

While reading a copy of your excellent periodical it crossed my mind your readers may be interested in the services of INFOTERRA. The wealth of knowledge your readers have in living aquatic resources could well be shared with others who may be in need of exactly that expertise. Let me explain:

INFOTERRA is a global reference service on all aspects of environmental information. The information is supplied by authorities of high professional note carefully selected by a national focal point in their respective countries (we call them "sources"). The focal points send in descriptions of their national sources to a central, computerized file maintained by INFOTERRA's Programme Activity Centre. From this file a Directory of Sources is produced (with supplements at regular intervals to keep it up-to-date). This directory is sent free of charge to all focal points within the 119-country system in which ever INFOTERRA working language they choose—English, French, Spanish or Russian.

When a potential user (the term used to describe someone in need of expert advice or information) contacts his or

INFOTERRA*

MIK MAGNUSSON

Information Officer
INFOTERRA Programme Activity Centre
United Nations Environment Programme
P.O. Box 30552
Nairobi, Kenya

her INFOTERRA national focal point, that office either mechanically (through a computer) or manually searches the directory. The names of sources likely to be able to provide information required by the user are then supplied free of charge, together with any conditions which may apply to the selected sources—such as working language or, in a few cases, costs. The user then selects and contacts directly any of the recommended sources, which in turn provide the required substantive information.

The INFOTERRA system was designed by the United Nations Environment Programme in conjunction with participating national governments to be low in cost yet effective in promoting the exchange of environmental information. Basically, the idea is to create a dialog

between the "haves" and the "have nots" of information.

What can the system offer you?—In the field of living aquatic resources a random selection from the current INFOTERRA directory presents the following information. The figures in brackets represent the number of sources currently available within the network:

- Aquatic mammals (110);
- Aquatic microbiology (244);
- Aquatic pest control (105);
- Aquatic plant biology (227);
- Aquatic Marine Biological Resources (230);
- River Basins (221);
- Beaches and sea shores (203);
- Biological freshwater resources (169);
- Ecology of estuaries (222);
- Freshwater ecology (383);
- Marine ecology (366);
- Freshwater ecosystems (260);
- Marine ecosystems (215);
- Fish (359);
- Aquaculture (177);
- Diseases of fish, birds and animals (135);
- Effect of pollutants on fish (291);
- Fisheries (276).

This example shows only a few of the 9,400 current sources registered by INFOTERRA as willing and able to share information on a whole range of subjects. Naturally, each category shown above is further sub-divided into specialized fields. Hopefully there is information within the INFOTERRA network which can be of assistance to a great number of people within ICLARM. At the same time individuals and institutions associated with ICLARM probably have a wealth of knowledge which would be of benefit to prospective users of the INFOTERRA network.



(L to R): Ms. Veronica Villavicencio of the National Environmental Protection Center; Mr. Tom Munetic, Chief, Network Development, INFOTERRA; Ms. Sylvia Ordoñez and Mr. Benjamin Milano of the Technology Resource Center at an information meeting about INFOTERRA in Manila, 26 March 1984.

HOW TO USE INFOTERRA

If you wish to learn more about INFOTERRA, either as a prospective source or user, please contact the INFOTERRA National Focal Point in your own country (it should be listed in the telephone directory) or contact: INFOTERRA Programme Activity Centre, United Nations Environment Programme, P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya, Telephone: 33-39-30.

In the Philippines, the focal point is located at the following address: Officer-in-Charge, Technobank Program, Technology Resource Center, TRC Building, Buendia Avenue Ext., Makati, Metro Manila, Telephone: 88-05-44.

*The author sent this material as a letter to editor. It is reproduced here in full.