

## MINUTES OF THE IPPC EPHYTO STEERING GROUP (ESG) VIRTUAL MEETING 05 September 2023 (14.00-15.00, Rome Time)

### Participants

Ms H el ene Klein (Europe, EU Commission/DG SANTE)  
Mr Rodrigo Robles (Latin America and Caribbean, Chile/SAG)  
Mr Christian Dellis (North America, USA/Aphis – **Chair**)  
Mr Gianluca Nuzzo (UNICC)  
Ms Rose Souza Richards (IAG, International Seed Federation)  
Mr Dominique Menon (IPPC Secretariat)

### Participants not able to attend

Mr Josiah Syanda (Africa, Kenya/KEPHIS)  
Mr Bojun Zhang (Asia, China/GACC)  
Mr Islam Aboelela (Near East, Egypt/MALR)  
Mr Piriariki Maa (Southwest Pacific, Cook Islands)  
Mr Venkatram Venkateswaran (UNICC)

### 1. IPPC Secretariat updates

- [1] The IPPC Secretariat (hereafter referred to as the “Secretariat”) gave a brief update on the **CPM Focus Group on Sustainable Funding of the IPPC ePhyto Solution** (FG) that met in July and August to develop a paper with proposed funding mechanisms (based on development status - fixed fee - and usage of ePhyto - usage fee), to be presented at the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) that will be held on 10-13 October 2023. The Secretariat forwarded a request from the FG to the UNICC to provide an update on the total transactions for the first six months of 2023 of each country exchanging ePhytos.
- [2] The IAG representative, who is part of this FG, explained that it was very important to have these data as the proposal would be fixed fee based and usage fee based. Therefore, it is important to have an idea of the users of the countries to be able to create the numbers. So, the proposal from the FG, even if she is not quite sure from a private sector perspective this is the correct way to go, would be to use the categorization of the World Bank so that the least developed countries would not pay anything. There is a model that has been worked and based on that, the FG will be finalizing the paper to be presented at the SPG in October.
- [3] The UNICC Representative wanted to know how the cost of an ePhyto is estimated in terms of value as issuing an ePhyto is a value for the receiving country. He asked whether the number of ePhytos received by the countries should be counted as phytosanitary certificates aim at preventing the spread of pests. In addition, some countries could organize themselves to connect with each other without using the Hub if fees based on the transactions are in place.
- [4] Following Secretariat’s question whether the FG was counting the ePhytos sent or also the ePhytos received, the IAG representative explained that according to her understanding the complete exchange was considered, but discussions are still ongoing. Indeed, some countries are just receiving so she asked whether they also pay fees like other countries sending and receiving. In addition, as said by the UNICC representative, ePhytos sent are not necessarily delivered. These details have not been worked through

yet by the FG and discussions are still ongoing. In any case there is a problem in some way, but the critical point discussed was how to make the system sustainable.

- [5] The IAG representative also highlighted that it would be really important to have a clear vision from the Secretariat, about ePhyto for the next five years to make sure it is clear for everybody. It would help the FG on ePhyto sustainable funding or the ESG or the IAG to understand what the Secretariat is trying to do and the vision for ePhyto. This would provide a better understanding of the objectives to be achieved, the next steps and the additions the Secretariat would like to make to the initiative.
- [6] The Chair mentioned that the model should also capture the costs of the administration of the funding mechanism and the cases of countries that would not pay. There will be a follow-up with a lot of work for the Secretariat with costs associated as well. Those costs must not be ignored and could double or triple the costs of everything. He also added that if a country has successfully sent an ePhyto but then the country does not pick it up and it expires, it becomes a non-delivered ePhyto, but it was successfully sent.
- [7] The Europe representative underlined that it is why the most important is to define what a transaction is. Furthermore, she did not agree that it is important for the receiving country because for the exporting country it is a huge help if accepted by the importing country. The Chair totally agreed with this point of view and would set up fees for those countries issuing ePhytos, not for those receiving ePhytos. The Europe representative added there are also those ePhytos delivered but not readable, so, the most important thing is to define what a transaction is.
- [8] The Chair reminded that the UNICC was requested to change the status of those ePhytos delivered but not readable, as they are basically not delivered. The UNICC representative responded this would be in the next release but the status itself that is already deployed on the Hub will remain the same internally otherwise that would impact the implementation.
- [9] To conclude this item on ePhyto sustainable funding, the Chair highlighted the necessity to add something about the administrative costs of doing anything per transaction because someone will have to follow-up on it including if a country does not pay.
- [10] Moving to another item, the Secretariat informed that **OIRSA organized on 28-31 August 2023 a workshop on ePhyto**, held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The UNICC representative and the representative of Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) attended the meeting and will present more about the outcomes of the workshop.
- [11] The Secretariat also informed the ESG that next week (**11-13 September 2023**), a **CAREC<sup>1</sup> Conference on ePhyto** will be hosted by the Republic of Uzbekistan and co-organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Some of the ESG members will deliver a presentation as speakers either in person or online (UNICC, ESG Chair, IAG, European Commission, IPPC Secretariat). The conference will discuss digitalization of phytosanitary certification to facilitate safe trade of plants and plant products in the region covered by CAREC. The participants are National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) of CAREC member countries, customs, trade-related agencies, development partners and private sector representatives.
- [12] The Secretariat also added that it received in August a request from **CIOPORA** (International Community of Breeders of Asexually Reproduced Horticultural Plants) who would like to organize a workshop to promote ePhyto during the upcoming Fruit Attraction 2023 event in Madrid, Spain. The workshop is scheduled for October 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- [13] The Secretariat informed the ESG that he had on July 28<sup>th</sup> a call with **the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation** (Philippe Isler, Director and Amine Belkhadir, ePhyto Domain Manager) to seek further collaboration on ePhyto. Following the workshop on ePhyto among African Union Member countries, held in Uganda at the end of June, they are prompt to further support African countries willing to join the ePhyto Hub. To that end, they will propose to the IPPC Secretariat a template letter for those countries willing to apply for support in implementing ePhyto.

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<sup>1</sup> Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program: <https://www.carecprogram.org/>

- [14] The Secretariat also informed the ESG about the ongoing discussions with **digital platforms transferring electronic trade documents according to blockchain technology**. Within the last two months, the ESG Chair, the UNICC and the Secretariat had several meetings with one of the companies managing such digital platforms namely Wave BL. This company has proposed a mutual Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) that was transmitted in early August to the FAO Legal Office for review. The purpose of this NDA is to ensure confidentiality of processes between the Wave BL's digital platform and the ePhyto Hub.

## 2. IAG update

- [15] The IAG representative gave a brief update by indicating she is working with the Chair and the Secretariat to prepare two IAG/IPPC workshops coming, one in UK, one in Honduras, where the private sector is trying to understand exactly what is happening in these countries, to understand the level of ePhyto implementation. She is also still working with the STDF on some implementations of ePhyto in some Asian/Pacific countries.