The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) promotes efforts to improve knowledge sharing and increase visibility of and access to data for food and agriculture. AGROVOC, a controlled vocabulary and thesaurus which covers all areas of FAO’s work, helps to standardize such data and make it more easily discoverable.
AGROVOC is the largest linked open data set about food and agriculture concepts available for public use. Originally devised in the early 1980s to describe documents and other information resources for indexing and searching, it has evolved from print catalogues to semantic web technologies.

AGROVOC is accessible online, free of charge, and links to other multilingual knowledge organization systems, allowing users to cross-reference data between from various sources. It offers a broad range of applications for text mining, information retrieval, data curation and data management, and allows for metadata annotation of digital resources such as research data sets.

AGROVOC is a structured collection of concepts, terms, definitions and relationships. Any aspect of food and agriculture can be represented by concepts, such as “maize”, “hunger”, “aquaculture” or “forestry”. These concepts are used to unambiguously identify resources, which allows for standardized indexing processes and makes searches more efficient.

AGROVOC currently incorporates more than 40 100 concepts and over 937 000 terms in up to 41 languages and allows users to access the data depending on their needs.

AGROVOC’s greatest impact arises from its role in facilitating access to and visibility of data across domains and languages. This multilingualism and depth of coverage is only possible thanks to a volunteer editorial network of national and international stakeholders, which includes government organizations, research institutions, foundations, academies, universities, national libraries and technical networks.

Coordinated by FAO, the members of the AGROVOC editorial network work together to maintain the different language versions and subject domains. The motivation for this is twofold – to utilize AGROVOC in their own language under their national systems and to increase visibility of research in their languages for a global audience.

Currently, over 35 organizations from 32 countries contribute their expertise, enriching AGROVOC with new concepts and terms, and adding new and updated terminology. Through collaboration with communities of experts, AGROVOC continues to expand its coverage to include specialized domains that can benefit from the AGROVOC infrastructure, such as land governance, law and policy, soil sciences, fisheries and aquatic sciences.

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