ePhyto

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is an international agreement that supports harmonized phytosanitary requirements to prevent the movement of regulated plant pests with traded commodities. Phytosanitary certification is an integral part of the Convention and allows the national plant protection organisation (NPPO) of an exporting country to communicate the phytosanitary status of a commodity in trade to the NPPO of the importing country. The IPPC the has adopted International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) ISPM 7, *Phytosanitary certification system* and ISPM 12, *Phytosanitary certificates* provide harmonized guidance on phytosanitary certification and are contributing to facilitating safe trade. In 2012, an appendix to ISPM 12 on electronic phytosanitary certification was approved which provided guidance on the exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificates. Electronic certification facilitates trade and increases the security and efficiency of government certification processes.

In recent years, some Contracting Parties to the IPCC, predominantly developed countries have made significant advances in developing systems for electronic certification. These have often required considerable resources to develop the electronic tools necessary for producing and receiving electronic certificates and in negotiating bilateral agreements with trading partners to allow for exchange. A 2014 study of electronic certification estimated that each agreement to support electronic exchange between countries could cost as much as US $50,000. The Commission on Phytosanitary Measures which is the governing body of the IPPC and composed of Contracting Parties has advocated the development of a hub system to facilitate exchange and remove the costs associated with developing country by country agreements for electronic exchange

In 2015, the Standards and Trade Development Facility of WTO approved funding for the IPPC Secretariat to develop and implement: (i) a generic national system available to developing countries for the production, sending and receipt of electronic phytosanitary certificates and (ii) an internationally accessible hub to facilitate the transfer of electronic certificates between NPPOs. The combination of these two systems, referred to as "the ePhyto Solution" will make it easier for countries (especially those with limited resources) to start exchanging electronic phytosanitary certificates for their export consignments and to receive certificates for imported consignments. Countries without an existing national system for the production, sending and receipt of electronic phytosanitary certification will have access to the simple generic web-based system to issue, send and receive electronic certificates through the hub which facilitates the exchange based upon a single communication protocol eliminating the cost. Countries with existing national systems for electronic phytosanitary certification can also connect to the hub and begin exchanging electronic certificates with any country connected to the hub. By extension, trade flows should be immensely expedited and border management should be greatly facilitated thanks to ease of information flow and access. The Solution once established and accessible to all Contracting Parties of the IPPC should enable them to communicate phytosanitary assurances in a modern, cost effective and globally harmonized way. The Solution is also

intended to be compatible with existing border information management systems (e.g. Customs information) and is expected to build upon such systems where possible.

The IPPC Secretariat is working with other international organizations, such as CODEX Alimentarius, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the United Nations Centre for Trade and Development, the World Customs Organisation and others, along with international industry associations and technical experts in electronic phytosanitary certification from the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) regions to develop the ePhyto Solution.

The ePhyto Project is expected to commence in July 2016 with the development of the hub and generic national system by the United Nations International Computing Centre. It is expected that development will require six to seven months at which time piloting of the system with 8-10 countries will commence. Piloting will continue for 3-4 months to determine the efficiency of the system, to determine operating costs and to establish implementation tools that will assist countries in adopting the Solution. Following the pilot all countries may begin using the Solution.

Representatives of global trade sectors that are affected by ePhyto will be involved in requirement setting, piloting and testing of the system and in supporting capacity building efforts that will result in full implementation of ePhyto through an Industry Advisory Group which directly advises the project implementation team and the Project Technical Committee, charged with overseeing the project.

Should you wish further information on the ePhyto project please contact your ePhyto Industry Advisory Group representative or email the ePhyto Project Manager at shane.sela@fao.org

ePhyto Industry Questionnaire

1	Name industry group/association:	
	Area represented (international/region/country name)	
2	Main products of industry group/association:	

3 Estimated (global) value (US$) and volume of trade for the industry group for the area represented

Volume of imports:		Value (US$) of imports:	
Volume of exports:		Value (US$) of exports:	

4 Estimated number of phytosanitary certificates for your trade for the area represented

Imports:		Exports:	

5 What are the immediate issues/concerns of your industry group in relation to ePhyto?

6 What proposals do you have to address the issues/concerns above?

7 What current processes, procedures, activities or interactions between government and business of 'paper' phytosanitary certification, should be retained by ePhyto?

8 Please provide examples of the estimated current cost of paper certification (e.g. cost per certificate in specific countries or cost of certification per exported consignment in specific countries)? If possible specify the cost of certificates and costs of the company/operator to prepare and/or obtain a certificates

9 In the examples provided, are the costs of certification applied to:

The exported consignment	Yes	No
Importer	Yes	No

Both   Yes   No

The proposed ePhyto system will be very simple as described in the factsheets on the generic national system and the hub, what features or requirements should be included in future enhancements/extensions of the ePhyto system?

10

Does your industry use electronic   Yes   No
documents?

11

If yes to question 11, in which countries are documents used in?

12

If yes to question 11:

Describe the type(s) of E-documents (e.g. Certificate of Origin, etc.) and the format of the documents (e.g. transfer of pdfs, data transfer using UN/CEFACT business formats, etc.)

13

Describe any improvements in timing and access to information which were realized, related to above examples

What elements of the phytosanitary certificate information would be useful to receive in electronic format?

14

What must be included in the pilot test phase?

15

How would your sector like to be involved in the pilot test phase?

16