

MINUTES OF THE IPPC EPHYTO STEERING GROUP (ESG) VIRTUAL MEETING

23 April 2024, 14.00-15.00, Rome Time (UTC+2)

1. Opening of the Meeting

- [1] The IPPC Secretariat (hereafter referred to as the “Secretariat”) opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

2. Meeting arrangements

- [2] As an additional item of the proposed agenda of the meeting, the ESG suggested to be updated on ePhyto outcomes of the 18th Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-18) ([Appendix 1](#)).

3. Administrative matters

- [3] The Secretariat introduced the three meeting documents: (1) the agenda, (2) the draft minutes of the ESG meeting held in March 2024 and (3) the request from the NPPO of Australia to add intended use options to the product description list.
- [4] The Bureau and the Near East representatives had apologized for being unable to attend the meeting. The list of participants is provided in [Appendix 2](#).
- [5] Regarding the adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting, there were no comments from the participants and therefore the ESG:
- (1) *approved* the draft minutes of the ESG Meeting held on 5 March 2024.

4. IPPC Secretariat updates

4.1 Update on ePhyto outcomes of CPM-18

- [6] The Secretariat informed the ESG on the main ePhyto outcomes of CPM-18 following the ePhyto update provided by the Secretariat and the proposal for ePhyto funding presented by the CPM Bureau representative on the CPM Focus Group on sustainable funding for the IPPC ePhyto Solution. Recommendations on ePhyto approved by CPM-18 are presented in [Appendix 3](#).
- [7] Regarding the ePhyto update, CPM-18 approved the ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) 2024–2030 as presented in Annex 1 of CPM 2024/14 paper.¹ Nevertheless, the Secretariat reported one concern expressed by New Zealand that approved the SIP. Indeed, regarding item (8) in paragraph 21 of the CPM 2024/14 paper namely “**Cooperation with other international and regional organisations to advance interoperationality, system sharing and cost reduction**” they said it “*needs caution to ensure no lessening of security and confidentiality which is highly valued by CPs [Contracting Parties]. Hence the need for good governance oversight and approval for substantive changes to the system.*” During discussion on the security issue raised by New Zealand, the UNICC representative confirmed this was an important one but relatively easy to address.
- [8] Regarding ePhyto funding, the Secretariat reported on main discussions that arose on the proposed funding model during the plenary session and the “Friends of the Chair” meeting that followed. Some CPs supported the proposed funding model as an important initial step towards a fully-fledged ePhyto system, but others called for changes to it, either now or in the future. These changes included the

¹ CPM 2024/14: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/93058/>

possibility of waiving fees for least developed countries, not basing the base fees solely on World Bank criteria, making a distinction between commercial and non-commercial ePhyto exchanges, and weighting the fees more according to exports than imports. Support was also expressed for continuing to explore the possibility of FAO funding the IPPC ePhyto Solution. It was also suggested to review the balance between the base fee and the usage fee and whether the usage fee part should not be increased when the model will be reviewed after two years of implementation. These discussions resulted in an amended set of proposed decisions for the CPM to consider.

[9] During the discussion, participants expressed concern about the administrative costs for the Secretariat to implement the funding model. Moreover, the Secretariat was invited to prepare in consultation with the ESG the draft letter specifying the expected contribution to be sent to countries. They also asked whether the ESG could be represented in the CPM Focus Group (FG) on Sustainable Funding for the IPPC ePhyto Solution, whose term was extended until CPM-19 (2025).

[10] After discussion, the ESG:

- (2) *noted* the funding model was approved and would be implemented as a transitional pilot, starting in 2025, and would be reviewed after two years (2027);
- (3) *expressed* its concerns about the administrative costs of the implementation of the funding model;
- (4) *invited* the Secretariat to submit for its consideration the draft letter specifying the expected contribution to be sent to countries;
- (5) *invited* the Secretariat to check whether the ESG can be represented in the CPM Focus group on Sustainable Funding of the IPPC ePhyto Solution;
- (6) *invited* the Secretariat to provide them with the full text of the CPM-18 adopted report on ePhyto.

4.2 Financial contributions and expenditures of the IPPC ePhyto Solution

[11] At its November meeting, last year, the ESG “*invited* the Secretariat to share with the ESG information on how much money has come in, *versus* how much the Secretariat has to pay out.”

[12] Including voluntary contributions from CPs into the IPPC Multidonor Trust Fund (MTDF), the projects funds (STDF, EU and GIZ)², other IPPC resources and estimated in-kind contributions, the total of revenues is USD 8,470,556 for the period 2015-2023.

[13] Expenses for 2015-2023 are estimated as USD 7,692,560 in total. For the projects, other IPPC resources and the estimated in-kind contributions, all available funds have been spent. The only difference is for the MTDF where the difference between revenues (USD 2,646,716) and expenses (USD 1,868,720) makes a positive balance of USD 777,996 as of December 2023.

[14] The Secretariat reminded that the current Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) between FAO and UNICC is USD 411,00/year (165,096 for the Hub and 245,748 for the GeNS) and stressed that the UNICC was currently working on the service renewal/cost revision for which an important increase is expected.

[15] As regards the cost revision, the UNICC representative indicated that, from the outset, UNICC has been able to build up reserves on which to draw as the use of ePhyto grew. But the balance is now negative as ePhyto use continues to grow and the services it provides evolved. This is why a cost revision of the SDA is necessary.

[16] After discussion, the ESG:

- (7) *noted* the positive balance of USD 777,996 as of December 2023 of the Multidonor Trust Fund for ePhyto.

² Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), European Union (EU) and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ).

4.3 IPPC Intended Use (request from Australia)

- [17] The Secretariat informed the ESG on the request dated April 2nd from the Australian NPPO to add two options to the current list of IPPC Intended Use for the XML mapping.³ The request is to add “Stockfeed” and “Other” options to the list and the reasons for their addition were reported in the related meeting document (2024-04_ESG_Intended Use). The question was to decide whether it was relevant to add “Stockfeed” and “Other” options to the list of IPPC Intended Use.
- [18] Regarding the “Stockfeed” option, participants mentioned that adding “Stockfeed” would lead to modifying the existing “Consumption” option into “Human consumption” option while it already includes both human and animal consumption. In addition, if there are different phytosanitary requirements from importing countries especially between human and animal consumption, these may be captured through the additional declaration of the ePhyto. One suggestion was also to address this by differentiating stockfeed in the national system by plant part as opposed to adding new entities that could lead to confusion in other countries.
- [19] Regarding the “Other” option, and based on experiences, discussions indicated this is a term that could encourage users from countries exchanging ePhytos to select this option rather than choosing one of the options already available. The “Other” option is not clear enough and will not be used for niche products only.
- [20] After discussion the ESG:
- (8) *decided* to not add the two options proposed by the Australian NPPO to the current List of IPPC Intended Use.

4.4 Other updates

- [21] The Secretariat informed the ESG that Palestine had submitted a request to be registered to the Hub with the GeNS and indicated that this request was under review by the FAO Legal Office.

5. Regional updates

- [22] The Chair informed that they started tests with Ukraine.
- [23] The Europe representative indicated they have also started tests with Ukraine and with one country being part of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) as well, namely Albania.

6. UNICC updates

n/a

7. Any other business

n/a

8. Date of the next meeting

- [24] The next ESG meeting is scheduled for 7 May 2024 at 2.00 pm, Rome Time (UTC+2).

9. Close of the meeting

- [25] The Chairperson thanked the participants for their active participation.

³ IPPC Intended Use List: https://www.ephytoexchange.org/doc/mapping/IPPC_Specific_Intend_Use.pdf

Action List

Action	Responsible	Deadline
1. Submit for consideration to the ESG the draft letter specifying the expected contribution from countries using the IPPC ePhyto Solution.	Secretariat	ESG meeting just before sending the letter
2. Request the Bureau to decide to include one ESG expert in the membership of the Focus Group on Sustainable Funding of the IPPC ePhyto Solution.	Secretariat	June 2024 Bureau meeting
3. Provide the ESG with the full text of the CPM-18 adopted report on ePhyto.	Secretariat	24 April 2024

Appendix 1**AGENDA OF THE EPHYTO STEERING GROUP MEETING****23 April 2024, 14.00-15.00, Rome Time (UTC+2)**

Agenda Item		Document No.	Presenter
1.	Opening of the Meeting		IPPC Secretariat
2.	Meeting Arrangements		
2.1	Adoption of the Agenda	2024-04_ESG_01_Agenda	Chairperson
3.	Administrative Matters		
3.1	Review of meeting documents		IPPC Secretariat
3.2	Meeting Participants	ESG Membership list	IPPC Secretariat
3.3	Approval of minutes of previous meeting	2024-03_ESG_Meeting_Minutes_Draft	IPPC Secretariat
4.	IPPC Secretariat updates		
4.1	Update on ePhyto outcomes of CPM-18		IPPC Secretariat
4.2	Financial contributions and expenditures of the IPPC ePhyto Solution		IPPC Secretariat
4.3	IPPC Intended Use (request from Australia)	2024-04_ESG_Intended Use	IPPC Secretariat
4.4	Other updates		IPPC Secretariat
5.	Regional updates		
	Updates of activities in the FAO Regions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Africa - Asia - Europe - Latin America and Carribean - Near East - North America - Southwest Pacific 		Regional representatives
6.	UNICC updates		UNICC
7.	Any other business		Chairperson
8.	Date of the next meeting		IPPC Secretariat
9.	Close of the Meeting		Chairperson

Appendix 2**EPHYTO STEERING GROUP (ESG) MEETING PARTICIPANT LIST****23 April 2024, 14.00-15.00, Rome Time (UTC+2)**

Region / Role	Name / Organization	Email address
Africa Member	Mr Josiah Musili SYANDA Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS)	jsyanda@kephis.org
Europe Member	Ms Helene KLEIN Directorate SANTE.DDG2.G (Crisis management in food, animals and plants) European Commission DG Health and Food Safety	Helene.KLEIN@ec.europa.eu
Latin America and Caribbean Member	Mr Rodrigo ROBLES Electronic Certification eCert SAG, Ministry of Agriculture Chile	rodrigo.robles@sag.gob.cl
North America Member (ESG Chairperson)	Mr Christian B DELLIS United States Department of Agriculture, Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine	christian.b.dellis@usda.gov
UNICC	Mr Gianluca NUZZO Solutions Delivery Manager Digital Business Solutions Section (DDD)	nuzzo@unicc.org
	Mr Dominique MENON IPPC Secretariat / IFU ePhyto Programme Officer	dominique.menon@fao.org

Appendix 3

12.1 Harmonization of electronic data exchange

CPM-18 recommendations

The CPM:

- (1) *noted* the successful implementation of the IPPC ePhyto Solution thus far;
- (2) *approved* the ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan 2024–2030 as presented in Annex 1 of CPM 2024/14;
- (3) *agreed* to promote the use of the IPPC ePhyto Solution;
- (4) *encouraged* contracting parties that had not yet registered to the IPPC ePhyto Hub to do so;
- (5) *urged* all contracting parties to continue to provide support to the IPPC ePhyto Solution through the Multidonor Trust Fund;
- (6) *noted* that some CPs were ready to contribute to the IPPC ePhyto Solution using the proposed model;
- (7) *noted* that some CPs needed more time or wanted modifications to the proposed model to be explored before they could begin contributing to the IPPC ePhyto Solution;
- (8) *agreed* the *Procedures for the IPPC ePhyto Solution funding model* as presented in Appendix 1 of CPM 2024/15_Rev1;
- (9) *noted* that country contributions to the IPPC ePhyto Solution would not be mandatory for any country;
- (10) *agreed* that, during the transitional period, reports comparing expected contributions and actual contributions by country would not be presented to the CPM (paragraph 23 of the *Procedures for the IPPC ePhyto Solution funding model*);
- (11) *agreed* that the funding model would be implemented as a transitional pilot, starting in 2025, and that the funding model would be reviewed after two years (2027) and reported to the CPM;
- (12) *agreed* that, during the transitional period, alternative fee structures embedded in the model would be explored;
- (13) *agreed* to extend the term of the CPM Focus Group on Sustainable Funding for the IPPC ePhyto Solution until CPM-19 (2025) and *requested* that the focus group explore and report to the CPM on alternative modifications and adjustments including those suggested at CPM-18 (2024);
- (14) *requested* that CPs provide any additional suggested modifications to the funding model to the secretariat with urgency for consideration by the focus group;
- (15) *agreed* that the CPM Bureau would govern the funding model until an alternative governance mechanism is agreed by the CPM; and
- (16) *requested* that CPs wanting FAO to provide funding for the IPPC ePhyto Solution promote this through their permanent representatives.