Report of the Meeting of the IPPC Industry Advisory Group

9 May 2016

Rome, IT

**Participants**:

Alessia Cogliandro, European Seed Association

Craig Fedchock, IPPC Secretariat

Anna Kaehne, International Community of Breeders of Asexually Reproduced Ornamental and Fruit Varieties (CIOPORA)

Sylvie Mamias, Union Fleurs (international Flower Trade Association)

Gary Martin, International Grain Trade Coalition

Gerard Meijerink, International Seed Federation

Philip Sigley, Federation of Cocoa Commerce Limited

Cindy Squires, International Wood Products Association (IWPA)

Orlando Sosa, IPPC Secretariat

Shane Sela, IPPC Secretariat

Jingyuan Xia, Secretary to the IPPC

**Observer:**

Kenza Le Mentec (STDF)

1. **Welcome and opening of the meeting**

The Secretary of the International Plant Protection Convention welcomed the Industry Advisory Group (IAG) members. He emphasized the importance of the ePhyto project and indicated that the IAG was an important component in ensuring that the project resulted in a practical and efficient electronic solution for phytosanitary certification. The establishment of the IAG is also a direct follow-up to the recommendation s of the participants at the 2nd International ePhyto Symposium held in November 2015 in Incheon, South Korea, where participants agreed with the industry representatives that the establishment of an advisory group would facilitate an ePhyto Solution that is developed with the interests of government and business in mind.

1. **Introductions**

The members introduced themselves. They noted that the move to electronic phytosanitary certification is welcomed by industry in general and that many of the trade are already relying on various electronic systems for communicating commercial information. The IGTC member noted that integration of electronic information is critical and various industries use phytosanitary certificates for specific or additional purposes beyond the requirements for border clearance activities and that access to the phytosanitary information is essential for commercial activities. Members noted that the proposed ePhyto Solution needs to recognize the unique requirements of the trading community and be able to meet these demands. In particular, the members noted that access to data sometimes needs to extend over decades to support the re-export of commodities. In other cases, fast and efficient processes and systems are also essential.

A member requested an update on the business plan to support operation of the Solution. The IPPC Secretariat noted that the business plan has not yet been developed, but that it is an important component of the project. The project plan consists of Solution development, testing to verify operation and to determine operating costs and based upon the costing an appropriate funding structure would be developed. The member suggested that costs and budgeting, as well as identification of a cost-recovery system, the feasibility of the project and possible exit strategies, should be clearly identified in advance of project development and should be included in the ToR of the IAG.

1. **Review and adoption of agenda**

The participants reviewed the agenda of the meeting and proposed no changes.

1. **Operation of the group**

The members reviewed the terms of reference for the group. The members discussed the scope of participation of the group including whether members from the logistics and banking sectors should be invited to participate. The members agreed that the current representation which is focused upon plant and plant product industries is appropriate and that any information required by the project from other stakeholders could be sought through specific invitations for observers to participate in the meetings or members could engage with these other sectors or industries to seek appropriate information for discussion. The members agreed to seek additional representation from the potato and fresh produce sectors and to ensure that representation is adequately & efficiently organised within each sector to avoid duplications and making the IAG too large. The group felt that it is most important to ensure that the right spokespersons with the right skills and expertise take part in the IAG and that the sectoral coverage is sufficiently representative to take into account needs all sectors involved.

1. **Selection of the Chair and rapporteur**

The members discussed the roles of the Chair and the rapporteur. The members felt that the role of these positions was unclear, particularly with respect to attendance at other meetings (e.g. ePhyto Project Advisory Group, where the Chair is a member) and level of work required. The IPPC Secretariat assured members that the roles are limited to participation at the IAG and any additional work is supported by the Secretariat. Members acclaimed Mr. Gerard Meijerink as the interim Chair (1 year). The members acclaimed Ms. Sylvie Mamias as rapporteur for the meeting.

1. **The project plan**

Ms. Le Mentec noted that the project plan was in final stages of approval. An implementation assignment which transfers funding to the IPPC Secretariat through the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) will only be signed following the finalization of the plan. Ms. Le Mentec also noted that the Standard and Trade Development Facility (SDTF) would be hosting a session on electronic certification on 28th June 2016 at the World Trade Organization, Geneva, CH. She encouraged members to attend. She also noted that the STDF was proposing an industry side-session which would be an opportunity for the industry to outline considerations for electronic certification.

The IPPC Secretariat provided a presentation outlining the project plan and its next steps. Members indicated that providing a general overview of the project with some key questions to solicit appropriate feedback from the group’s memberships as well as other relevant sectors would be useful in mapping out and guiding future work of the IAG and ensuring it delivers where needed. The Chair agreed to develop some key questions and agreed to work with the Secretariat to finalize a paper that could be shared with the members.

1. **Industry views on electronic phytosanitary certification – challenges and recommendations**

The members noted the following issues as important considerations in the development of the ePhyto Solution:

* The Solution should result in improved market access and expedited trade. Development should consider that multiple systems (e.g. paper and paperless) may complicate trade which should not disturb the level commercial playing field between countries;
* Costing of the system should be determined and made transparent as to who will pay for operation;
* Cybersecurity should be considered and appropriate security measures included to prevent tampering with or loss of data;
* Harmonization in both procedures for certification and in requirements associated with certification between developed and developing countries is essential in supporting trade flows. Training and outreach should emphasize the need for harmonization;.
* Software used in the Solution should avoid being subject to exorbitant proprietary costs;
* Change management of the Solution should be well defined so that it does not impact upon trade when updates or changes to software/hardware is required;
* Industries/governments should coordinate/harmonize Solution standards (e.g. ability to maintain data to support onward or re-export certification)
* The current ePhyto Solution proposal is limited in scope and requirements for additional enhancements and possibilities for integration with other electronic export documents should be mapped out for future enhancements.

Members representing the flower and seed sectors also provided presentations outlining issues associated with moving to electronic certification. Ms. Mamias noted that a great deal of import rejections of flowers is associated with paperwork issues and not pests. She suggested that electronic certification could reduce the occurrence of these rejections, if import requirements are fully linked to export certification. She also noted that acceptance of digital signatures is required and that integration of all trade documents into a compatible electronic format is needed to create efficiencies in trade. She noted that in some cases if border agencies are required to obtain some certificates electronically while others are in paper format, this may increase impediments to trade. Mr. Meijerink added that importers need access to the data contained in ePhytos to prepare re-exports for certification; official laboratory test reports and other documents need to be able to be attached to electronic certificates; length of storage of ePhyto data needs to recognize that some trade may require the data for very long periods of time and process for transition from paper to electronic documents must consider that re-export certification may require paper information long after the implementation of paperless systems.

1. **Next meeting**

A date for the next meeting was not set but would be agreed to by electronic mail between the members. The tentative proposal of October 2016 was agreed to by members. The members agreed to hold the next meeting in a location where the costs can be minimized for the majority of members (e.g. several members are located in Brussels).

# Action Items

| **Description** | **Responsibility** | **Due Date** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Develop summary document outlining the project | Sela | 15 July 2016 |
| Develop a questionnaire which may be circulated to the Groups memberships to solicit feedback on the ePhyto system and to identify an issues in project development  | Meijerink | 1 June 2016 |