ePhyto implementation and rppos

*(Prepared by the Mr Peter Neimanis)*

1. Introduction

1. The IPPC Secretariat is developing the ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan 2019 – 2023 for endorsement at CPM-14 (2019). Regional Plant Protection Organisations (RPPOs) play an important role for the successful implementation of ePhyto by contracting parties.

2. Current issues

1. The ePhyto Solution project has completed the development of IT systems for use by contracting parties. The Solution consists of three technology components:
2. A hub to facilitate the exchange of electronic certificates between participating countries and
3. A web-based Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) to allow countries to participate without having the necessary infrastructure to create, send and receive electronic certificates.
4. Harmonized message format and contents (i.e. message schema, accompanying codes, lists and terms to be used in the schema)
5. The IPPC Strategic Framework 2020 – 2030 includes, as one of its key components for its Development Agenda, *“the implementation of a global system for production and exchange of electronic certification information”.* It specifies 5 key activities to be carried out:

* Successful establishment of the IPPC ePhyto hub as the international system for exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificate information.
* Successful establishment of the IPPC ePhyto Generic ePhyto National System for production, sending and receiving of electronic phytosanitary certificate information.
* The successful implementation of both the ePhyto hub and the Generic National System, where needed, in all member countries.
* Investigation of associating other databases (such as regulatory import requirements) into the ePhyto hub.
* Establishment of pilot projects for new or improved electronic systems. Uninterrupted operation of the hub and GeNS.

1. The IPPC ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan 2019 – 2023 plans to deliver the activities outlined in the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020 – 2030 with an initial focus on implementation of the systems by countries, securing uninterrupted service and establishing effective governance and financial management structures for its long term operation.
2. To achieve the activities outlined in the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020 – 2030, this plan proposes the following medium term agenda for the five year period from 2019 to 2023:
3. Stable operation of the hub and GeNS to permit implementation by contracting parties;
4. Sustainable financial operation based upon a compelling and coherent donor strategy;
5. Monitoring and reporting on the performance of the solution;
6. Fully-funded capacity development strategy separate and distinct from a sustained ePhyto operational fund;
7. Monitoring and reporting on financial management;
8. Communications and advocacy framework;
9. Cost-benefit analysis;
10. Long term cost recovery plan to maintain ongoing operation including change management, and;
11. Cooperation with international and regional partners to advance interoperability and cost reduction.

The core elements of this agenda are governance, operations, finance, country implementation, communication and international cooperation.

**2.1 RPPO considerations**

1. As per Article IX of the IPPC, Regional Plant Protection Organisations (RPPOs) contribute to various activities that achieve the objectives of the IPPC – notably through cooperation and coordination of NPPOs and the IPPC. The successful implementation of ePhyto will require a strong collaborative approach across governments, industry and multi-lateral agencies.
2. It is recommended that the TC-RPPO considers what individual RPPOs can do, to support implementation of ePhyto within their respective regions, and how they can coordinate their efforts as a whole.
3. It is suggested that the TC-RPPO discusses the following options:

* include ePhyto as a standing agenda item on annual RPPO workplans/meetings
* seek agreement at RPPO annual meetings for ePhyto work plan and funding
* establish regional (RPPO) ePhyto Working Groups
  + member countries to coordinate activities
  + guided by Terms of Reference, agreed by membership
* provide technical feedback to IPPC ePhyto steering group
* coordinate actions across countries
* identify countries for next phase of ePhyto implementation
* identify collaboration opportunities (eg. Trade facilitation initiatives and industry groups)

1. The Chair of the IPPC ePhyto Steering Group is willing to work with the TC-RPPO to develop an RPPO work plan that will complement the implementation scheduled by the IPPC ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan 2019 – 2023.
2. The TC-RPPO is *invited* to:
3. *review* the IPPC ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan 2019 – 2023 and provide feedback to the IPPC Secretariat
4. *agree* on a collaborative workplan to support the implementation of ePhyto
5. *consider nominating* a TC-RPPO lead for the work on ePhyto
6. *agree* on including ePhyto as a standing item on annual agendas

Appendix 1: background

Title

1. **Global ePhyto developments**
2. The United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC) has developed the Hub and currently building the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) for the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) with funding provided by the Standards & Trade Development Facility (STDF).
3. The Hub pilot was completed in March 2018 after commencement in October 2017 when a number of countries were ready to begin testing. Piloting has determined the efficiency of the system with operating costs to establish implementation tools that will assist countries in adopting the ePhyto solution. Following the pilot, countries selected for ePhyto implementation in the first round have begun exchanging electronic phytosanitary certificates – notably Argentina, Chile, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the USA.
4. The pilot confirmed the proof of concept, validated the design and estimated the cost of operation. The outcome of this pilot testing will be used to refine the Solution components for full implementation by the remaining pilot National Plant Protection Organisations (NPPO). (i.e. Australia, Ecuador, Kenya, and The Republic of Korea).
5. The pilot is also intended to ensure that training and support tools for the implementation of the ePhyto Solution are produced and tested. These include tools for countries to undertake the business changes necessary to effectively participate in ePhyto exchange.
6. The UNICC is currently developing the GeNS after completion of its system specifications. It has outlined a process to deploying the GeNS to pilot countries with the NPPO identifying the technical focal points, the team for in-country training and regional ePhyto developments. The pilot for the GeNS is expected to commence with Ghana, Samoa and Sri Lanka in Q4 2018 after system development is finished. The evaluation of the pilot may occur in the first quarter of 2019, before rolling out to other countries during 2019.
7. After the GeNS pilot, evaluation will be conducted to assess the functionality, stability, security, efficiency, cost etc. of the ePhyto Solution, as well as the supporting documents and the Helpdesk. The evaluation findings will be used to determine the next steps of improvement associated with the system and service. The ePhyto Steering group (ESG) will finalise a benefit analysis document to evaluate the GeNS pilot.
8. The UNICC and the IPPC Secretariat is planning to develop a communication strategy clearly identifying the different roles undertaken by both organisations in the event of hub malfunctions. The GeNS countries will also have to develop a contingency plan for handling phytosanitary certificates during external (Hub) and internal (in-country) failures.
9. The UNICC has built and hosted a validation tool to confirm the compliance of country messages with the specified ePhyto message format (mapping and schema) to warn users of harmonisation issues which will not prevent them from sending the ePhyto.
10. The Trade Development and Facilitation (TDAF) consulting is developing a Business Model report for the next five years recommending a cost recovery method to the IPPC to ensure long term sustainability of the project after the operation of the ePhyto solution. The IPPC along with the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) with input from the Industry Advisory Group (IAG) has drafted the IPPC ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan 2019 – 2023 outlining a final recommendation based on the report to be provided to the Bureau and thereafter tabled at the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) in 2019.
11. The Advocacy and Communications Strategy would be a key component of the five year strategic plan with a strong focus on the benefits of the ePhyto system; the value of going truly “paperless”; the impact that the system has on the trade environment; and future funding operations and capacity development as separate activities.
12. The ESG is working on an ePhyto implementation guide (Blueprint) to reflect the broad scope of trade facilitation through electronic facilitation. This guide will give a general understanding of the business considerations during the process of ePhyto implementation.
13. The Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) is working on developing mapping tools of the harmonised food certificate, along with a guidance document on the introduction to paperless certification with further cooperation between Codex and the IPPC.
14. **Regional ePhyto developments**
15. **Latin America:** Argentina hosted a workshop to advance the understanding of ePhyto with Latin American countries in order to populate the ePhyto concept. The ePhyto regional workshop for Latin America was held in Buenos Aires from 11‒13 September 2018. It was hosted by the Argentine National Food Safety and Quality Service (SENASA) with financial and logistical support from the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRECIC). More than forty representatives from the national plant quarantine agencies of twenty Latin American countries attended. Participants provided an update on the status of their national electronic certification systems (NECS) and discussed the benefits derived from the harmonisation of NECS and the potential integration to the Global ePhyto Hub.
16. **Asia Pacific:** The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (MAFF) in Japan is planning to host the Asia and Pacific ePhyto Workshop and the Asia and Pacific Plant Protection Commission (APPPC) ePhyto working group Meeting on 10-11 December 2018 to support ePhyto implementation in the Asia and Pacific region.
17. Australia is engaging with Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand to exchange ePhytos with Australia. Vietnam committed to participate in the GeNS and Australia co-hosted three ePhyto workshops in Vietnam. Samoa and Sri Lanka are currently waiting for the GeNS to be developed by the UNICC for implementation.
18. Australia will take a leading role to pilot the ePhyto concept and support other countries through their respective regional plant protection organisation – APPPC and the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation (PPPO) leading to enhance trade facilitation.
19. **Africa/Near East North Africa:** the African and Near East Regional Plant Protection Organisations (RPPOs), respectively IAPSC and NEPPO, are planning with the support of the IPPC to host a regional workshop about the ePhyto solution for the benefit of countries from Africa, Near East and North-African (NENA) regions. The aim of this workshop is to enhance and expand knowledge about the ePhyto solution among these countries, and encourage their participation and involvement in the global exchange of ePhyto certificates.
20. The workshop is proposed to be held from 11-13 February 2019 with initial planning for a Gulf State NPPO to host the workshop. The IPPC will provide financial support to the workshop from Capacity Development funds in the STDF project. However, the IPPC and the RPPOs of the concerned regions are counting on additional support from the hosting country to hold this event, as the currently expected funds are not sufficient to cover the participation of the expected participants (at least 70 country representatives).
21. The host country will lead the organisation of the workshop assisted by an Organising Committee with representatives from the IPPC, Near East and African RPPOs and ePhyto Steering Group members. Host NPPO staff will be engaged to prepare the workshop, moderate the meeting, compile and publish the proceedings.