MINUTES OF THE IPPC EPHYTO STEERING GROUP (ESG) VIRTUAL MEETING
10 September 2024, 14.00-15.00, Rome Time (UTC+1)

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] There were no comments from the participants on the proposed agenda of the meeting (Appendix 1).

3. Administrative matters

[3] The Secretariat introduced the three meeting documents: the agenda, the draft minutes of the ESG meeting held in August 2024 and the contingency plan for electronic phytosanitary certification of the Inter-American Coordinating Group in Plant Protection (GICSV - *Grupo Interamericano de Coordinación en Sanidad Vegetal*).

[4] The list of participants is provided in Appendix 2.

[5] Regarding the adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting, and after having addressed a few comments from the participants, the ESG:

(1)   *approved* the draft minutes of the ESG Meeting held on 6 August 2024.

4. IPPC Secretariat updates

4.1 Review of the GICSV contingency plan for electronic phytosanitary certification

[6] At the August ESG meeting, the Latin America and Caribbean representative informed that the GICSV had finalized a contingency plan for electronic phytosanitary certification. The Secretariat then shared this contingency plan with ESG members for preliminary discussions on it at the meeting. The Chair indicated that the purpose of this document was to provide solutions in the event of ePhyto system failure. While countries would probably revert to paper in such a situation, they also have validation tools at their disposal. The purpose of this document is therefore to register these tools and to mention the emails to know who to contact in the event of a problem with a particular country.

[7] The Europe representative then indicated there were two cases: imports and exports. For the imports to the European Union (EU), the EU regulation provides that paper should be used if electronic certification implemented in accordance with EU legislation does not work. For the exports, it depends on the importing country whether they accept or not to check in the EU application namely "TRACES"; if they do not accept to check in TRACES then the only solution is the paper. Moreover, the legislation of importing countries does not necessarily accept phytosanitary certificates sent by e-mail as an alternative solution.

[8] The Chair then added that the whole point of this document is just to have, if nothing else, the help desk emails because this information is not in one place. The document could thus be posted on the www.ephytoexchange.org website so that everybody can see it and know who to get in touch with.

[9] After discussion, the ESG:

(2)   *noted* the added value that the GICSV contingency plan for electronic phytosanitary certification could bring, even if it will not be able to respond to all country-specific legislation, and was a good starting point with a view to adapting it worldwide;

(3)   *invited* the ESG members to provide their comments and inputs on the GICSV contingency plan for electronic phytosanitary certification, to be then further discussed at a next ESG meeting.

4.2 Other updates

[10]   The Secretariat informed that **Botswana and Mozambique** have expressed their interest in joining the IPPC ePhyto Hub.

[11]   The Secretariat also indicated that Ukraine was requesting how to notify to exporting countries any invalidated ePhytos, practically speaking. The UNICC representative then confirmed this is possible to digitally notify through the hub, but the problem is that only countries using the GeNS can support, if enabled, notifications of invalidated ePhytos; countries with their own IT system are not supporting those notifications, so far. He then suggested to raise awareness of countries in the future to configure this feature of notification in their respective system.

5. Regional updates

Europe

[12]   The Europe representative confirmed that three of the CEFTA[1] countries, namely North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania started at the end of August to send ePhytos in production to the EU.

North America

[13]   There was no specific update.

6. UNICC updates

6.1 XML mapping of the certifying statement of re-export certificates

[14]   The UNICC representative presented the question submitted by an expert of the TRACES Team of the European Commission and regarding the XML mapping of the certifying statement of re-export certificates. Indeed in the XML mapping of the re-export certifying statements that are associated at line level, it is requested to indicate the number or the reference of the original phytosanitary certificate accompanying the re-export certificate. The question is, where there are more than one original phytosanitary certificate, whether it would be possible to have more than one element or concatenated information of all original phytosanitary certificates.

[15]   After discussion the ESG:

(4)   *invited* the UNICC representative to share the email they received with the ESG Chair and the Europe representative for consideration, in view to discuss the issue further at a future ESG meeting.

6.2 Other updates

[16]   The UNICC representative indicated that they were working on how to reduce the costs of the IPPC ePhyto Solution that are currently above the amount foreseen in the Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) with the IPPC. For instance, reviewing the length of the period to download archives and attachments in the GeNS may be an option to consider. Questioned by the Secretariat about the possibility of separating SDAs dedicated to basically maintaining the system from new

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[1] Central European Free Trade Agreement. CEFTA's member countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo) on behalf of Kosovo.

developments/enhancements that might be undertaken as part of specific projects, the UNICC representative indicated that this would be more costly. In fact, when operation/maintenance and development activities are carried out jointly, the staff in place are perfectly familiar with the IT applications and are therefore much more efficient, unlike the people who would have to be recruited each time a new development project is launched.

[17] The UNICC representative also informed that the Hub release notes for September 2024 will be sent during the week to the users. They will include some enhancements that were discussed and decided by the ESG on the XML validation tool (See the minutes of the March 2024 ESG meeting). Those enhancements will remain quite a long time in the User Acceptance Test (UAT) environment as they may affect the countries.

[18] In addition, and related to the implementation of the ePhyto funding model endorsed at the 18th Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary measures (CPM-18, April 2024), the Chair reminded what he suggested at the August ESG meeting. It would be a matter of adding one functionality in the IPPC ePhyto Solution namely to establish for each country a usage report of ePhytos successfully exchanged through the Hub. Then, based on this usage report and the parameters of the funding model, the system could calculate and release the corresponding invoice for payment. The Secretariat then indicated that the CPM Focus Group on ePhyto sustainable funding will meet on 2nd October.

7. Any other business

[19] There was no other business.

8. Date of the next meeting

[20] The next ESG meeting is scheduled on 1st October 2024 at 2.00 pm, Rome Time (UTC+2).

9. Close of the meeting

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

Action List

Action	Responsible	Deadline
1. Share for inputs with ESG Members the GICSV contingency plan for electronic phytosanitary certification	IPPC Secretariat	13 September 2024

Appendix 1

AGENDA OF THE EPHYTO STEERING GROUP MEETING

10 September 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	2024-09_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	2024-08_ESG_Meeting_Minutes_Draft	IPPC Secretariat
4.	**IPPC Secretariat updates**		
4.1	Review of the GICSV contingency plan for electronic phytosanitary certification	2024-09_ESG_02_ePhyto Contingency Plan GICSV	IPPC Secretariat
4.2	Other updates		IPPC Secretariat
5.	**Regional updates**		
	Updates of activities in the FAO Regions: - Africa - Asia - Europe - Latin America and Carribean - Near East - North America - Southwest Pacific		Regional representatives
6.	**UNICC updates**		
6.1	XML mapping of the certifying statement of re-export certificates		UNICC
6.2	Other 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 MEETING PARTICIPANT LIST

10 September 2024, 14.00-15.00, Rome Time (UTC+2)

Region / Role	Name / Organization	Email address
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
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