

EPHYTO NEWSLETTER



The IPPC ePhyto Solution in 2020

The IPPC community has been planting the seeds for ePhyto over the past few years and despite all the challenges of 2020, the seeds have really started to bear fruit. This year we celebrate many accomplishments including more than 40 countries now actively exchanging via the IPPC ePhyto Solution. The use of virtual platforms and the level of cooperation between contracting parties, dedication to finding efficiencies, and ensuring that safe trade continued is commendable. It's a pleasure to see how this year the benefits of ePhyto to both trading partners and industry stakeholders are truly becoming a reality, and we look forward to continued success.

**- Mr Christian Dellis,
ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) Chair**



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ePhyto regional perspectives

Latin America

With the onset of the global pandemic resulting from Covid-19, countries began to take actions to facilitate the continued flow of trade. In Latin America, some countries implementing ePhyto have already removed the requirement of paper for their plant trade. Argentina and Chile exchange as many as 9000 phytosanitary certificates per year, and now, through the ePhyto Hub all of these exchanges are paperless.

Other countries such as Costa Rica, Colombia and Mexico have initiated pilots for paperless plant trade and are expecting to be in production by the first quarter of 2021. Furthermore, seven other Latin American countries (Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, and Paraguay) are all in different stages of ePhyto implementation and it is expected they will start their way to the paperless certification in 2021.

Paperless trading further facilitates and improves security between Governmental organisations and the private sector greatly appreciates it due to the time and cost savings.





Southwest Pacific

With a tumultuous 2020 drawing to a close, we're all looking forward to the promise of what 2021 will deliver. ePhyto has proven a very handy tool for Samoa, Fiji and Sri Lanka as they used the GeNS to overcome covid related trade facilitation issues in 2020. Through a bilateral funding arrangement that extends to the end of 2021, Australia will continue to support the implementation of the GeNS in Sri Lanka and Samoa.

Australia and New Zealand are in the final stages of developing a funding arrangement for the Pacific Community (SPC) to support implementation of the GeNS throughout the Pacific region. Implementation of the GeNS in the Pacific region will provide for trade facilitation and enable greater transparency of the import/export processes. Fiji has already enthusiastically onboarded the GeNS and like Samoa is now exchanging ePhytos in production. Further Pacific countries will test and implement the GeNS over the coming months.

- **Mr Peter Neimanis,**
ESG Southwest Pacific member



Africa

Despite the challenges of 2020, the ESG representative for Africa, Mr Josiah Syanda had a busy year supporting the implementation of ePhyto in the Africa region.

In November 2020, Uganda became the second African nation to go live, using the Generic ePhyto National system (GeNS). Kenya have completed building their own national system to connect directly with the Hub and are actively testing with the hope to go live in early 2021.

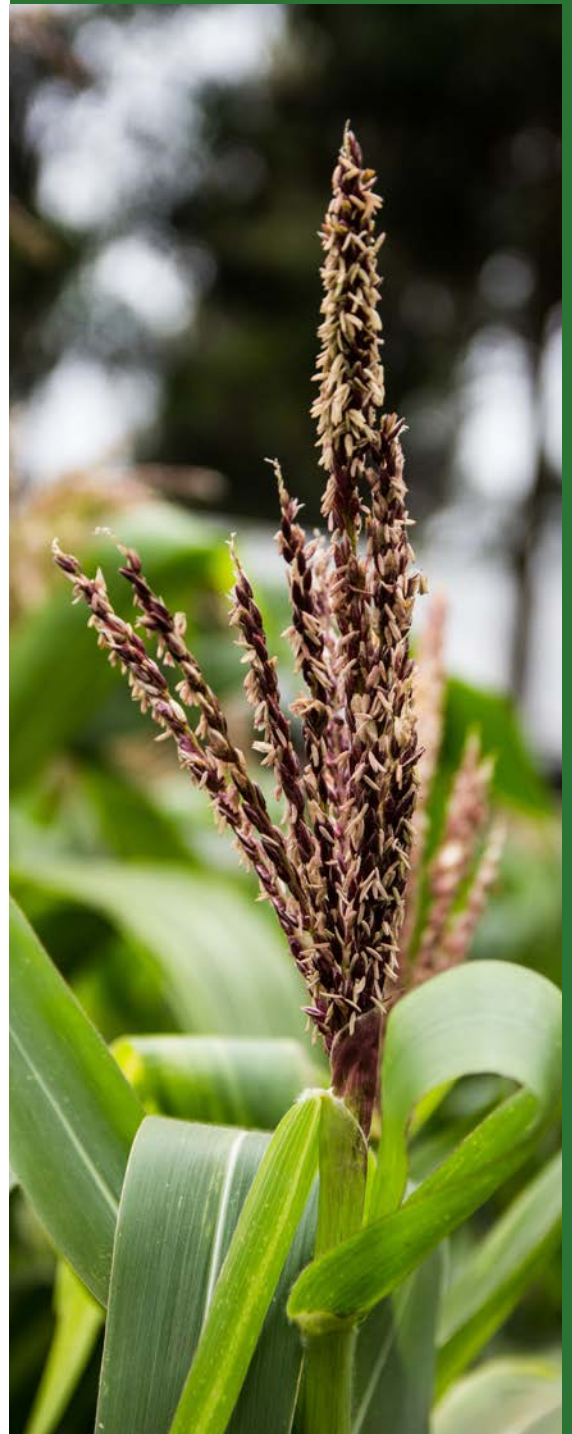
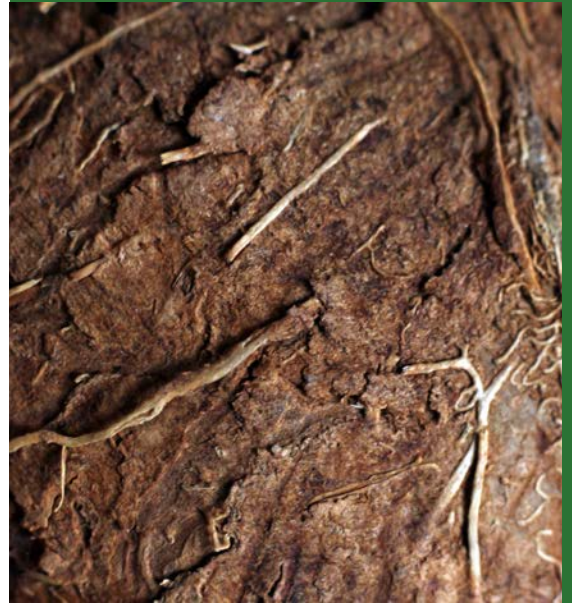
On top of that, Nigeria, Rwanda, Madagascar, Zambia and the Seychelles are all in various stages of initiating the Solution in their countries. Mr Syanda noted the challenges in engagement when working solely by virtual means and that physical meetings are far more beneficial in the region.

Country perspectives - Samoa

Samoa went “live” with the ePhyto Solution in March 2020 at a time that coincided with the beginning stages of the global pandemic emerging from Covid-19. With the cancellation of international flights and closure of borders, there were challenges in delivery of original phytosanitary certificates (PCs) to countries.

Fortunately, for Samoa, Australia and New Zealand granted approval for the receipt of scanned copies of PCs and New Zealand also agreed for the issuance of hard copies of the PC to clients in parallel with ePhyto certification.

Although new to the ePhyto Solution, Samoa is already seeing how it has helped to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic by ensuring that safe and efficient trade can continue. Samoa plans to move to paperless trade for all of its PCs.





Country perspectives - Fiji

Fiji's NPPO, the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF), exchanged its first commercial electronic phytosanitary certificate (ePhyto) using the GeNS with New Zealand on July 01, 2020. Since then, Fiji has issued close to 1900 phytosanitary certificates (PCs), a massive 69% of which were generated through GeNS. In the same period, BAF received close to 900 ePhytos from various countries. These numbers would have been expectantly much higher if not for the disruption in trade due to the global pandemic. In the absence of ePhyto during this pandemic, BAF and other border agencies including freight clearance agents would have had to undertake the cumbersome, time-consuming and costly process of releasing consignments based on scanned copies of PCs and other documents. Fiji and its trading partners have realized how greatly the ePhyto platform compliments trade, more so during global calamities.

In 2021, Fiji aims to extend issuance of ePhytos for personnel goods carried by the travelling public to hasten its departure and border clearance processes.





Contry perspective - Sri Lanka

During this 2020 pandemic, developing countries like Sri Lanka have been badly affected due to disruption of boarder operations from different regulatory agencies. The Sri Lankan NPPO is one of the most important boarder agencies who regulates imports and exports of plant products and allied commodities.

Due to the travel restrictions, a limited number of quarantine officers have been deployed under a roster basis to carry out all the quarantine operations without disruptions and without delay. The procedures and protocols of quarantine operations were revised to facilitate trade while assuring health and safety of quarantine officers and other stakeholders.

In light of this, ePhyto activities implemented through the GeNS are being extensively used with countries like Argentina, Chile, New Zealand and the USA. A very positive outcome of 2020 is the initiation of paperless trading between Sri Lanka and both Argentina and Chile. Due to the inability of conducting physical gatherings, virtual trainings and awareness programs for ePhyto are ongoing.



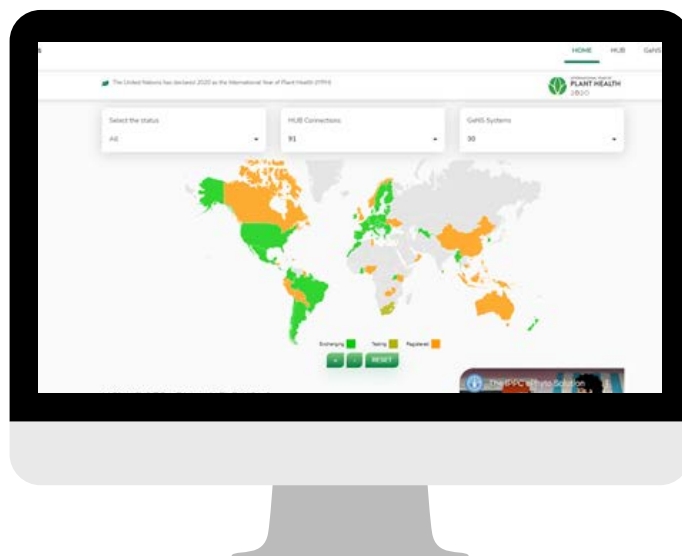


2020 highlights from the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNCC)

Since January 2020, almost **381,000 certificates** were exchanged through the ePhyto Hub. On top of this, various new features and enhancements to functionalities have been introduced on both the Hub and the GeNS throughout the year.

In April the Hub channel feature was introduced which facilitates sending copies of ePhytos to multiple recipients based on a distribution list that is configured in the Hub. This breakthrough for the Solution allowed the **EU system TRACES** to start using the Hub in production and means all **26 EU countries** can receive their ePhytos through the **Hub into TRACES**.

Other 2020 highlights include the launching of the [GeNS training modules](#) and the revamping of the ePhyto-landing page. The new landing page has more information and resources available as well as an interactive map of registered countries and other statistics for users.



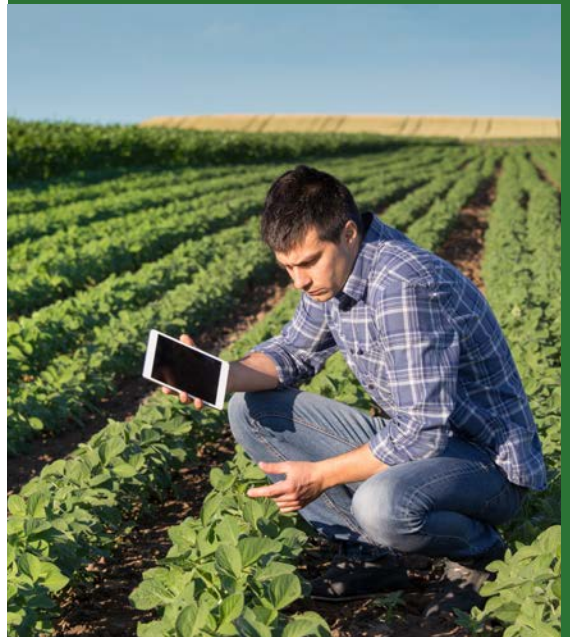
A message from the IAG co-chairs

Digital readiness in the supply chain has been revealed by the current pandemic as an urgent and critical need. Traditional links of the chain have been weakened or disrupted, and so various sectors like banking, retail and health services have taken a massive shift to electronic means of doing business. Consumers, employees and leaders are embracing an array of digital technologies in a more accelerated pace than ever before, out of necessity and need for efficiency.

Agricultural trade is no different, especially in phytosanitary measures which maintain standards for food safety and animal and plant health. For plant products, global trading operations rely on steady communication and transparency in phytosanitary requirements to protect plant health and ensure international unrestricted and safe trade of goods.

Electronic certification has proven itself indispensable under COVID-19 to maintain continuity of agricultural trade despite limitations on air traffic and courier services. Recently, the [Industry Advisory Group \(IAG\)](#) of the IPPC ePhyto Solution called on governments to support the adoption of the ePhyto solution.

In addition, the IAG encourages industry members and national associations to initiate dialogue with their NPPO and government to support the adoption of ePhyto in their country with the aim of achieving safer, faster and more cost-efficient trade of agriculture products.





Closing remarks from FAO DDG and the IPPC Secretariat

Dear Colleagues,

As this challenging 2020 comes to a close, I am pleased to have been invited to offer a few comments on one of our real collective successes of this year – the IPPC ePhyto Solution.

There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the ePhyto Solution has demonstrated that the digital exchange of phytosanitary certificates (and once formatted, the possibility of animal health and food safety certificates) is not only possible, but improves efficiencies in trade, decreases chances of fraud and provides cost savings to government and industry alike.

With the average number of digital exchanges moving upward to nearly 50,000 ePhytos per month, it is clear that ePhyto can be a winning solution for everyone involved in the trade of plants and plant products. So, what does the future hold for ePhyto? Certainly more countries will be coming on board ... more than ninety countries are registered, forty-six are actively exchanging in business as usual' operations, and linkages with the other SPS "sisters" (Codex and the OIE) are being actively explored. And, as FAO's new private sector engagement strategy, which was endorsed by our Council Members just last week, is implemented, I fully expect that additional partnerships will be built that will contribute to making ePhyto a continuing and sustained success.

Let me close by underscoring how important initiatives like ePhyto and others are building momentum and strengthening the fulfillment of the UN's Strategic Development Goals. I am very glad to support ePhyto from my position in FAO leadership, and I wish all of you the best for the coming year.

**- Ms Beth Bechdol,
FAO Deputy Director General**





Dear Colleagues,

It is hard to believe that a year that began with so much promise is going out to the immense relief of everyone and good riddance. Despite the tragedy of Covid-19 and the associated effects of global economic uncertainty, those of us who have worked to make the IPPC ePhyto Solution a reality, in particular the ePhyto Steering Group, can be proud of what we have accomplished this year. By the end of November, the ePhyto Hub was helping countries to exchange thousands of electronic phytosanitary certificates per month, more countries continue to come on board, and we have built great partnerships with the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, our Industry Advisory Group and the World Bank. We will be losing Mr Philippe Loopuyt from the ESG to retirement (he is really too young for this), and this is a big loss as he almost singlehandedly brought the European Union onboard the ePhyto Solution through TRACES. He will be missed.

The IPPC Secretariat's participation in the STDF's Electronic Certification Advisory Committee provides us with another platform to continue to dispel the notion that multilateral SPS certificate digital exchanges can't be done; and we are grateful for the support the STDF continues to provide in pushing to build the ePhyto Hub into an SPS Hub. Perhaps next year will be the year we see other certificates and other organizations join with the IPPC to build a bigger and better digital certificate exchange platform.





None of this would be possible of course without the leadership and development work the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC) provides. UNICC has set a standard of excellence that will be difficult to exceed. Their innovative solutions and willingness to take on the hardest challenges make the UNICC an example of the best that the UN has to offer. The IPPC will be forever thankful for this working relationship.

Finally, I would like to specifically thank Ms. Aoife Cassin and Mr. Denis Alex for their leadership, ingenuity and dedication to making the IPPC ePhyto Solution the success it has become. You could travel the world and not be able to find two other people with the enthusiasm, the smarts and the willingness to go the extra distance to ensure the IPPC ePhyto Solution a success. Thank you both.

Best wishes for 2021!

**- Mr Craig Fedchock,
IPPC Senior Advisor and ePhyto Manager**



**International
Plant Protection
Convention**



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
PLANT HEALTH
2020