

How to Add a Publication in MEL – Metadata Guidelines, 2026 Edition

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About ICARDA

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) is a treaty-based, autonomous, non-profit, international organization that was established in 1975, and is governed by a Board of Trustees. Under the auspices of the CGIAR System, and in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, ICARDA focuses on delivering innovative solutions for sustainable agricultural development in the non-tropical dry areas of the developing world. ICARDA provides innovative, science-based solutions to improve the livelihoods and resilience of resource-poor smallholder farmers. This is done through strategic partnerships, linking research to development and capacity building, and by considering gender equality and the role of youth in transforming agriculture in non-tropical dry areas.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team of ICARDA improves the decision-making and impact of research organizations through four areas of expertise: monitoring and evaluation to plan, implement and evaluate the impact of projects and programs throughout the project lifecycle; knowledge management to capitalize on learning, dissemination and knowledge sharing; data management to collect data and ensure its quality and accuracy; and research software development to improve digital applications in support of the work.

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Glossary of acronyms

| | |
|---------|--|
| AGROVOC | Multilingual agricultural thesaurus developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) |
| APC | Article Processing Charge |
| CC | Creative Commons |
| DDI | Data Documentation Initiative |
| DMS | Degree, Minutes, Seconds |
| DOI | Digital Object Identifier |
| ESSN | Electronic Standard Serial Number |
| FAIR | Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable |
| GDPR | General Data Protection Regulation |
| GPS | Global Positioning System |
| IF | Impact Factor |
| ISBN | International Standard Book Number |
| ISI | Institute for Scientific Information |
| ISSN | International Standard Serial Number |
| MEL | Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning |
| MELIA | Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Impact Assessment |
| OA | Open Access |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| TOC | Theory of Change |
| URL | Uniform Resource Locator |
| WOS | Web of Science |

Introduction

This guideline helps researchers and data managers add **accurate and high-quality metadata** when uploading publications and datasets to the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) platform. Following these steps ensures records are complete, discoverable, and properly documented.

● **Note:** *This guide is a living document. As the MEL platform evolves, it will be updated regularly to reflect new features and changes.*

Why metadata quality matters

High-quality metadata makes publications easier to find, cite, and reuse. It also ensures compliance with the CGIAR Open and Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR) Data Assets Policy².

Before you upload

Journal articles, books, and book chapters

Before uploading a **published journal article, book, or book chapter**, always search for the publication on the publisher's website to retrieve accurate metadata.

1. Locate the publication on the publisher's website.
2. For open access publications, prepare the final version of the file (PDF preferred; Word also accepted). You can also report in MEL using only the DOI (e.g., 10.1371/journal.pone.0324104).
3. Check the publication's copyright and access status on the publisher's website or on the [Jisc's Open Policy Finder](#) (formerly SHERPA/RoMEO). Note that the Jisc's Open Policy Finder is only applicable to journal articles.

² <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/113623>

Datasets

Before uploading a **dataset**, always check if it contains personal or sensitive data. If it does, do not upload the file to MEL and instead contact the MEL Data Management Specialist to proceed with data anonymization first.

Metadata fields for knowledge products

In MEL, there is a variety of fields that can apply to different **knowledge product types (Table 1)**, some of which are:

- **Mandatory metadata for all knowledge products:** fields that must be completed to submit a record in MEL. They are marked with **one asterisk (*)** in Table 1.
- **Mandatory metadata for specific knowledge products:** specific fields, depending on type, that must be completed to submit a record in MEL. They are marked with **two asterisks (**)** in Table 1.
- **Recommended metadata:** optional fields that enrich the record and improve its findability. They are unmarked in Table 1.

● **Note:** The fields listed in Table 1 are presented in order of appearance in MEL when uploading a publication. Variation in the order might occur as some fields are specific to some publication types. Mandatory fields may also vary by type and within a given type (e.g., a journal article may be uploaded only with the Creation/Submission Date or the In Print Publication Date).

Unique fields for **datasets** are presented separately (**Table 2**).

Annex A contains the list of all knowledge product types in MEL. Despite a few differences, they all align with the CGIAR Core³.

³ <https://agriculturalsemantics.github.io/cg-core/IPtypes.html>

| Field | Instructions | Field type |
|--|---|------------|
| Type | Select the knowledge product type that best describes the publication (e.g., Journal Article, Report, Dataset). This determines which fields are displayed in the form. See Annex A for the list of all knowledge product types in MEL. | * |
| Sub-Type | Some knowledge product types (e.g., Report, Dataset) require a sub-type. Select the most appropriate option from the drop-down list. | ** |
| File | Upload the final version of the publication. Accepted formats: PDF (preferred), Word, Excel. You can drag and drop the file, browse from your device, or select from your reports in MEL. A URL (Uniform Resource Locator), handle, or Digital Object Identifier (DOI) can be added instead of or alongside the file. | * |
| Human Images (different set of questions) | Indicate whether the publication contains images or videos of human subjects by selecting Yes or No. Selecting Yes will trigger additional mandatory questions related to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance and informed consent. If you select yes, written consent must be uploaded; verbal consent is no longer accepted. | * |
| Date | Enter at least one date for the knowledge product. Choose from: Creation/Submission Date, Date Accepted for Publication, Online Publication Date, or In Print Publication Date. For draft or unpublished documents: use the Creation/Submission Date. For online publications: use the Online Publication Date and add the URL. For printed, final or issued publications: use the In Print Publication Date. | * |
| Research Period | Enter the start and end date of the research covered by the publication. This refers to the period during which the research was conducted, not the publication date. | |
| Title | Verify the title matches the uploaded publication exactly. Enter the title in the language of the publication. For non-English publications, add the English translation in the first "Alternative Title" field. If the original title is in all caps, reformat it in Title Case (e.g., "WHEAT YIELD STUDY" → "Wheat Yield Study"). | * |
| Alternative title | If a publication is written in two languages, list one language as the main title and the other as the alternative title. Do not repeat the same title if the publication is written in only one language. | |
| Abstract / Summary | Copy the abstract exactly as it appears in the publication. If no abstract is present, write a brief summary based on the content; do not simply repeat the title. For journal articles, books, and book chapters: copy the abstract exactly as written in the publication. | * |
| URL | Add any relevant links to the publication, including the DOI, the journal or publisher page, or a repository/institutional link. Multiple links can be added. | ** |
| Manual Title | Enter the full title of the manual as it appears on the published document. This field applies only to publications of type Manual. | |
| Manual Chapter(s) | Enter the chapter(s) of the manual covered by this record. This field applies only to publications of type Manual. | |
| Is the Newsletter published via email? | Indicate whether the newsletter is distributed via email by selecting Yes or No. This field applies only to publications of type Newsletter. | ** |
| Newsletter Title | Enter the title of the newsletter. If the newsletter is part of an ongoing series, enter the name of the series (e.g., ICARDA News). If the specific issue has its own title, enter that instead. Where both apply, prioritise the series name. This field applies only to publications of type Newsletter. | |
| Series Name | <i>Applicable to ICARDA official series only.</i> Select the series title from the drop-down list (e.g., Annual Report, CARAVAN, Factsheets). Only visible if "Is it part of a series?" is set to Yes. | ** |
| Series Number | Enter the number of this publication within the series (e.g., No. 12). Only visible if "Is it part of a series?" is set to Yes. | ** |
| Language(s) | Select the language(s) in which the publication is written. Multiple selections are possible. | * |

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| Authors Co-Authors | Add all authors in the same order as they appear in the publication, with their correct affiliation. If the author has more than one affiliation, add all of them. Distinguish between the First Author and Co-Authors as indicated in the form. If an author is not yet recorded in MEL, add them manually with their affiliation(s). Do not forget to indicate the corresponding author (see instructions in the Contact Person field). | * |
| Contact Person | Use the envelope icon to identify the corresponding author (the person responsible for correspondence about the publication). Only one corresponding author can be selected. | * |
| Is this an ICARDA Product? | <i>Applicable to ICARDA official series only.</i> Select Yes if the publication was produced by or in partnership with ICARDA. Selecting Yes will reveal additional fields: Is it part of a series?, Series Name, and Series Number. | * |
| Is it Part of a Series? | Select Yes or No. Selecting Yes will reveal additional fields: Series Name and Series Number. | |
| Journal Title | Enter the name of the journal in which the article was published. The system will suggest matching options as you type; select the correct one from the list. If not present, add it manually. | ** |
| Issue | Enter the issue number of the journal in which the article was published (e.g., Issue 3). | |
| Volume | Enter the volume number of the journal in which the article was published (e.g., Volume 12). | ** |
| Pagination | Enter the page range of the article or chapter (e.g., 45–62). | |
| ISSN | The International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) is added automatically once the journal title is selected. If not populated automatically, add it manually. | |
| ISBN | Add the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) if available. Applies mainly to books and book chapters. | |
| ESSN | For journal articles only: the ESSN (Electronic Standard Serial Number) is added automatically once the journal title is selected. If not populated automatically, add it manually. The ESSN is the ISSN assigned to the online version of a journal. For other types of publications: add it manually. | |
| Is the Organization of the First Author also the Publisher? | Select Yes if the first author's organization produced and published the document. Otherwise select No. | ** |
| Publisher | Added automatically once the journal title and publication date are entered. If not populated automatically, enter the publisher's name manually. | ** |
| Publisher Country | Enter the country where the publisher is headquartered. | * |
| Publisher City | Enter the city where the publisher is headquartered. | |
| ISI Journal | Indicate Yes if the journal is indexed in the Web of Science (WOS, formerly ISI, Institute for Scientific Information). <i>Not sure? Check the FAQ</i> | ** |
| Impact Factor | Add the journal's Impact Factor (IF) if available. This is a measure of the frequency with which the journal's articles are cited. <i>Not sure? Check the FAQ</i> | |
| Peer review Journal? | Indicate Yes if the article was published in a peer-reviewed journal. <i>Not sure? Check the FAQ</i> | ** |
| Is the Article Open in the Journal Page? | Indicate whether the article is freely accessible on the journal's website: Yes (Green) - available as green open access; Yes (Gold) - published as gold open access with APC (Article Processing Charge); No - not openly available. <i>Not sure? Check the FAQ</i> | ** |
| Access Status | For journal articles only: check the publication's copyright via the publisher's website or the Jisc's Open policy finder (former SHERPA/RoMEO). Note that some journals allow uploading a pre-print or author manuscript as open access in the institutional repositories, while for other version an embargo period might apply. | * |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | <p>For other types of publications: check the publisher's website if the publication is available online or refer to the publication itself if it is not. If the access status is unclear, contact the main author.</p> <p>If the publication is restricted: select "Timeless limited access" and set an embargo period in the dedicated field if applicable.</p> | |
| License | <p>If open access: select the appropriate Creative Commons (CC) licence as stated in the publication or on the publisher's website. ICARDA knowledge products should use the CC BY SA 4.0 licence.</p> <p>If restricted: select "Copyrighted, all rights reserved".</p> | * |
| Gold OA Amount of Processing Charges | Enter the APC amount in USD, if the publication was published as Gold Open Access (OA). <i>Not sure? Check the FAQ</i> | |
| Main Reporting CGIAR portfolio | Select the CGIAR portfolio (Initiative or Science Program/Accelerator) under which the publication is primarily reported. If the publication is linked to multiple portfolios, select the one most directly linked to the work. | * |
| Is this knowledge product a MELIA Product? | Select Yes if this publication is an output of a MELIA (Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Impact Assessment) activity. MELIA products are studies or assessments that evaluate the outcomes and impact of CGIAR research. If unsure, check with your MELIA focal point. | * |
| Donors | Select the donor(s) that funded the work from the drop-down menu. Multiple selections are possible. If unsure, refer to your project agreement or check with your project coordinator. | |
| Contributing Non-Pooled Projects | This field applies to publications reported under Science Programs/Accelerators. Select the non-pooled (bilaterally funded) project(s) that contributed to the publication. Non-pooled projects are funded by a specific donor for a defined scope of work, as opposed to pooled/core CGIAR funding. If unsure, check with your project coordinator. | |
| Partners | Select all institutional partners involved in the publication. Partners are organizations that contributed to the research or co-authored the work. Multiple selections are allowed. | |
| SDG | Select all relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relevant to the publication from the drop-down menu. Multiple selections are possible. | |
| CGIAR Impact Areas | This field applies to publications reported under previous CGIAR Initiatives and ongoing Science Programs/Accelerators. Select the CGIAR Impact Area(s) as specified in the Theory of Change (ToC) under which the publication is mapped to. | |
| Keyword(s) | For journal articles, books, and book chapters: use the keywords listed in the publication. If no keywords are provided, add 2–3 appropriate ones drawn from the title or abstract. Use at least one AGROVOC terms where possible. For non-English publications, keywords can be added in both the original language and English within the same field. | * |
| Commodities | Add all crops and livestock commodities mentioned or studied in the publication. Multiple selections are allowed. Feel free to reach out to the MEL team if you would like to add more commodities to the list. | |
| Dataverse Subjects | Select the most relevant subject area(s) from the drop-down menu. | |
| EPrints Subjects | Select the most relevant subject classification(s) from the drop-down menu. | |
| Related Publications | Use this field to link the knowledge product to other related records already in MEL, or to external publications via URL or DOI. This helps users discover connected research outputs. | |
| GPS Coordinates | Add the GPS (Global Positioning System) coordinates of the primary research location(s), if applicable. Use degree, minutes, seconds (DMS) format. | |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Click on the map to select coordinates | Click on the map to pin the location where the research was conducted. The corresponding latitude and longitude coordinates will be added automatically. This field is optional but recommended when the research is tied to a specific geographic location and GPS coordinates are not known. | |
| Research Country(ies) | Select the country or countries where the research was conducted from the drop-down menu. Multiple selections are possible. | * |
| Research City(ies) | Enter the city or cities where the research was conducted, if applicable. | |
| Geo Admin Unit | Select the administrative unit(s) (e.g., region, district, province) where the research was conducted. Use this field to specify a level of geographic detail beyond country level. | |
| Citation | Generated automatically based on the metadata entered. Can also be entered or adjusted manually if preferred. | * |
| MELSpace | A MEL handle is automatically generated by the system once the publication is approved. | |

Table 1. Metadata fields in MEL to describe knowledge products

Dataset-specific metadata

| Field | Instructions | Field type |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| Date of collection | Add the start and end date, if known. | |
| Unit of analysis | Describe the basic unit of analysis or observation that the dataset describes, for example: individuals, families/households, groups, institutions/organizations, or administrative units. For more information about the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) controlled vocabulary for this element, please refer to the DDI web page at http://ddialliance.org/controlled-vocabularies . | ** (only for survey) |
| Universe | Describe the population covered by the data in the file, that is the group of people or other elements that are the object of the study and to which the study results refer. Age, nationality, and residence commonly help to delineate a given universe, but any number of other factors may be used, such as age limits, sex, marital status, race, ethnic group, nationality, income, veteran status, criminal convictions, and more. The universe may consist of elements other than persons, such as housing units, court cases, deaths, countries, and so on. In general, it should be possible to tell from the description of the universe whether a given individual or element is a member of the population under study. Also known as the universe or interest, population of interest, and target population. | ** (only for survey) |
| Time method | Describe the time method or time dimension of the data collection. Common examples include panel, cross-sectional, trend, or time series. | ** (only for survey) |
| Sampling procedure | Describe the type of sample and sample design used to select the survey respondents to represent the population. It may include reference to the target sample size and the sampling fraction where applicable. | ** (only for survey) |
| Dataset Source | Add information about source(s) of the dataset, such as a persistent identifiers (e.g., DOI) or citation (e.g. to a book, article, serial, or machine-readable data file). | |
| Data collector | Add all data collectors, if different from the authors, with their correct affiliation. If the data collector has more than one affiliation, add all of them. | |
| Is information on Curator(s) available | Indicate Yes or No. | * |
| Curator(s) | Add all curators with their correct affiliation. If the curator has more than one affiliation, add all of them. | * (If yes is selected) |
| Software name | Enter the name of software used to generate the dataset (e.g., R, SPSS). | |
| Version | Enter the version of the software used to generate the dataset (e.g., 4.11). | |
| Number of dataset users | Provide information about the target audience of the dataset, if known. | |
| Dataverse subjects | Select the most relevant subject area(s) from the drop-down menu. | * |
| Coverage Spatial Bounding Box | Enter the geographic coordinates that define the spatial extent of the dataset. | ** (only for spatial data) |
| Spatial Reference | Enter the coordinate system used for the spatial data (e.g., WGS 84) | ** (only for spatial data) |
| Spatial Resolution | Enter the resolution of the map. | ** (only for spatial data) |
| Unit | Enter the measurement unit used for the spatial resolution. | ** (only for spatial data) |

Table 2. Metadata fields in MEL unique to datasets

Some useful features in MEL

- **Magic wand:** Clicking the “Magic wand” icon in MEL fills the page at once with all available information from the MEL Planning section (the project under which you are reporting the knowledge product). Users can also use the function to populate single fields when the icon of the “Magic Wand” is next to the chosen field.

 **Note:** Use this feature only if all planning information is correct.

- **Extract from Platform:** Clicking on the “Extract from Platform” icon fills at once the page with all available information from other platforms such as CGIAR Repositories or Web of Science/Scopus when the Handle or the DOI is provided in the “Manage files” steps (the one where users upload the file and can add the handle, URL, or DOI). For DOIs, metadata will appear only if the article is indexed in one of the two repositories (Web of Science or Scopus).

 **Note:** When using this function, verify that all automatically entered data is accurate.

- **Metadata progress bar:** A bar showing the progress of filling the form. It includes:
 - **Basic metadata:** The mandatory fields required to save the deliverable as a draft.
 - **Required metadata:** The mandatory fields required to submit the deliverable.
 - **All metadata:** All the fields in the form.

Important to remember

- **Publications related to Capacity Development & Knowledge Sharing Activities**, such as Presentations, Conference Papers, Posters, Theses (Individual Degrees and Non-Degrees), Training, Workshops, or Conference Participation, must be uploaded in MEL under the type "**Capacity Development & Knowledge Sharing Activity**".
- **Each publication must be uploaded separately** under its own metadata form. Do not group multiple publications under a single record.
 - Exception: For trials, related publications, images, and datasets may be combined under one metadata form.
- **Multiple images** (e.g., photos from a Workshop or Training activity) may be uploaded together under a single metadata form.

Additional resources

- For further information on how to upload a publication, please visit the MEL [online user guide](#).
- Read the [MEL Depositing and Publication Process](#) to learn more about the process followed by the staff involved in MEL workflow.
- Browse the [Guidelines on Production and Dissemination of Information Products](#) to learn more about ICARDA's information product types, branding, and intellectual assets.
- Consult the [General Dataset Curation Guide \(GDCG\) 3.0](#), a short guide on how to develop structured and curated datasets.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. How do I check if a journal article is ISI?

ISI-indexed journals are journals indexed in the Web of Science (WOS) Core Collection, formerly produced by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI).

To check, visit the [WOS Master Journal List](#) and search for the journal by name or ISSN. If the journal appears in the results, check if it is indexed under the WOS Core Collection, at least in one of the four indexes (Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE); Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI); Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI); Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)). If so, select Yes in MEL. If it does not appear, select No.

2. How do I find a journal's Impact Factor (IF)?

The Impact Factor (IF) measures the average number of citations a journal's articles receive. It is calculated and published annually by Clarivate, but it may also be displayed on the journal's profile page. Enter this value in the IF field in MEL. If the journal doesn't have an IF, or you are unable to locate it or are unsure, leave the field blank.

3. How do I know if a journal is peer-reviewed?

A peer-reviewed journal requires submitted articles to be evaluated by independent experts before publication. To verify, visit the journal's official website and look for information on the submission or editorial process. Usually, if the journal article is indexed in the Web of Science (WOS) Core Collection (see [FAQ #1](#)), then it is also peer-reviewed.

4. How do I know if the article is open on the journal page?

This field refers to whether the article is freely accessible to readers directly on the journal's website. There are three options:

- Yes (Gold): The article is openly available on the journal page, and an Article Processing Charge (APC) was paid to publish it open access.
- Yes (Green): The article is openly available through a repository or author self-archiving, without an APC.
- No: The article is behind a paywall and not freely accessible.

To check, visit the journal's page for the article and see whether it can be read without logging in or purchasing access. You can also verify the open access status on [Unpaywall](#) or [Jisc's Open Policy Finder](#) (formerly SHERPA/RoMEO).

5. What is a Gold Open Access Article Processing Charge (APC)?

When an article is published as Gold Open Access (OA), the publisher makes it freely available to all readers immediately upon publication. In most cases, this requires the author or their institution to pay an Article Processing Charge (APC). If an APC was paid for your article, enter the amount in USD in the Gold OA Amount of Processing Charges field in MEL. If no APC was paid (e.g., the journal is fully open access with no charges, or the article is Green OA), leave this field blank. To find the APC amount, check your payment confirmation, your institution's finance records, or the journal's website.

Annex A

List of knowledge product types in MEL

1. Audio
2. Blog
3. Book
4. Book Chapter
5. Brief
6. Brochure
7. Conference Paper
8. Conference Proceedings
9. Convention/Agreement
 - a. Contract
 - b. Generic
 - c. Financial
 - d. Intellectual Property
 - e. Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)
 - f. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
 - g. Publication
 - h. Research
 - i. Service Cooperation
 - j. Technology Transfer
10. Dataset
 - a. Clinical data
 - b. Experimental data
 - c. Spatial (raster)
 - d. Spatial (vector)
 - e. Survey data
 - f. Other
11. Demonstrator, pilot, prototype, plan designs
12. Equation
13. Image
 - a. Logo
 - b. Photo
 - c. Photo report
14. Journal Article
15. Manual
16. Map
17. News Item/Press Item
18. Newsletter
19. Policy Contribution
20. Poster
21. Presentation
22. Report
 - a. Conference/Workshop report
 - b. Donor report
 - c. Internal report

- d. Outcome Impact Case Report
- 23. Software
- 24. Source Code
- 25. Template
- 26. Tool
- 27. Training Material
- 28. Video
- 29. Website
- 30. Wiki
- 31. Working paper
- 32. Other