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HORTIVAR, a horticultural crop cultivars performance database, has been developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as part of the World Agriculture Information Centre (WAICENT). In light of the growing concern for “food safety” and environmentally sustainable crop production, growing the right cultivar in the right place and at the right time is a key component of good agricultural practice (GAP).

HORTIVAR is a new tool for safeguarding information on the agronomic performance of horticultural cultivars in relation to agro-ecological conditions, cultivation practices, the occurrence of pests and diseases, market requirements, and consumer preferences. It originated from the need to store and easily retrieve data published in technical documents as a result of FAO field projects. However, it is equally suitable for recording trial results from the wide array of public and private sector horticultural science research centres around the world that conduct field trials to assess the performance of horticultural crop cultivars in different agro-climatic and agro-economic environments.

This wealth of information is not, at the present time, easily accessible. Furthermore, much of the information that can be accessed is difficult to evaluate since the methodologies applied for data recording vary so widely from country to country and sometimes even within a country from one institution to another.

HORTIVAR is a centralised information base for the recording and retrieval of data on the performances of horticulture cultivars throughout the world and, importantly, provides a standardised data recording methodology for field trials and observations. It serves as:

- A tool for easy and quick retrieval of information related to horticulture cultivars all over the world
- A standard methodology for data recording of current and future cultivar trials
- A source for data analysis and extrapolation (GIS applications)
- A template for educational purposes in colleges and universities
- A lively interface between scientists and growers
- A source for quick retrieval of available seeds of required cultivars for emergency operations

HORTIVAR covers six categories of horticultural crops: fruits, vegetables, roots and tubers, ornamentals, mushrooms, herbs & condiments. The data registered in the database are “site specific” and geo-referenced and suitable for GIS applications.

HORTIVAR has two primary functions which are interdependent: Data retrieval and data entry. Access to the HORTIVAR database is free of charge.

Data are retrieved by searching according to various parameters such as crop, species; cultivar, country, geographical references, resistance to pest and diseases, ecozone, and production system.

For data entry, interested partners have to register and obtain their personalised username and password from the HORTIVAR Desk Office at FAO Headquarters by sending an e-mail to

The structure of the HORTIVAR database has the following essentially elements:

1. **General Information** (site and geo-references, cultivar and characteristics, seed supplier and contact address)
2. **Basic Cropping and Yield** data (target plant product, production system, data recording environment, transplanting or direct seeding system, planting density, total fresh yield, crop cycle)
3. **Source** (origin of data, publication reference if any, data originator and his/her e-mail contact, country and species gatekeepers and his/her e-mail contact)
4. **Additional data** (*inter alia* climate information, target product destination and use, nursery practices, field operations and practices including substrate, irrigation, fertilization, plant protection, harvesting practices)
5. **Photographs**

HORTIVAR also facilitates access to other databases as well as websites of partner institutions or individuals in relation to horticultural science (examples include the World List of Seed Sources, Ecoport, ISHS and CABI). The database is accessible through internet at the following website: www.fao.org/hortivar. A standalone CD version is also available. The first version of the CD was released

on the occasion of the XXVI International Horticultural Congress, Toronto, August, 2002.

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