grateful to the numerous contributors that make PigTrop website an updated and relevant information initiative and a collective experience.

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