

# Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

**Global agency reaches isolated rural areas with vital food production information using Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF**

## PROFILE

- The United Nations' lead agency for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and rural development
- Employees: More than 3,700 in over 80 countries
- Headquarters: Rome, Italy
- [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

## BENEFITS SUMMARY

- Adobe technologies are helping the FAO increase agricultural efficiency through improved information distribution.
- Adobe PDF allows the FAO to more easily share documents across a broad range of hardware and software.
- Acrobat compresses documents for faster transmission.
- Acrobat ensures that documents look exactly as intended.
- Acrobat 5.0 allows Adobe PDF documents to be read on wireless devices, extending the FAO's reach into isolated rural areas.

Eradicating world hunger requires innovations in food production in remote communities, which in turn requires information. Rapid distribution of data is critical, as soil maps, remote sensing data, and other information can mean the difference between a record harvest and an insufficient yield. But getting agricultural data to remote areas is challenging. In developing countries, the information infrastructure is often designed on a “push” model, with television and radio broadcasts subject to changes in the political climate. Many remote areas have no electricity at all.

To spur grassroots agricultural projects, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations adopted Adobe Acrobat software and Adobe PDF to allow anyone in the world with a computer—regardless of hardware or software—to access information via the Web from the FAO's databases of agriculture, fisheries, and forestry data.

Now, thanks to Adobe Acrobat 5.0 features that allow Adobe PDF documents to be read on wireless devices, agricultural producers in isolated areas without access to computers may soon be able to access the FAO's vital information. The plan is to allow them to use a cell phone or other handheld device to access information beamed worldwide via a wireless network or satellite. With a wireless network and Adobe technologies, the FAO could set the stage for substantial increases in agricultural efficiency in rural areas.

## Broader outreach

The FAO is one of the United Nations' largest specialized agencies and the lead agency for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and rural develop-

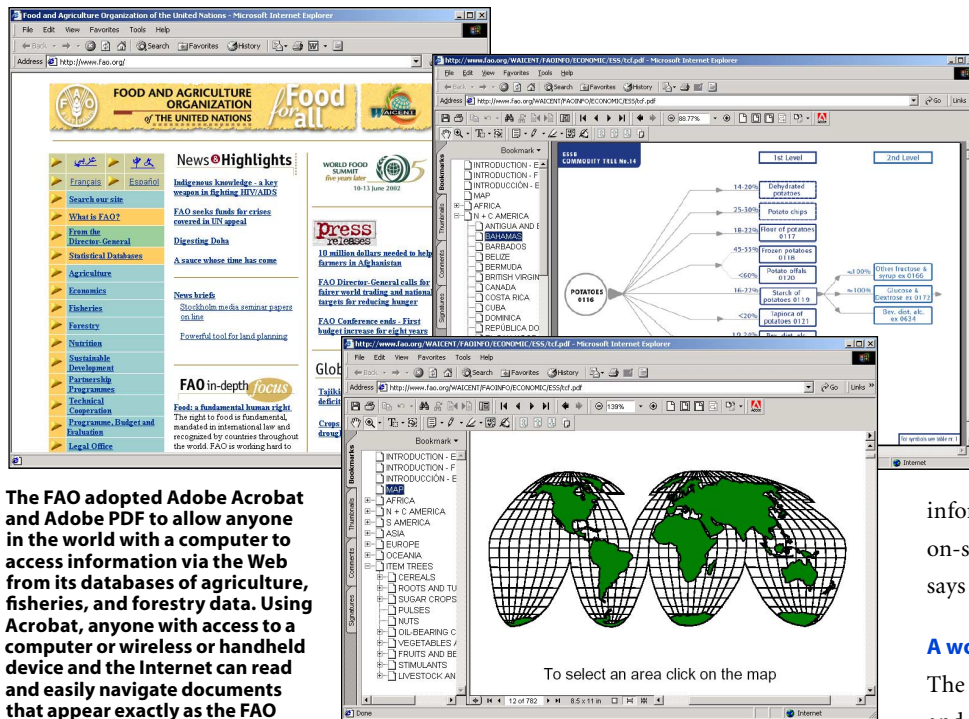
ment. The FAO provides research and oversight for food production and is analogous to a global combination of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Through projects in 140 countries, the FAO affects the lives of millions of people.

Traditionally, the FAO distributed information to regional offices in developing countries through printed or electronic documents—created with Adobe Illustrator® and Adobe FrameMaker® software—and through audiotapes and videotapes. Before adopting Adobe PDF, the FAO had to disseminate electronic documentation in several different formats, depending on each recipient's computer platform and applications.

Acrobat and Adobe PDF now enable the FAO to deliver information to anyone, regardless of computer hardware and software. Using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader® software, anyone with access to a computer or wireless or handheld device and the Internet can read documents. The software also ensures that FAO documents, which feature photos, charts, and graphs depicting technical agricultural information, look exactly as intended with formatting and images intact.

The FAO selected Adobe PDF for its ability to compress information for rapid transmission and preserve document integrity. “Far and away the biggest benefit is that Adobe PDF is a universal format for document exchange that lets us reach people in remote areas,” says Robert Patterson, senior liaison officer at the FAO's office in Washington, D.C.





The FAO's aim is to empower local users to access information. However, in the initial rollout of the wireless network, the FAO's information repositories would likely be available only to key contacts in specific developing countries, who would be able to interpret the data and pass it on to local residents. "The ability to use an agent who becomes a link to the FAO's

information repository and answers questions on-site is already a tremendous leap forward," says Patterson.

### A world without hunger

The FAO plans to test the concept of Adobe PDF and other electronic documents accessed over a wireless network with a series of pilots in different geographical regions. The success of the pilots could lead the FAO to leverage Adobe technologies to transition to a more effective "pull" method for distributing information.

In addition to helping the FAO with flexible publishing applications and Adobe PDF, Adobe Systems funded a US\$1.5 million grant to support Groundwork 2001, the FAO's annual campaign to raise money and awareness to reduce hunger worldwide. "Like the FAO, Adobe recognizes that many of the actions required for successful food production in remote areas hinge on efficient information dissemination," says Patterson. "Through private sector engagement from companies like Adobe, we're getting closer to realizing our vision of a world without hunger."

### TOOLBOX

Adobe Acrobat  
Adobe Illustrator  
Adobe FrameMaker

Microsoft® Windows® based PCs  
Power Macintosh computers  
Cellular phones  
Handheld computers

The FAO adopted Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF to allow anyone to access information via the Web from its databases of agriculture, fisheries, and forestry data. Using Acrobat, anyone with access to a computer or wireless or handheld device and the Internet can read and easily navigate documents that appear exactly as the FAO intended, including photos, charts, and graphs depicting technical agricultural information.

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*Robert Patterson  
Senior liaison officer  
The Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations*

### From push to pull

Having achieved success with Adobe PDF, the FAO converted content developed using Adobe illustration and publishing applications to a massive digital data repository. Now more than 10,000 documents in Adobe PDF are available to volunteers and remote offices worldwide via the Web. Adobe tools enable the FAO to produce materials in formats such as Adobe PDF, XML, and SVG (Scalable Vector Graphics), combining text, digital video, and audio to educate the broadest possible audience.

As a next step, the FAO hopes to enable residents in isolated areas to access information in its online repositories. The vision is to publish information in electronic formats like Adobe PDF that can be beamed worldwide by satellite or a wireless network. With devices such as cell phones and wireless handheld devices, anyone seeking agriculture, forestry, or fisheries data could access the FAO's databases. At the same time, recipients would have the opportunity to receive real-time guidance from experts either by phone or through online Help systems.



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