

AGRA Impact Series

Agriculture Ministry's Intranet Modernized For Efficiency Gains

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An adaptation of Burkina Faso's Ministry of Agriculture and Hydro-agricultural Development's (MAAH's) intranet has driven down operating costs, increased efficiency and opened up the platform to more functionalities.

Supported by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the MAAH set out to improve an existing network, initially acquired in 2017 as a mail management system.

The MAAH receives up to 850 mails everyday, and before the intranet was set up, most of these letters were delivered physically, with some requiring duplication for distribution across departments.

The earlier version of the intranet – launched in 2018 - completely transformed the communication landscape within the MAAH by automating daily tasks related to mail management.

“Before this solution, the reception, recording, processing, imputation, research and classification of the mails through the mail books were tedious, manual processes,” said Claire Ouedraogo, the Secretary of the Piloting and Support program.

However, it soon became clear that the first version of the intranet also had challenges, notably monitoring and prioritization limitations.

“It was difficult to assess the day-to-day situation of the various mails reaching the department, the reception structures and processing levels,” said Ouedraogo.

Besides, there was a case to transform the system from just a mailing function to a collaborative space with modalities for file sharing. Other requests were to make the display responsive to mobile devices as the desktop-focused design was limiting the ability to consult and process important files from remote areas. There was also an immediate need to expand the network to cover administrative agents in remote areas. Initially, the agents in villages had to travel up to several hundreds of kilometres to provincial capitals for administrative tasks because the intranet's coverage was limited.

With AGRA's support, the department engaged consultants to support the progressive maintenance of the intranet and the extension of its modules and integrations.

Among the adaptations made was to link the intranet to the personnel management system, allowing the mail administration properties to

promptly respond to staff changes.

The outcome of this investment, since the second quarter of 2020, has been a 50 percent reduction in the time spent on the management of mail. The network now allows administrative authorities to establish automated roadmaps with sets of tasks and to follow the progress through process flow charts.

“Additionally, the system is projected to bring about a reduction of at least 208 million FCFA per year on travel. This is in addition to the savings in printing and paper costs and a reduction in the ministry’s carbon footprint,” said Yougbare Sebastien, the Director of IT Services.

More benefits have been registered in staff administration where an increase in the processing speed for files related to human resource management such as leave requests has helped improve employee morale and the general image of the ministry.

Ultimately, the changes made have served to break down the communication silos between services, allowing the ministry to offer more integrated and efficiently delivered public services.

The next few months will see the intranet’s appropriation and popularization for the benefit of the country’s 352 Agricultural Technical Support Zones (ZAT), 45 provincial directorates and 13 regional directorates in charge of agriculture.

