

July 19, 2015

Dear Colleagues,

You may have seen IFPRI's new [Research Blog](#) series:

- <http://www.ifpri.org/blog/leveraging-agriculture-improving-health>
- <http://www.ifpri.org/blog/does-aflatoxin-exposure-cause-child-stunting>
- <http://www.ifpri.org/blog/poverty-reduction-smallholder-farmers-brazilian-style-can-it-work-africa>

The primary goal of the series is to provide an outlet for IFPRI researchers across the institute to discuss innovative ongoing research projects, to engage with others blogging on research of interest to IFPRI, to discuss interesting research results, and to raise research issues regarding methods and measurement. We hope to develop a readership within the academic and research development community and contribute views of IFPRI researchers to current debates, fostering academically-oriented discussions about IFPRI research.

The Research Blog series will feature posts that are more technical/academic in nature, with content overseen by senior research staff editors (one from each division), and (hopefully) active commenting and responses. Senior research staff editors will solicit and manage requests to write blog posts, read and edit posts from their divisions, and collectively ensure a consistent, steady, and balanced stream of institute-wide research blog posts. Attached, you will find logistical instructions, examples of other research blogs that you may wish to emulate, and blogging guidelines from CKM. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with your division's senior research staff editor:

DSGD: Katrina Kosec

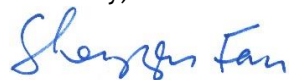
EPTD: Tim Thomas

MTID: Alan de Brauw

PHND: Dan Gilligan

I very much look forward to reading more IFPRI Research Blog posts, and hope that you will contribute to this new series.

Sincerely,



Shenggen Fan
Director General

Logistics

If you would like to write a blog post, please do the following:

1. Write to your divisional blog editor and let them know that you would like to write a blog post. Provide:
 - a. Your name
 - b. Very brief (1-2 sentences max) description of what will form the topic of your blog
 - c. Date by which you can be sure to have it completed
2. They will let you know roughly the date on which it can appear (to be on or after the date you've specified) and your official due date (1-2 days in advance of posting).
3. Send the completed blog post to your divisional communications liaison by your due date. It will be minimally edited, passed to your divisional editor for approval, and then posted (pending approval) on the IFPRI website

Divisional communications liaisons are:

EPTD: Emil Caillaux
DSGD: Yifei Liu
MTID: Rachel Kohn
PHND: Kim Keeton

Divisional senior staff blog editors are:

EPTD: Tim Thomas
DSGD: Katrina Kosec
MTID: Alan de Brauw
PHND: Dan Gilligan

Examples of other Research Blogs

While individuals will have a variety of different styles, the following are good example blogs that we may wish to emulate:

Organization/ Blogger	Blog Name	Link
The World Bank	Development Impact	http://blogs.worldbank.org/impactevaluations/
Chris Blattman	Chris Blattman's Blog	https://chrisblattman.com/
The Brookings Institution	Future Development: Economics to End Poverty	http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/future- development
The World Bank	Governance for Development	http://blogs.worldbank.org/governance/
The World Bank	Jobs and Development	http://blogs.worldbank.org/jobs/

IFPRI Blogging Best Practices (from CKM)

1. **Know your audience and cater to their reading style.** Most external blogs are geared toward a general audience, which means that you should avoid using a lot of jargon or being too technical. Once you've identified your target audience, ask yourself: *What type of content is my audience most interested in reading about?* For example, if you're looking to capture the attention of policymakers who work in the climate arena, you would want to consider a story angle that centers around policies aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change in a particular country/region of interest.
2. **Put the main idea in the opening.** Ask yourself: *What's the most interesting part of this story?* Make sure this idea is front and center in your story. If you're writing a story after an event, make sure you're not just listing the event logistical details, who attended, and who organized the event, as this information is NOT your most interesting content. Was there a really interesting idea and/or sound bite that captured your attention and that of other audience members? Putting your most interesting content first increases the odds of people reading on further.
3. **Invest time and energy on creating a catchy title and accompanying photo.** Don't make the mistake of investing all your time and energy into drafting the best possible blog story without doing some serious thinking about the title/headline. A good title should appeal to your target audience and sound catchy. It also should include some popular search terms in order to increase your search engine optimization (SEO), commonly known as Google ranking (note: CKM experts will work with you on this). Moreover, some potential readers are more visually oriented when browsing stories online and a good photo can go a long way toward increasing your odds of being read.
4. **Links, links, links!** Sound academic writing must include cited references to others' ideas; similarly, well written blog stories must link to related online content, including publications, events, and other important content of various types (e.g., videos, presentations, etc.). As a general rule, links to specific ideas referenced from the text of the story should be included as in-line hyperlinks. Also, make sure you include links to further reading at the end of your story so that you don't miss a key opportunity for those readers who want to access your core research content (e.g., research publication). Please note that blog stories do NOT include footnotes.
5. **Choose your content wisely.** There is a LOT of potentially interesting material we can draw from- from research publications to events to press releases and videos. Make sure you choose your most interesting content to blog about and work with your researchers to determine which of their research programs/projects they're most excited about and come up with the key messages you want to highlight from their work.
6. **Keep it short and sweet.** Blog stories are intended to capture the reader's interest and make him/her want to read more, not serve as a definitive source of all knowledge and information on a given subject. As a general rule, blog stories should have a practical limit of 500-700 words and should never exceed 900 words in length. Please note that if your blog story exceeds this limit, it will be edited in order to conform to this word count. In some cases, links to further reading can help reduce what's covered in the blog story; in other cases, a story that attempts to cover too much may be broken down into separate pieces on specific sub-topics.

7. **Review content before hitting publish.** Timeliness is very important in blogging so you don't want to delay the publishing of a blog story by subjecting each and every blog story to an overly exhaustive review process. On the other hand, typos, grammar mistakes, and other obvious errors are indicators of poor writing quality and may turn off some readers. Most blog stories require *at least* one round of editing from a person with a strong background/training in writing/editing for the web. In many cases, an additional round of "fact checking" from a researcher whose work is being profiled in the writing is required.

For any questions related to IFPRI blogs, please contact [Peter Shelton](#), social media coordinator at IFPRI, or [Tamar Abrams](#), Head of Outreach.