VERCON Changes and Enhancements

**A Follow up report based on the
Information Needs Assessment of VERCON stakeholders**

Prepared By

Samhaa El-Beltagy

August, 2005

Table of contents

1   Introduction

This report has been prepared to address issues and suggestions raised by two documents that have been prepared by Dr. Mohammed Kassem as part of the RADCON Stakeholder Analysis. These reports are a **Report on the workshop on potential development of VERCON Systems**, and a report on the **Information Needs Assessment of VERCON stakeholders.** The reports will hence forth be referred to as RAD/05/1   and RAD/05/2 respectively. The first report (RAD/05/1) offers suggestions for improving the VERCON system based on feedback from a workshop organized to discuss how the VERCON system can be further improved. The second report (RAD/05/2) also offers suggestions for improving the VERCON system, but these are based on feedback from existing system users obtained through pre-prepared questionnaires.   It also offers suggestions for new systems to be added to the VERCON system.

After analyzing the above mentioned reports, suggestions and recommendations made in these reports were divided into five categories. These are:

1. **Recommendations that can be carried out immediately:**   These are clear recommendations that contain straight forward suggestions that require little or no design.
2. *Recommendations that require further design:* These are elaborate recommendations that need to be looked into closely, and have their solutions designed.
3. *Recommendations that require further clarification/consideration:* These include suggestions that are either unclear or which raise some question marks about their development.
4. *Recommendations that require no action:* These are suggestions that are either non-system development related, or that have been addressed else where. They are included here for the sake of completeness.
5. *Recommendations that have been rejected:* These include recommendations that are either not feasible or that the author of this document does not believe serve the overall objective of the RADCON project. Justifications for rejecting recommendations is included for each.

This report has thus been divided into five major sections (other than the introduction) each addressing one of the above mentioned categories. Each section is organized by system, i.e all suggested changes for each system are addressed in each subsection of each category under which it fits.   As much as possible, recommendations or suggestions made in documents RAD/05/1 and RAD/05/2, have copied as is. All original quotes taken from these documents appear in italics under each recommendation. A reference to the exact location where these recommendations appear in its original document, is also provided. The required action for carrying out each recommendation is stated unless further clarification is required.

2 Recommendations that can be carried out immediately

2.1 Farmers problems tracking system

Recommendation 1

Support extension centers, agricultural directorates and research stations with scanners to help problem or solution description. In this case the system should support uploading the pictures

Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/1, page 3
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Comment
This can be done subject to budget allocated for equipment, which is outside the scope of this report. Availing digital cameras (again if the budget permits) can also serve a similar purpose.

Required Action
A component for uploading photos and another facilitating their viewing should be included in the system. I would suggest that this component be added regardless of whether scanners/digital cameras will be made available or not, as sooner or later means for conveying a problem through photos will be feasible.

Time needed to complete this task
2 man weeks.

Recommendation 2

Add a button in the extension center's page to report the problems uploaded by mistake and should be deleted from the database. In this case, a text box should be available to justify the reason for elimination for the system administrator. This facility should not be allowed except for the extension center as the source of farmer's problems

Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Required Action
Carry out recommended action.

Time needed to complete this task
1 man weeks.

Recommendation 3

To enable the extension center to rephrase or modify the problem description, or to enable the Agricultural Directorate to modify the extension center's formulation and then the research station consider the best formulation (extension center's or AD's) to publish.

Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Comment
This recommendation is related to recommendation 2 in section 3.1 and as such should be considered with it.

Required Action

Carry out recommendation by adding an additional text box in the problem review page, for problem re-formulation and offering the research station both formulations for consideration.

Time needed to complete this task

3 man weeks.

Recommendation 4

It is better for the operator to log in directly to his page of the system according to his screen name and password, rather than logging through AD's or CAAES's sites. This would also lessen the system's hang-ups

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Required Action

Carryout recommendation. This can be done by checking the log-in name and comparing it to known operators. If the user is an operator, then he/she should be re-directed to the appropriate page. To implement this, an field in the database identifying operators should be added, as well as a field identifying the appropriate page to be re-directed to for each operator.

Time needed to complete this task

2 man weeks.

Recommendation 5

Enable the published solution to be supported with the infection picture if available. This picture could be uploaded by any site, but should be approved by the researcher for publishing

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Required Action

Carryout recommendation by availing an upload photo function in the solution entry web page.

Time needed to complete this task

2 man weeks.

Recommendation 6

Add a new page for longer answers/solutions in the shape of an article. Such a reply was suggested by researchers sometimes and couldn't be published.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Required Action

Carryout recommendation. Instead of adding a page for longer answers, simply allow the entry of long answers by modifying the properties of the entry text box, and the answer field in the database.

Time needed to complete this task

1 man week.

Recommendation 7

Add a function in the problem data base to search the frequently repeated problems or persisting problems.
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/1, page 3
Comment
This will require the storage of entered problem descriptors along with a counter so as to determine frequently queried problems.
Required Action
Carry out recommendation through:
> (a) creation of an "entered problem data" table(s) in the database
> (b) provision of an interface (page) for displaying frequently searched problems
> (c) addition of appropriate links from the system, to the frequently searched problems page.

Time needed to complete this task
3 man weeks.

2.2   The News and events system

Recommendation 1

Support the system with pictures at least in the main page
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2
Required Action
Support uploading a photo with each news item and showing a thumbnail for that in the news summary page. This will entail making changes in 4 places:
1. In the database: An extra field should be created for storing a picture or a pointer to a picture per news item
2. In the news data entry page: A new option for uploading a picture for the news item, should be included.
3. In the news summary page: A thumbnail of any news item photo entry, should appear next to the news item's summary
4. In the page dedicated for viewing the news item: A full photo should be shown next to its associated news item

Time needed to complete this task
3 man weeks.

Recommendation 2

Enable archiving the important articles and facilitate retrieving it by the user. Add an archive system to enable the user to locate the news by date, subject and source
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/1, page 2
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2

Required Action

Carry out recommendation. This simply entails the development of a search front end that employ the above mentioned descriptors which already exist in the database.

Time needed to complete this task

1 man week.

Recommendation 3

Put more focus on agricultural innovations news

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2

Required Action

Add a new news category for agricultural innovations. This will entail the development of a data entry components (with workflow) and a front end.

Time needed to complete this task

3 man weeks.

Recommendation 4

Add new page titled (TO THE EDITOR) to respond to VERCON users

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2

Comment

This can simply be a link that activates an email editor with a pre-defined email address of a person who can respond to VERCON users.

Required Action

Add an email link (To the Editor)

Time needed to complete this task

1 day

Recommendation 5

Suggested sites for news input to the system:
- *Extension Centers.*
- *Agricultural Research Center (HQ).*
- *Agricultural Directorates.*
- *Agricultural Economic Sector.*
- *Research Institutes and Central Labs.*
- *CAAES.*
- *Research Stations.*
- *Development Support Communication Center (DSCC).*
- *Faculties of Agriculture.*
- *Policy and Coordination Unit for Women in Agriculture (PCUWA).*
- *MALR public relations.*
- *General Administration of Agricultural Culture (GAAC).*
- *Central Lab for Agricultural Climate (CLAC).*
- *Egyptian National Agricultural Library.*

- *Agricultural Services Sector.*
- *Agricultural councils.*

Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2
RAD/05/1, page 2: "*Enable the news source suggested in the study recommendations* [cited above] *to upload its related news. after the source director approval, AERDRI will publish it.*"

Required Action
Assuming that what is required is to give above mentioned centers the authorization to publish news events then the following tasks are required:
1. Identify a contact person for each of the listed centers.
2. Create a user name and password for each center giving them appropriate privileges.
3. Train contact persons on using the system

Time needed to complete this task
- 1 man week for task 2.
- 1 day for task 3 (not counting the time required to contact the people that should attend this 1 day training course, and the time needed to plan it)
- Estimating the time needed for completing task one is a difficult task. It can take as little as one day, if there is a directory for these centers and as much as 1 month (or more), if it requires researching and enquiring.

Recommendation 6

Add a component for the announcement of agriculture exhibitions.
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/1, page 2
Required Action
Carry out recommendation by creating a new event type which will be called " Agricultural exhibitions". Publication privileges of this item should be given to all those who can publish news items.
Time needed to complete this task
3 man weeks.

2.3   The Brochures System

Recommendation 1

Respondents recommended that the bulletin can be downloaded as a single and integrated file. This would facilitate using this system offline and the fast retrieval or printing of the bulletin
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.3
Required Action
Carry out suggested recommendation by availing a "download as a single file" function. This will require availing the file as one single unit either in html or in pdf.

In of availing the file in html, then all images have to be included in a zip file. This task can be broken down into two steps:

1. Converting existing files to html/and or pdf
2. Updating the database (to include pointers to single files) and writing required scripts

Time needed to complete this task

3 man weeks for task 1

1 man week for task 2

Recommendation 2

It is recommended to add a main page for bulletins categories only. In this page, the category link opens another page containing all bulletins in this category, with options to read it online, or download it in one big file preferably in a word format. Some useful links to other bulletins in Arabic or English can be added to either page. These links should be verified by the concerned researchers.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.3

Required Action

Carry out the recommendation. This is related to the previous recommendation.

Time needed to complete this task

2 man weeks.

2.4   Expert Systems

Recommendation 1

Develop a list for all possible symptoms and avail it in a printable format to help extensionists identify it during their field diagnosis.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/1, page 3

Required Action

Carry out recommended action. This list can be extracted from expert system design documents. In the future, a component can be built to generate this list automatically from an expert system's knowledge base.

Time needed to complete this task

2 man weeks/expert system.

2.5   The Forum

Recommendation 1

Add a help page on how to use the system

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/1, page 2

Required Action

Carry out recommended action. Content n can be derived from already prepared training material.

Time needed to complete this task

2 man weeks

Recommendation 2

Add a function for publishing successful experiences and ideas
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/1, page 2
Required Action
Create a forum for this issue and assign a moderator for it.
Time needed to complete this task
Creating the forum itself will take negligible time. Finding a moderator for this forum and publicizing it, might take a little longer.

Recommendation 3

Suggested discussion groups
> 1.   *Youth problems in agriculture*
> 2.   *Rural Women*
> 3.   *Different agricultural commodities*

Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/1, page 2
Comment
Points 2 and 3 need to be more focused
Required Action
Create a forum for each of the suggested topics
Time needed to complete this task
Same a recommendation 2.

2.6   The Statistical DB Front end

Recommendation 1

Change the name of the system [from e-commerce] *to be agriculture marketing information system*
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/1, page 3
Comment
There is no e-commerce system at the time being. I think what is being referred to here is the front end to the statistical database which can easily be renamed as suggested.
Required Action
Rename the system as suggested and update links in all pages.
Time needed to complete this task
1 man week.

2.7 General

Recommendation 1

Eliminate the registry system for ordinary users. In order to shorten login steps to the system and make the site handy to novice users; conditioned accessibility should be eliminated. Registration system should be limited to:

- *formal users in the working sites.*
- *VERCON forum users only in case of posting messages.*
- *Problem solving database users in case of posting a problem.*
- *User data (except the name and occupation) would be accessible only if the user accepted that option. User data should include: Full name., Occupation after adding open field for "other", Organization after adding open field for "other", Gender, Residence, with an extra box for the country of users outside Egypt, E-mail address (optional), Option to reveal his personal data publicly.*

- The system should confirm the login name and password by mail (if available).
- It should have a mechanism to retrieve forgotten password.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.2
RAD/05/2,Section 3.3

Comment

Eliminating the registration process entirely will mean that valuable information about so called "ordinary" users will be lost. In order to continue to enhance the system and to evaluate its usability, its important to know who's using the system and how. Without registration, the monitoring component of the VERCON/RADCON system will collapse. The valuable information in the system should offer enough incentive for VERCON/RADCON users to register. Having said that, improvements can be made to the current registration mechanism. We can minimize the mandatory fields and keep those to a minimum as well as eliminate the need for entering an email address except for systems that really require it. A short explanation about why this information is required can be provided. Users can also be allowed access to interesting statistics that they help create (the top 3 pages accessed by researchers or farmers for example).

Required Action

Re-consider the registration process and make it more friendly for the users of the system. Mainly:

- Do not make entering an email address mandatory except for systems that require it. So, for example a registered user can not ask to be notified about news updates, or forum postings if he/she has not entered an email.
- Do not make entering a name mandatory.
- Occupation and gender should be mandatory, but for occupation the "other" option should be offered as suggested. Same as for country.
- Add two mechanisms for retrieving forgotten passwords. The first should depend on asking the user to enter a memorable question or sentence to remind him/her of the password. This should be used in case the user has not entered an email. The second should simply

12

email the user his/her password once they indicate that they've
forgotten it.
- Add an option for hiding user data
- Add a link some monitoring system reports
- Allow brochure browsing with no registration, but restrict
downloading of printable versions to registered users

Time needed to complete this task

1 man month.

Recommendation 2

Add a page for related useful links.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.2

Comment

A set of related useful links is already being offered, but this can be extended and
included in a separate page as suggested.

Required Action

Develop a new page for related links and link it to all other pages.

Time needed to complete this task

2 man weeks.

Recommendation 3

Add a HELP tool to use VERCON systems

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.2

Required Action

Add a help page to each system. Training material is already available for each of
the systems. This can be used to creates these pages

Time needed to complete this task

3 man weeks/system

2.8   New Components

Recommendation 1

Provide a page for *Frequently Asked Questions*

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 4.2

Required Action

A list of questions that can be included in this page is provided in document
RAD/05/2,Section 4.2. Provide a page for these questions, simply entails providing
hyperlinks to answers to these questions from a guide page, and adding a link for
this page in VERCON's main menus.

Time needed to complete this task

1 man month

Recommendation 2

Develop a component for sending out a *VERCON newsletter. This is to be sent on demand to the users by e-mails. The contents are about new activities of VERCON, and any significant notifications*

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 4.5

Required Action

1. Create database tables for storing news letter items.
2. Create a front end for entering news letter events. News letters should be entered, deleted and managed by month (Jan news letter, Feb, etc)
3. Create a mechanism whereby interested users can subscribe to getting the news letter in the email. Add a link to this, in the news page and the front page.

Time needed to complete this task

6 man weeks

3 Recommendations that require further design

3.1 Farmers problems tracking system

Recommendation 1

Research Institutes should have accessibility to the system to monitor the problems solution, and take over the problem to solve it in case of unavailability of a solution in the research station, or a delay for more than three days in the research station.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Required Action

Design and develop a component to keep track of when a problem was posted and to automatically notify concerned persons of the delay. The component should allow managers to quickly see if there are any staff that are causing bottle necks in the system.

Time needed to complete this task

2 man months.

Recommendation 2

It is preferable to use options in the system to describe a problem to help the extension worker to cover all needed aspects of the problem, unify the description and link the system's database with other systems. Expert system options can be a good start for this modification, but an extra text box should be available for free text by the extension worker. In this case, a search engine can be developed to enable the user of searching the farmer problems database by symptoms to find published solutions

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Comment

Pre-defined descriptors already exist to describe the type problem being entered. It is assumed that what is required here is more descriptors to define the problem on a finer level of detail. The system already has a multitude of problems that have been entered in the past. These can be used to determine whether a set of extra features that can serve as descriptors can be abstracted or not.

Required Action

1. Analyze existing problems and extract features that can serve as descriptors or conclude that this solution can not be applied.
2. In case there are no problems extracting descriptors, then (a) develop an interface that allows problems to be entered via identified descriptors, and (b) extend the farmer's problems search engine.

Time needed to complete this task

1 man month for task 1.
1 man month for task 2.

Recommendation 3

Find a way to link the farmer problems tracking system with the extension bulletin system to support the solution by more information if needed (For more information click here)

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Comment

There is no straight forward way of doing this automatically expect, by providing descriptors for the solution and seeing whether a corresponding item can be found in the database. This can also be achieved through problem descriptors) As such, this recommendation is also related to recommendation 2. In any case, descriptors that are used for extension bulletins should be employed in order to generate the link.

Required Action

1. Implement a component that attaches meta-tags to a problem. If recommendation 2 is implemented, then problem descriptors will be provided by the user.   Alternatively, solution descriptors can be used. Solution descriptors offer an easier way of achieving the desired outcome with the system as it stands now. They requires meta-tagging by solution producers using descriptors that are also employed by the brochures system.
2. Develop the means by which to create the links automatically. Basically this entails using the descriptors attached to the solution by the researcher as a query to the brochures system thus obtaining any available links as a result to this query.

Time needed to complete this task

1 man month for task 1.
2 man month for task 2.

3.2   Expert Systems

Recommendation 1

Develop a mechanism in the system to follow-up repeatedly consulted problems by users; that can be used to warn other users about possible events.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.4

Required Action

Carry out recommended changes. This will require the development of a component that logs problems/cases.

Time needed to complete this task

2 man months.

3.3   New Components

Recommendation 1

Suggestions for RADCON:
- *Include a system for users queries and officials answers.*
- *Results and lessons learned from developmental projects.*
- *Market places and exportation of agricultural production.*
- *Geographical agricultural maps.*
- *Charts of developmental projects.*

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.3

Comment

Not enough details are provided for these systems. More details need to be collected for each system, and a design can be prepared accordingly.

Recommendation 2

Provide a training system with the following features:
1. *Consider covering different specialization.*
2. *Use distance learning techniques.*
3. *Training modules should be based on needs assessment.*
4. *Publish the training plans including syllabus, trainers, target trainees or groups, venue, duration and training cost if applicable.*

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/1,page 2-3
RAD/05/2,Section 4.1

Comment

The justification for this system, suggestions for online courses, as well as further details on the requirements from this system can be found in RAD/05/2, section 4.1.

Required Action

Design and implement the system

Recommendation 3

Develop a system for establishing "*Communication lines and decision nodes of the national extension campaigns".* The system will have 4 components:
- A *National extension campaigns* module
- A *National extension programmes* module
- A *Local extension programs* module
- A *Monitoring* module

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.4.1

Comment

From the description provided in document RAD/05/2, the success of national extension campaigns and programs seem to rely on proper information flow between parties involved. Details regarding the work flow that is to be modeled by this system can be found in RAD/05/2,Section 3.4.1 and in annexes VI and VII.

Required Action

Design and implement the system

Recommendation 4

Develop an "*Agricultural services guide"*

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 4.2

Comment

What is required is the development of a system that would aid farmers to find the selling places, prices of commodities, and the contact points of various service. A list of these is described in the referenced document

Required Action

Design and implement the system.

Recommendation 5

Develop an "*Agricultural services guide"*

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 4.2

Comment

What is required is the development of a system that would aid farmers to find the selling places, prices of commodities, and the contact points of various service. A list of these is described in the referenced document

Required Action

Design and implement the system.

4 Recommendations that require further clarification/consideration

4.1 Farmers problems tracking system

Recommendation 1

Enable the public users to report their agricultural problems directly to the system. In this case, the problem field should be specified by the user through clear options and the destination of the problem might be the extension center if available and then the research station in the user area. In case of administrative problems, the responsible site might be the Agriculntural directorate if available, and then CAAES.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Comment

This recommendation is also related to recommendation 3, but it needs to be considered carefully. Allowing anyone to enter problems in the system can have two un-desirable outcomes. The first is that the system can receive more problems than researchers can handle; the second and more serious problem is that bogus requests can be sent through the system. These will still require the attention of those involved and may sometimes take up more time than is necessary. Both these limitations can hinder the over all operation of the system.

Required Action

Determine the importance of this recommendation as opposed to its drawbacks and decide whether or not to go forward with it.

Recommendation 2

It is very preferable to support the system by a researcher online in the common fields. This might make solving the problem much faster, and have the confidence of the beneficiaries grow stronger. This system could work for peak hours only, and the problems and solutions should be uploaded in the database as well. Such a schedule of online researcher can be coordinated among the working research stations to cover the needed specification in the working hours.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Comment

Solutions to problems usually have to be approved at some stage before being published. Having a researcher answering queries in real time indicates that the researcher has to be of a fairly high caliber. It is not immediately obvious whether such researchers will be available to carry out the recommended task. Also what will such researchers do when facing too many queries at any point of time.

Required Action

Re-consider recommendation

Recommendation 3

Continue developing the slide picture database and enable the DSCC to upload it.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/1, page 3

Comment

This recommendation is rather vague. More information on this recommendation is needed before considering it.

4.2   The News and events system

Recommendation 1

Add a page for successful experiences and ideas (endogenous knowledge). Successful experience should include: youth experience in establishing small projects, marketing experts successful ideas, cost reduction experience

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2

Comment

I don't think this fits under the "News and events" Category. A similar recommendation has been made for the forum. Should this recommendation be carried out, experiences need to be focused and need to fit under a set of pre-defined categories which fit a set of priorities.

Required Action

1. Determine types of experiences to be included and descriptors for those.
2. Create appropriate database tables.
3. Develop a backend for entering experiences
4. Develop a front end for retrieving experiences.

Time needed to complete this task

2 man months

Recommendation 2

Add a new page for the Extension vehicle schedule to be issued by DSCC and published by CAAES

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2

RAD/05/1, page 2: "*Add the monthly action plan of the extension equipped vehicle by the related Development Support Communication Center (DSCC).*"

Comment

This recommendation is very vague

Recommendation 3

Enable the chief editor to store important news to an additional database for news

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2

Comment

This recommendation is also very vague

Recommendation 4

Advertise information that is of interest to farmers. (A list of this type of information is available in RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2). Examples include:

- Research Institutes' products, selling places and prices.
- Principal Bank for Development and Agricultural Credit (PBDAC) credit services and commodities being sold through its facilities.
- Calls of National Campaigns.
- Emergency calls (warnings).

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2

Comment

Collecting this type of information and keeping it up to date is quite a task. Before carrying out this recommendation, a party or (various parties) willing to enter and maintain this information, should be located.   It should also be determined whether the expected benefits of this recommendation will out weigh the required effort (which is quite considerable) to implement and maintain it.

Required Action

1. Design a system to allow for the entry of required information in a decentralized manner, and implement it
2. Integrate the designed system with the news system
3. Develop a user interface.

Time needed to complete this task

3 man months for task 1.

1 man month for task 2.

1 man month for task 3.

Recommendation 5

Suggested Agricultural Magazines to be online:

- *Agricultural Extension (bi-monthly issued by CAAES).*
- *Agricultural Extension in the New Lands (bi-monthly issued by CAAES).*
- *Agricultural Climate (monthly issued by CAAES).*
- *Agricultural Journal (monthly issued by GAAC).*
- *Shorouk Magazine (Private). Uploading older versions can be negotiated with the magazine board.*
- *A link with Cooperative Journal and Agricultural Magazine (www.dareltaawon.org).*

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2

Comment

It is not clear whether these magazines are available in a soft format or not.   It is also not obvious how this recommendation relates to the news system. However, should this recommendation be carried out, then uploading of these magazines

should be done in a decentralized manner similar to the way extension brochures are being uploaded. CAAES and GAAC should also be willing to allocate someone to take responsibility for this task. This person will have to be trained on using an uploading tool (which is yet to be developed). Availing an uploading/publishing tool will depend on the format of the magazines, so these must be examined.

Required Action
1. Ensure that CAAES and GAAC are willing to co-operate in this task.
2. Examine magazines and determine the best way to publish them. An output of this task should be a small design document for the uploading/publishing utility (with needed workflow) as well as for a design for the user interface.
3. Implement the uploading/publishing utility.
4. Train staff from CAAES and GAAC and any other party that will use the developed tools, on using them.

Time needed to complete this task
2 man month for task 2.
1 man month for task 3.
1 day for task 4 (not considering training organization and material preparation time)

4.3   Expert Systems

Recommendation 1

Update each system before the system begins
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.4
Comment
This recommendation is very vague. It's not clear what it means.

Recommendation 2

New Expert Systems suggested to be online:
- *Field crops: Cotton, Maize, Sorghum, Sugar Cane, Peanut, Faba bean and Clover.*
- *Fruit: Citrus, Cantaloupe, Apricot, Date Palms, Guava, Grapes, Mangoes, Stone Fruits, and Banana.*
- *Vegetables: Onion, Garlic, Cucurbits, Cauliflower, Green Pea, Egg Plant, Cabbage, Sugar Beet, Potato, Sweet Potato, Pepper, Cucumber, Water Melon, and Artichoke.*
- *Medical and Aromatic plants.*
- *Comprehensive expert systems: IPM, Weed Control, Crop Selection and Soil and Water Management*

Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.4
Comment
These are too many. They need to be narrowed down based on a set of priorities

4.4 General

Recommendation 1

Support recommendations with references and pictures if applicable.
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.2
Comment
Recommendations are made primarily in two systems: Expert systems, and the Farmers Problems systems. Adding references and pictures to recommendations offered by both should thus be considered.
Required Action
Request the developers of Expert Systems and the Farmers Problems system to augment their recommendations with references and pictures.

Recommendation 2

Facilitate printing the online material
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.2
Required Action
Investigate each system and see how this support can be provided.
Time needed to complete this task
1 man week/system (just for investigating and recommending a course of action. So this time estimate does not include the actual provision of printing support)

Recommendation 3

Suggestions for new systems for VERCON:
- *Expert system for olives.*
- *Expert system for vegetables.*
- *Small projects for newly reclaimed lands.*
- *Small investors extension.*

Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.3
Comment
Same as comment for recommendation 2, in section 4.3 . These need to be decided based on a set of priorities

4.5 New Components

Recommendation 1

Develop an *E-commerce agricultural system*
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 4.4
Comment
The description provided for this component is almost similar to the existing statistical DB system. So further justification for implementing this as a new system, is needed.

5 Recommendations that require no action

5.1 Farmers problems tracking system

Recommendation 1

AERDRI and CAAES should analyze the published and repeatedly reported problems in the last season for each commodity to identify the needed modifications in the current extension programmes.
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1
Comment
This is none system development related.

Recommendation 2

Research Institutes should analyze the published problems and solutions for each commodity seasonally to determine the valid problems in the next season and delete invalid ones.
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1
Comment
This is none system development related.

Recommendation 3

The manager of the research station should coordinate with research departments to assign a research officer to solve the daily problems.
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/1, page 3
Comment
This is none system development related.

5.2 The News and events system

Recommendation 1

Move the news system to RADCON main page instead of being a link in VERCON.
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.2
Comment
This has already been recognized in a document that addresses required changes to the VERCON system.

5.3 The Brochures System

Recommendation 1

In addition to the 38 bulletin subjects suggested in the questionnaire, respondents recommended another 25 issues [details of which are provided in RAD/05/2]

Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.3
Comment
In terms of system development, this recommendation does not require any immediate action. Any available brochures can be added as soon as made available.

Recommendation 2

Respondents suggested to support computers in the Extension Centers with a video card to connect their PC with the available TV to help running VERCON shows during extension meetings for a larger group of farmers
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.3
Comment
This is none system development related.

5.4   Expert Systems

Recommendation 1

Link all other sub-systems with the other available scientific material published on VERCON, like the diagnosis sub-system.
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.4
Comment
This has already been recognized in a document that addresses required changes to the VERCON system.

Recommendation 2

Develop the main page of the system, and include available fields of advice
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.4
Comment
This has already been recognized in a document that addresses required changes to the VERCON system.

5.5   The Statistical DB Front end

Recommendation 1

The system should be under RADCON and not VERCON
Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/1, page 3
Comment
This has already been recognized in a document that addresses required changes to the VERCON system.

5.6   General

Recommendation 1

Suggestions to enhance women participation in VERCON:
- *Feasibility studies of small projects for women.*
- *Rationalize home demands.*
- *Discussing women problems and solutions.*
- *Small projects to reuse, reduce or recycle farm wastes*

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.3

Comment

These are not directly related to system development.

6   Recommendations that have been rejected

6.1   Farmers problems tracking system

Recommendation 1

The system might be supported by a limited communication tool for exchanging short text message to enable one operator to communicate with one or more operator for some requests or clarification

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.1

Comment

What is requested can be easily supported by email.

Recommendation 2

Limit problems upload to the extension centers and if any farmer has a problem send it through the email.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/1, page 3

Comment

This recommendation contradicts with recommendation 1 in section 4.1 !!

6.2   The News and events system

Recommendation 1

Add all the radio and TV programs schedules including the time of airing and episode subject

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/1, page 2

Comment

Its not clear what is meant by that. What is the point of adding all radio and TV program schedules and how will that serve the overall objective of the project?

6.3   The Brochures System

Recommendation 2

Support the system with Articles to work as a compromise between an integrated bulletins and problem solution that exceed the limited space in farmers problems tracking system. Such solutions were already offered by researchers, but there was now way to publish it in VERCON

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.1.3

Comment

The purpose of having a brochure/bulletin system is to support users with sources of information that are officially approved. The place of articles offered by

researcher as solutions to problems, is not here. This recommendation was also mentioned under the "Farmers Problems System" (Recommendation 6, section 2.1)

6.4 Expert Systems

Recommendation 1

Develop multi-disciplinary expert systems such as weed identification and control or IPM.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/1, page 3

Comment

This is a very general recommendation which can not be carried out as such in the VERCON//RADCON system. As much as possible (subject to various project objectives and budgets) this is already being carried out at CLAES when developing new expert systems.

6.5 General

Recommendation 1

Add a system for agricultural research results.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.2

Comment

There is a whole system being developed to do precisely that under a different project (NARIMS). As soon as the system is completed, a link to the system can be added from VERCON.

Recommendation 2

Translate selected information from other related sites.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.2

Comment

This is too broad a recommendation giving rise to many questions. Which sites? On what basis is material to be chosen. Who will carry out the translation? How much will this cost? Where will this be placed in the system?

Recommendation 3

Add a mechanism to respond to users questions and queries.

Cross reference(s)

RAD/05/2,Section 3.2

Comment

This recommendation is a bit vague. A whole system is already in place to respond to users' problems. For each system in VERCON, a contact email is

availed to answer user questions or queries regarding that system. So, what is required here is not very obvious.

Recommendation 4
Consider users in other Arab countries

Cross reference(s)
RAD/05/2,Section 3.2
Comment
Users in other Arab countries will require different content than that being offered in most current systems. Broadening the scope of the project to consider them will thus introduces a considerable overhead which is not really required at this point in time.