

Reader's Survey 2004

The 2004 Reader's Survey was distributed to all subscribers together with the June 2004 issue of the global edition, and was also made available on the LEISA website. By asking readers 19 questions, we tried to answer two questions of our own: "Who are the readers?" and "How is the Magazine useful to them?" The two open questions allowed space for mentioning concrete examples of how information provided in the Magazine had been of use, and to provide comments and suggestions for improvement.

By the end of January 2005, around eight percent of the subscribers to the global edition had responded to the survey. Replies are still coming in and considering the remote location of many of our readers and the requirement to pay for postage, we consider this is a good response.

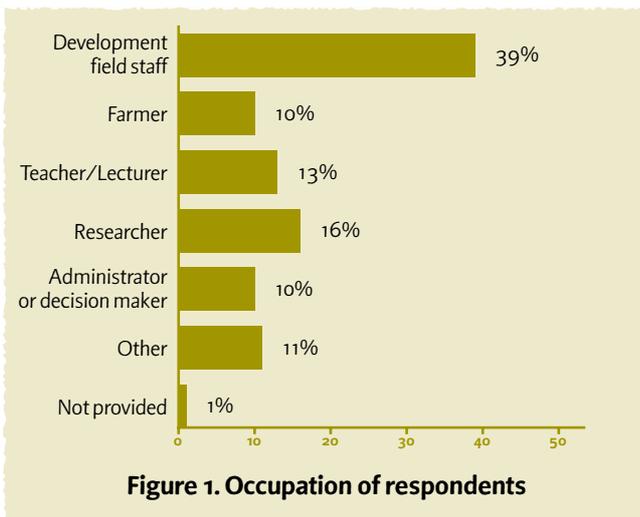
Who reads LEISA Magazine?

The questions in the first part of the survey aimed to help us to understand who our readers are and whether we are reaching our target readership.

Occupation and organization

A comparison with our general subscriber's database showed that the survey respondents were representative of the general readership in terms of occupation and organization. The primary target group for the Magazine is field-level workers in agricultural development who have frequent contact with farmers. Both the survey and the subscriber's database clearly show that the Magazine is continuing to reach this target group – almost 40% of those who replied to the survey are development field staff (Figure 1), compared with 46% of subscribers in general.

Secondary target groups are staff involved in training, teaching and agricultural research in universities and teaching institutions, because of the potential they have to influence the way people think about agriculture.



Nearly 7% of the readers who replied to the survey listed more than one occupation, and some listed quite a number. This was especially true for the farmers who replied – over half mentioned more than one occupation, mainly working as development workers or teachers in addition to their farming activities. This helps to explain the high number of responses from farmers (10% compared to 6% in our subscriber's database) and perhaps also the fact that 40% of the farmers indicate that they belong to a community-based organization.

Nearly half of those who responded (45%) work in a government organization, showing that *LEISA Magazine* not only circulates in the NGO world but also has a strong readership in the more mainstream environment such as government ministries and extension services (Figure 2).

Just over 8% of the readers who responded to the survey were women.

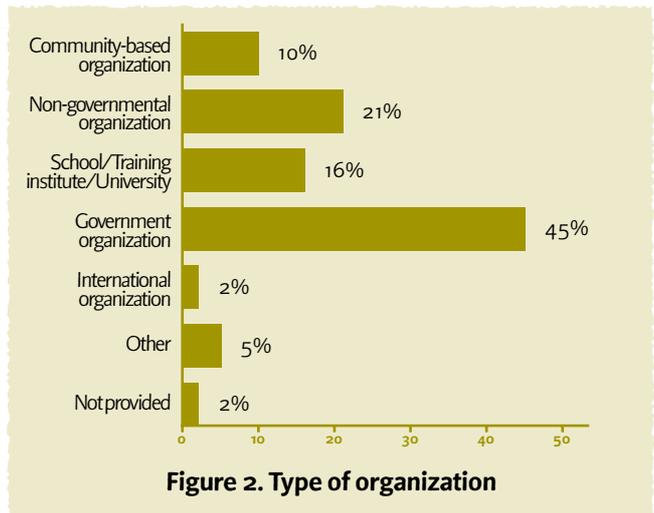


Figure 2. Type of organization

Subscriber dynamics

Over half of the readers who replied subscribed to *LEISA Magazine* less than four years ago, and most of these more recent subscribers are teachers/lecturers, farmers and development field staff. We can conclude from this that the Magazine is attracting active new subscribers among our target readership. In addition, the ages of the readers who responded were well distributed with about 30% younger than 35 years, a good sign for the future of *LEISA* and the Magazine.

Use of computers and Internet

Most of those who replied to the survey (61%) said that they regularly use a computer and just under a third have regular access to Internet. Nearly all of the respondents with a computer had a CD Rom drive, so the CD Roms produced by ILEIA have a good number of potential users. Of course, these results also highlight the importance of continuing to produce a hard copy of *LEISA Magazine*.

Almost 30% said they had visited our website. As might be expected, researchers and teachers/lecturers were more likely to have visited our website than farmers or development field staff, as they have easier access to Internet. However, many of those who said they had visited our website do not have regular access to Internet. Most of these were development field workers or farmers, reinforcing the importance of *LEISA* information for these groups.

How is the LEISA Magazine useful?

Use and relevance

The fact that the Magazine is well read and appreciated by readers was resoundingly confirmed by the survey results, although it should be kept in mind that more enthusiastic readers are probably also more likely to respond to the survey.

Almost all (98%) of those who responded find the information in *LEISA Magazine* “relevant” or “highly relevant” and just under 80% read every issue. Those who replied said they read well over half of the articles, and almost 80% read the Editorial “most of the time”. The Sources and New Books sections remain an important source of additional information and are read “most of the time” by around 70% of the respondents. The Networking Section is read most of the time by 56%. This relatively lower figure may reflect the fact that this section has in the past been focused mainly on websites. This section is read “most of the time” by 65% of those readers who regularly use Internet. Efforts are now being made to make this section more interesting also to those without Internet access, for example by including the physical addresses of organizations mentioned as well as their Internet addresses.

In addition, nearly 95% of the readers who replied indicated that they share their copy of the Magazine with others. Nearly 60% share their copy with more than four other people, and 16% with more than 10! From this we can conclude that each copy of the Magazine is read by at least five people.

Readability

Nearly all the readers who replied to the survey said they found the language used in the Magazine “easy to read” or “understandable” and that they understand the concepts and ideas expressed in the articles. Still, nearly half indicated that they would like to receive more explanation about the terms and concepts used in the Magazine.

Impact

The options provided in the final closed question “How has *LEISA Magazine* been of use to you?” were based on previous surveys and impact studies. The answers confirm that the Magazine stimulates action through broadening the perspectives of its readers – the reader is exposed to new ideas, to new ways of thinking about agriculture and to technologies that have been tried out under similar circumstances in the South. The Magazine also stimulates participatory approaches and an awareness of gender issues, through providing guidance and presenting experiences.

Most of the readers who replied (85%) indicated that the Magazine has provided them with a better understanding of agriculture based on LEISA principles and over 70% said they had been encouraged in their work by reading that others around the world are facing similar issues.

Even more importantly, 65% of the respondents said the Magazine had stimulated them to rethink what they have been taught about agriculture and extension and 64% claim to have learnt more about participatory approaches. For development field staff, these issues were even more important – 75% said the Magazine had stimulated them to rethink what they have been taught and 73% claim to have learnt more about participatory approaches. Nearly half of the respondents have become more aware of gender issues. Interestingly, a larger proportion (56%) of administrators/decision makers mentioned greater awareness of gender issues as a result of reading the Magazine.

A large number of those who replied (42%) said they had actually tried out an approach or idea after reading about it in the Magazine. Unsurprisingly, development field staff and farmers were above average in trying out these new ideas in practice. However, administrators/ decision makers were also above average. Few researchers said they had tried out an approach or idea, although three quarters of the researchers who responded

said that the Magazine had been a source of ideas for research or further study.

The two main activities that can really extend the outreach of the Magazine are the translation of articles into other languages and the use of the Magazine for teaching or training purposes. About 15% of those who replied have translated articles into local languages, and just under half the respondents said they had used articles for training purposes. Nearly 60% of teachers/lecturers had used the Magazine as training material.

Open questions

Two open questions were also posed to readers, asking how they use the Magazine and for suggestions for improvement. Most people wrote extensively in this section, including many very warm and encouraging messages about how they value and use the Magazine. We are still going through all the answers provided in this section, and will take into account the suggestions provided for improvement.



Photo: Elena Pardo

Patricio and his friends read about their school in *LEISA Magazine* 20•2. K'arhui, Canchis, Cusco, Peru.

Conclusion

The results of the survey have confirmed that we are reaching our target readership, and that the Magazine fulfils a useful function for this readership. It has also confirmed some strategic choices we have made, such as the continued production of hard copies of the Magazine and the production of CD Roms. More importantly, it has shown us that readers are not just reading but thinking about the ideas presented and taking an active part in the exchange of information on LEISA – translating articles, discussing them with colleagues and using them as a basis for training – and using the information in the Magazine to try new approaches and ideas in practice.

We greatly appreciate the feedback of everyone who has responded to the survey, and hope you will continue to guide us with your opinions on how we can improve the Magazine and information on how you use it. ■