

How to write for ICROFS NEWS

What is ICROFS News?

ICROFS News is a digital newsletter published by ICROFS with articles about the results of scientific research on organic farming and food systems –primarily from projects coordinated by ICROFS.

The articles are written in a correct and compelling language and structured as news articles – not as articles for a scientific journal although the content is serious and based on scientific research.

Before you start writing...

What's the story: First thing you have to consider before writing is what message would you want to convey to the readers. The story has to be expressed in your headline and the lead paragraph (sub header) so the reader immediately knows what the key message of this article is.

Example:

Don't write: Biological N fixation in catch crops and effects on crop yield and N₂O emissions

Examine your work and find out what your key message is:

Better to write: Legumes can improve N supply without increasing N₂O emissions

There are a million things to say about the former and if you write like that, it doesn't necessarily give a direct key message that could be understood by all, whereas the latter is a specific story – the reader gets a clear impression of what to expect from your article.

How to structure your article

1. Headline

A short, attention-getting statement telling your story in the most concentrated form. Please, pay attention to the word statement. A good headline is a statement.

Length: No more than 10 words

Examples:

This is a fine title, but it's NOT a statement and NOT A HEADLINE:

- Animal husbandry in organic farms in East Africa – challenges and future prospects

These examples are statements – and potential headlines:

- Organic farmers in East Africa make a better living when using by product as cattle feed
- Pineapple silages as cattle feed improves both sustainability and farmers' income
- Cows love pineapple silage – farmers love happy cows

2. Byline

This tells who wrote the story – your name – e.g.: *By Mary Farmer Johnson*

3. Subheading

One or two sentences that summarizing the story in support of the headline. In particular if the headline is short, it is important.

Length: No more than 230 characters including spaces.

Example:

Organic farmers in Uganda can increase both milk and meat production significantly by using pineapple silage as cattle feed according to a new study from University of Kampala

A good lead should answer most of the who, what, when, where, why and how questions you may ask. As a writer, you should find the answers to these questions or most of them and write them into the opening sentence(s) of the article or as soon as possible thereafter.

4. Body text

After the lead paragraph has been written, you must decide what other facts or details the reader might want to know. You will most likely have far more information/knowledge than needed for the article. So make sure that you only use the information which supports your story.

Imagine you write about how the use of by products from the fruit industry can be used as cattle feed on organic farms in East Africa on the one hand to increase productivity in the organic husbandry sector and on the other can improve the resource efficiency and sustainability of the farming system in general.

.... Then you need to select the information that can support this angle and your arguments. Don't start telling about the school system or women's rights in Uganda – unless you have very clear reason for doing so.

Length: Between 3000-4000 characters including spaces.

5. Additional Information

This information is the least important. Thus, if the news article is too long for the space it needs to fill, it can be shortened without rewriting any other part. In an article for ICROFS News it could typically be a more detailed explanation about how you conducted the study etc.