

September 2020

**The Industry Advisory Group (IAG) of the IPPC ePhyto Solution calls on governments to support the adoption of ePhyto to facilitate international agricultural trade, which would be crucial in safeguarding global food security beyond the Covid-19 recovery period.**

Global trading operations of plant products rely on crucial communication and transparency of phytosanitary requirements to protect plant health and ensure international unrestricted and safe trade of goods. Phytosanitary certificates facilitate such trade and benefit plant production sectors as well as consumers. Electronic certification as part of a broader endeavor for trade facilitation has proven itself indispensable during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic to maintain continuity of agricultural trade despite limitations on air traffic and courier services. The IPPC ePhyto Solution is a globally uniform approach with improved crisis resilience, consistency, security, fraud prevention, sustainability and replacement of paper documentation. The IAG, which is comprised of a consortium of industry associations representing the global trade of plant products, calls on policy makers to commit to a faster onboarding to the IPPC ePhyto Solution and accelerated access for all countries, including developing and least developed economies, regardless of infrastructure capacity.

**The ePhyto Solution is founded in the standards of the only international convention for plant protection, the IPPC, and was intended to eventually become a permanent replacement for paper certificates even before the pandemic began.** The ePhyto Solution is led by the IPPC Secretariat with the involvement of other international organizations and governments, to which 90+ countries are registered. A number of countries such as Argentina, Chile, Fiji, Ghana, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Samoa and USA are already operating the system to transmit phytosanitary certificates safely from NPPO to NPPO. The EU TRACES system was connected to the ePhyto Hub in May 2020 for imports only with the aim to be fully operational by the end of the year. For the full list of registered countries please visit: [www.ephytoexchange.org](http://www.ephytoexchange.org)

The IAG welcomes the actions of many governments to implement contingency plans that include acceptance of digital attachments, signatures, and copies for trade related documents during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Electronic trading documentation should not only be seen as a one-off, emergency measure, but as a permanent solution to ensure plant product trade is crisis-resilient in the future and that goods can keep moving efficiently. The IAG is concerned that many countries have taken a very individual path to digital certification, that may end when the emergency measures expire. This has unfortunately led to additional work and for both operators and government organizations.

The IAG is highly supportive of the further development of the ePhyto Solution and sees it as the responsibility of governments and policy makers to ensure the sustainability of the project until fully operational, as well as ensuring that all types of economies and including necessary capacity development. The IAG emphasizes:

1. Support for an all-encompassing adoption of a fully functioning ePhyto exchange model, with the proactive involvement of the entire supply chain, and no requirements to maintain paper certificates.
2. The need for private sector operators to continue to practice well-established, efficient and safe trade.
3. Government engagement with IAG industry representatives working around the world to provide practical insights on the commercial impacts of the system via the “industry case studies”, to contribute to a strong IPPC ePhyto Solution.

Ultimately the IAG hopes to work with all actors for a successful deployment of the IPPC ePhyto Solution including policy makers, National and regional Plant Protection Organizations, and customs experts worldwide.

For more information on the project please [click here](#) or contact: Natalia Santos, Freshfel (nominated communications coordinator for the IAG) [n.santos@freshfel.org](mailto:n.santos@freshfel.org)

The IPPC ePhyto Solution is the digital transmission system for phytosanitary certificates of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). The IPPC ePhyto Industry Advisory Group (IAG) supports the IPPC ePhyto Solution by providing relevant perspectives from global plant product trade flows including cut flowers, cocoa, cotton, fresh fruit and vegetables, grains, hay and forage, seeds, and wood products. For example the IAG advises the IPPC on the feasibility and facilitating efficient and effective trade flows. The IAG is comprised of specialists from the not-for-profit associations with international scope who support the commercial trade that is impacted by phytosanitary certification conducted under the Convention.



International Cotton Advisory Committee



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