COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES
SEVENTEENTH SESSION
UPDATE ON THE IPPC EPHYTO SOLUTION ACTIVITIES
AGENDA ITEM 14.4

(*Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat*)

[1] The IPPC ePhyto Solution continues to be a global leader in the digitalization of SPS trade documents and is the only fully operational digital exchange mechanism available globally for the exchange of any type of SPS certificate. Any IPPC Contracting Party wishing to do so may make use of the system either by connecting through the ePhyto Hub directly or via the web-based GeNS system for those countries that do not have their own national system. As of December 2022, more than three million ePhytos have been successfully exchanged through the Hub by 74 active user countries (up from 62 active user countries at the end of 2021). A total of 116 countries are now registered on the system up from 103 at the end of 2021 with Sierra Leone being the final onboarding country for 2022.

[2] Statistics are still being compiled for 2022, but some results through 2021 underscore the value and success of the IPPC ePhyto Solution. Partnering with FAO's Markets and Trade Division on a project funded by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, it has been determined that the value of plant exports from ePhyto participants increased sharply at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the value increasing by 225 percent between January and February 2020 (from 1 billion USD in January to 3.2 billion USD in February 2020). With an acceleration in the use of ePhytos in 2020/21, the value of plant exports from ePhyto participants grew by 682 percent from 1 billion USD in January 2020 to 7.8 billion USD in December 2021. The value of plant product exports from countries that issue ePhyto certificates has also increased significantly, with over 4.8 billion USD recorded in 2018 to over 79 billion USD by the end of 2021. At the end of 2021 only 10.6 percent of the value of plant exports requiring phytosanitary certifications was covered by the ePhyto solution. With additional countries such as India, Japan, Pakistan, and Thailand coming onboard in 2022 statistical results should continue to be striking.

[3] A large part of the success can be attributed to the collaborative efforts between the Secretariat ePhyto team and the many partners who form an even larger "ePhyto Global Team". These partners include first and foremost the ePhyto Steering Group and the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC) who developed and continue to lead in developing the technical aspects and enhancements of the ePhyto Solution. Broad implementation the ePhyto Solution could never have happened without the contributions of the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF), the Industry Advisory Group (IAG) and the World Bank. The GATF has helped facilitate ePhyto onboarding in Madagascar (the first to use the French version of GeNS), Jordan and Senegal (among others) as well as providing the financial resources to translate the GeNS into Arabic provide for ePayment/eBilling, and eSignature.

[4] The IAG has taken the lead in setting up a series of seven joint webinars with the Secretariat in 2022. These webinars provided the opportunity for more than one thousand participants to learn about the ePhyto Solution in Australia/New Zealand, Colombia, the Philippines, Guatemala, Pakistan, Chile, and Thailand. The World Bank Group has also launched ePhyto Solution onboarding assistance projects in Cote d'Ivoire, Zambia and Nepal while working facilitate connections between the Asycuda World single windows system to the ePhyto Solution in Fiji.

[5]   The API (Application Programming Interface) to connect the external payment (ePayment) system is under piloting with Senegal and Jordan. The feature is considered developed and ready for transitioning to business-as-usual operation. The "Right to Left" support for the Arabic language version of the GeNS has been implemented and is ready to be used. The Arabic version is deployed, and validation was performed with a few revisions that have been implemented for Jordan.

[6]   Integration with the Asycuda World single windows system still remains a challenge due to factors associated with issues external to the IPPC effort (the World Bank is funding the project, and UNCTAD is the lead for Asycuda and they have yet to agree on a way forward – IPPC and UNICC are prepared to move forward and the next steps are not within our ability to influence – we are entirely dependent on the World Bank and UNCTAD to take the next steps). Nevertheless, the IPPC/UNICC efforts have instead linked with several other single windows systems including in Madagascar, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Morocco, Kenya, Uzbekistan, and Uganda, among others, and UNICC has confirmed that connecting to the Asycuda World system would be relatively easy. Expectations are that this connection will take place sometime during 2023.

[7]   Finally, a focus group on sustainable funding for ePhyto has completed a paper for CPM review with recommendations for a sustainable way forward which is to be considered elsewhere in the CPM agenda. In summary, the IPPC ePhyto Solution has improved safe trade in plants and plant products making trade more efficient and less costly. Future growth and success is possible as additional countries come onboard, new enhancements are installed and the strong partnerships already developed are maintained.

[8]   The CPM is invited to:

(1)   *Note* the successful implementation of the IPPC ePhyto Solution thus far; and
(2)   *Encourage and support* Contracting Parties that have not yet registered to the system to do so.