



COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

TWENTIETH SESSION

IPPC EPHYTO SOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE INCLUDING GOVERNANCE STATUS

AGENDA ITEM 13.1.1

(Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat)

Introduction

[1] The harmonization of electronic data exchange is one of the eight Development Agenda Items (DAIs) included in the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020–2030, and entails the following activities:

- Successfully establishing the IPPC ePhyto HUB as the international system for the exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificate information.
- Completing the establishment of the IPPC Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) for the production, sending, and receiving of electronic phytosanitary certificate information.
- Where needed, supporting contracting parties in implementing the ePhyto HUB and the GeNS.
- Investigating the possible incorporation of other databases into the ePhyto HUB or associating them with the electronic certification requirements.
- Establishing pilot projects for new or improved electronic systems.
- Establishing a sustainable funding model and implementing a transparent and efficient mechanism for resource mobilization to support the ePhyto program.

[2] The work program of this DAI, now in its delivery phase, with the first two activities well completed, aims at enabling countries' national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) to exchange ePhytos¹ in a safe, secure, and efficient manner, develop opportunities and improvements while providing a reliable and stable service. Implementation is progressing in line with the implementation plan².

Status Update

[3] As of 30 November 2025, a total of 148 countries were registered (+11 from last year: Malawi, Republic of Türkiye, Somalia, Botswana, Comoros, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Angola, Moldova, Lebanon) on the IPPC ePhyto Solution, with 98 (+6 Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Japan, El Salvador, Angola, Azerbaijan) actively exchanging ePhytos. The system currently processes an average of around two hundred fifty thousand (250,000) ePhytos per month, delivering quantifiable cost savings and indirect resources optimizations for countries, agencies, traders, and operators³.

¹ Electronic phytosanitary certificates.

² [12_SPG_2018_Oct_Rev_01_ePhyto_strategic_implementation_plan_201_2023-2018-09-26.pdf](#)

³ FAO. *Investing in Trade Digitalization: The Case of ePhyto*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). To date, countries exchanging ePhyto are cutting their costs by an estimated USD 3.7 to 83.51 per certificate, which, depending on the scale of trade and the type of product traded, could result in millions of dollars in annual savings.

- [4] In 2025, approximately 22 out of the 72⁴ contracting parties encouraged at CPM-18 to provide a voluntary contribution have done so in 2025, reaching only approximately 50% of the indicative overall target of USD 1,263,000, which allows for the coverage of maintenance costs only through the end of 2027. The dedicated paper proposing revised fees, calculated on the basis of the most recent **2025 data**, is referenced under the CPM-20 (2026) agenda item **13.1.3 IPPC ePhyto Solution funding model**.
- [5] Considering the available resources, constant growth, adoption, and the mission-criticality of the ePhyto services for the trade activities, the IPPC Secretariat revised the ePhyto work plan and team structure to ensure the most efficient and successful implementation of the DAI activities and objectives. This includes establishing a dedicated team, providing proactive and reliable project and budget management; launching initiatives to structure the implementation and solution roadmap; strengthening collaboration with stakeholders, implementing partners, industry, and international organizations; and improving the governance process and transparency.

Governance

- [6] In response to discussions and recommendations from the SPG and the bureau, particularly the need to strengthen, formalize, and better structure governance and change-management processes, as well as to enhance the participation and effectiveness of the ePhyto Steering Group (ESG), the IPPC Secretariat has developed a set of key actions, summarized in table 1.

Table 1. proposed key actions for the ESG

Proposed Action	Expected Outcome	Deliverables
Enhance the functioning of the ESG by appointing two representatives/experts from each region	Strengthened regional engagement, improved participation in ESG meetings and activities, and enhanced consistency in the dissemination of ePhyto-related information.	ESG revised ToRs to be agreed upon by CPM-20. (Appendix 1)
Organize region-specific virtual ePhyto meetings in collaboration with the ESG regional representatives	Increased outreach capacity, supported by the expanded ESG and the IPPC Secretariat; improved implementation, monitoring and support; more effective feedback gathering and clarification of technical inquiries; reduced risk of unilateral interpretations or assessments.	One regional ePhyto virtual meeting organized per year from 2026 for each region.
Revamp the Industry Advisory Group	Increased inclusion of relevant industry stakeholders in governance processes; strengthened mechanisms for collecting industry input; improved opportunities for collaboration and development.	Organize at least two virtual meetings of the Industry Advisory Group per year and maintain a coordinated roadmap for the ePhyto implementation
Define and operationalize the Change Management Process and status	Improved prioritization and planning of development activities by governance bodies; clear delineation of roles and responsibilities in ePhyto Solution oversight; formal categorization of changes to enable rapid maintenance/security interventions while carefully evaluating major enhancements; establishment of a standardized decision-making framework for evaluating change requests. Prioritize and reserve maintenance costs within governance procedures to ensure long-terms continuity and performances of service	ESG endorsed the change management Change management presented to CPM-20 for approval under agenda item 13.1.2.

⁴ Although the funding model considered a total of 88 countries only 72 were qualified for an expected contribution

	delivery, by reserving maintenance costs in advance. Maintain a transparent change roadmap. A centralized repository for proposed solution enhancements, enabling traceability through evaluation, prioritization, approval, and scheduling phases within the governance process.	
Publish regular updates and countries experiences	<i>Quarterly</i> updates shared on the IPP for the whole community and monthly exchanges of experiences from countries.	Updates ⁵ and experience ⁶ s regularly published on the IPP

- [7] The revised ESG Terms of Reference (TOR) are presented in Appendix 1 and enhance the functioning and revisions to the nomination process to align with practices applied by other governing bodies. In particular, the main change concerns the composition of the ESG, with one regional representative from each region and an additional five experts. For the nomination of the regional representatives, the IPPC Secretariat will make a call, and each of the seven Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) regions may devise its own procedures for selecting its regional representatives for both members and replacement members. Their selection is communicated to the IPPC Secretariat through the CPM Bureau member from that region. Concerning the nomination of the experts, the IPPC Secretariat will make a call for experts. The Bureau will also consider the skills and experience of the seven regional representatives and select additional experts to complement them.
- [8] The ESG may approve routine changes within the approved maintenance budget, while major changes require approval by the CPM, in accordance with the **decision-making framework** outlined in the Change Management paper (under the CPM-20 (2026) agenda item **13.1.2 IPPC ePhyto Solution change management and enhancement proposals**).

Implementation Support

- [9] Implementation of the ePhyto Solution is divided into three steps:

Step 1: onboarding

- [10] Support countries in the registration, high-level implementation approach, and introduction to the existing materials and required steps; covered under the maintenance budget of the ePhyto MDTF. During the reporting period, the IPPC Secretariat supported multiple countries in the onboarding and adoption of the IPPC ePhyto Solution, **Japan, Türkiye, Oman, Moldova, the Bahamas, and Guyana**, among others.

Step 2: specialized technical support

- [11] Depending on the identified requirements, typically requiring additional external funds to support countries in non-standard setups and specialized training, etc.
- [12] During the reporting period, specialized technical support was provided to **13 countries in the Southern Africa region**, contributing to increase adoption of the IPPC ePhyto Solution through train-the-trainer workshops and targeted individual support sessions. This support was delivered exclusively in the Southern Africa region and was financed through a dedicated regional initiative (STOSAR II).
- [13] The IPPC Secretariat is developing an **Implementation Package** to standardize the core steps for national onboarding and system adoption. The package is intended to harmonize implementation procedures across countries, enhance predictability, and improve efficiency and timeliness in the

⁵ Latest Program update of October 2025: <https://www.ippc.int/en/ephyto/ippc-ephyto-solution-programme-updates-october-2025/>

⁶ Latest leader blog from the Cook Islands: <https://www.ippc.int/en/news/leaders-blog-cook-islands-a-small-nation-takes-a-big-leap-towards-digitalization-to-transform-trade/>

deployment of the ePhyto Solution. Next steps include the development and refinement of the package through the full-scope implementation projects planned for the coming year, followed by its validation in collaboration with the ESG and subsequent availability to countries and implementers.

Step 3: Overall implementation

- [14] Through external funding spanning up to several thousand USD for a country, including comprehensive and 360 degrees NPPO practices improvements through the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation, the plant Health Campus, the full ePhyto implementation, including interoperability, and purchase of IT equipment.
- [15] The IPPC Secretariat is also expanding implementation support capacity by creating **updated eLearning materials** under the IPPC Plant Health Campus. These resources will provide structured, up-to-date training for NPPOs and other stakeholders, covering key technical, procedural, and regulatory aspects of ePhyto adoption. The objective is to enable countries to independently progress through implementation planning and milestones and strengthen user competence and save IPPC Secretariat staff time and travel costs.
- [16] A new project, with a dedicated funding source and team, for the full implementation of ePhyto across five Central African countries (Chad, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Gabon, Democratic Republic of the Congo) and European Countries has been confirmed by the European Commission. The project, which will start in January 2026 and run for three years, will be implemented under the leadership of Expertise France, with FAO/IPPC, the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as consortium partners. Its main objective is to enhance the NPPO functioning through the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) and digitalize phytosanitary certification processes in Central Africa through the implementation of the ePhyto Solution. Key activities include establishing an operational framework; the implementation of PCE-based assessments to identify capacity gaps and priorities; developing a fully functional ePhyto national capacities for the electronic exchange of phytosanitary certificates, including infrastructure and legal framework; the preparation of operational manuals; the delivery of capacity-building activities combining practical exercises based on real-life operational scenarios and self-paced online training modules made available through the IPPC Plant Health Campus; and providing post-go-live support.

International Cooperation

- [17] The IPPC Secretariat has strengthened the collaboration with international organizations to develop opportunities, improve harmonization and interoperability, and share resources for further implementing the ePhyto solution globally (WTO, STDF, WCO, UNCTAD, Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF), World Bank, Inter-African Phytosanitary Council (AU-IAPSC), African Union, IICA, Expertise France, and many others).
- [18] The African ePhyto Initiative⁷, announced at the CPM last year, is advancing with an initial funding provided by SIDA⁸ and managed by GATF, in addition to the above-described project for Central Africa and the EU. This support enables the implementation of ePhyto in six pilot countries through a standardized and coordinated framework.
- [19] The **Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)**–funded project *Enhancing Multilateral e-Veterinary Certification in Latin America and the Caribbean (STDF/PG/856)*, led by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), is launching. Initial phases of analysis and system design are underway, with the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC) serving as the principal technical provider. The IPPC Secretariat is participating in the project through

⁷ Consortium composed by: IPPC Secretariat, the Inter-African Phytosanitary Council (AU-IAPSC) / African, Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF), Trademark Africa, the STDF, and the International Seed Federation

⁸ The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

its role in advisory committees, contributing technical expertise and facilitating opportunities for harmonization and adaptation of the ePhyto Solution for veterinary certification. This collaboration, when it will be operational, is expected to support increased interoperability and potential cost efficiencies for participating countries, while ensuring alignment with established ePhyto governance processes.

- [20] In parallel, the application of the ePhyto Hub for dairy food certification is undergoing pilot testing between the United States and the European Union. This initiative presents an additional opportunity to extend the reusability of the existing technological infrastructure, reducing the implementation costs of building bilateral and ad hoc connections.

Communication

- [21] In 2025, the IPPC Secretariat carried out a range of outreach and communication activities, including a session at the WTO Public Forum entitled “*The IPPC, ePhyto, and the Future of Digital Plant Trade*” held on 17 September, and participation in FAO’s “*From Seeds to Foods*” exhibition in Rome from 10 to 13 October. During the exhibition, an ePhyto presentation was delivered and supported by a short mime performance. Communication efforts in 2025 also included targeted social media outreach and the development of country case studies, including a recently published from [the Cook Islands](#), and additional case studies currently under preparation by Ecuador and the Bahamas, aimed at showcasing national experiences and lessons learned from ePhyto implementation. In addition, programme updates were published on a quarterly basis⁹ on the IPPC website to provide regular information on progress, key activities, and upcoming milestones of the ePhyto Solution Programme.

Recommendations

- [22] The CPM is *invited* to:
- (1) *note* the continuous growth and success, yearly achievements, restructuring of the dedicated team, increased transparency, standardization of processes and workplan of the IPPC ePhyto Solution;
 - (2) *agree* on the proposed governance improvements;
 - (3) *agree* on the revised terms of reference for the ePhyto Steering Group as per Appendix 1;
 - (4) *note* the creation of the implementation package as a measure to standardize the support for countries using the IPPC ePhyto Solution;
 - (5) *note* the advancement of international cooperation and collaboration through the launch of new comprehensive implementation projects in central Africa, enabling the full implementation of the ePhyto Solution and supporting a 360-degree transformation of NPPOs; and,
 - (6) *note* the progress in international cooperation around piloting the reuse of the ePhyto Solution for other certifications (eVet, dairy product)

⁹ Latest Program update of October 2025: [IPPC ePhyto Solution - PROGRAMME UPDATES October 2025 - International Plant Protection Convention](#)

Appendix 1: Revised terms of reference for the ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) to CPM 20 (2026)

Background and purpose:

CPM 8 (2013) established the ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) to facilitate the implementation of electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhytos) and act as the first governing board defining priorities and details of the ePhyto Solution development and implementation roadmap. The ESG provides coordination, guidance, and advice on IPPC actions to develop and facilitate the harmonized use of electronic phytosanitary certificates and their exchange among contracting parties.

Process:

The IPPC Secretariat will issue call for regional representatives and experts on the IPPC website to allow national and regional plant protection organizations to nominate their representatives and their alternates to be part of the steering group. Nominations will be presented to the CPM Bureau for their review and endorsement.

The ESG will normally meet virtually every two months, with additional or in-person meetings convened as required by the work program. It is expected that the majority of regions will be represented either through meeting attendance or through the review of meeting minutes and supporting documentation.

Membership:

The membership should be both skills- and knowledge-based, with broad geographical and gender representation. The ESG is composed as follows:

- Seven members will be representatives, with extensive knowledge of phytosanitary certification processes from each of the seven FAO regions.
- Up to Five members will be ePhyto and trade facilitation experts (ideally from different regions).
- A Bureau member, who is selected by the Bureau (unless already present in the above members)
- Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) member, who is selected by the IC
- IPPC Secretariat ePhyto Product Manager (responsible for liaising with the technical providers and partners)

The Chair shall be elected by the membership for a three-year term, which may be renewed once. The same three-year term applies to ESG members.

All ESG members should have the time available to actively participate.

The ESG can invite additional experts to deal with specific topics or challenges.

The ESG can invite external observers as required.

The ESG may engage expertise or establish task-specific support arrangements, under its oversight, as required.

The IPPC Secretariat will provide support, coordinate, and facilitate the functions of the ESG.

The following criteria should be used for selecting SG members:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Demonstrated engagement in phytosanitary certification and verification processes at export and/or import level. ○ Proven expert knowledge of ISPMs 12 <i>Phytosanitary certificates</i>, 13 <i>Guidelines for the notification of non-compliance and emergency action</i>, and 7 <i>Phytosanitary certification system</i>. ○ Proven expert knowledge of international standards related to phytosanitary certification and plant products trade regulations. ○ Documented experience working with national phytosanitary certification systems. ○ Documented experience in ePhyto implementation and capacity building. ○ Desirable: Sound understanding of information technology systems, including web services and data communication.
<p>Functions (tasks)</p> <p>The ESG will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify governance issues and recommend solutions to the Bureau for decision; ❖ Identify, prepare for, and support the implementation of technical changes, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ The governance structure model and decision-making framework ➢ Availability of funds ➢ Criticality of the changes, considering the quality of services and security main priorities ➢ Impact of the changes on the final users ➢ Expected benefits of the changes ❖ Monitor the execution of the ePhyto budget against the agreed priorities; ❖ Promote the multilateral vision and use of ePhyto, and actively support and collaborate in maintaining a unified implementation approach and coherent communication among all stakeholders. ❖ Identify implementation requirements of the ePhyto-related ISPM(s); ❖ Regularly review and confirm the official harmonized terms and codes to be used in ePhyto; ❖ Contribute to building capacity amongst contracting parties to implement ePhyto by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Developing standard materials that could be used by contracting parties to support the implementation of ePhyto; ➢ Supporting and collaborating on organizing regular webinars and workshops, dedicated to ePhyto to improve the adoption, sharing of practices, and feedback collection in all the FAO regions ❖ Identify and develop initiatives for ePhyto Solution scaling and sustainability; ❖ Assist the Secretariat in developing proposals to address funding and resource needs; ❖ Identify opportunities for communication, awareness raising and advocacy on ePhyto; ❖ Collaborate on electronic certification initiatives with other international or regional organizations and industry ❖ Other related functions, as identified by CPM
<p>Expected start date and duration:</p> <p>The ESG's program of work and Terms of Reference will be established for three years.</p>
<p>Expected outputs:</p> <p>As identified by the above functions.</p>
<p>Reports:</p> <p>The IPPC Secretariat, on behalf of the ESG, reports to the CPM Bureau and CPM</p>
<p>Funding:</p>

To undertake this work, participants will be self-funded. Where extra-budgetary resources are identified and allocated to ePhyto, the IPPC Secretariat can consider funding assistance for participants who meet specific criteria established by the IPPC for assisting developing countries.

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