



COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

TWENTIETH SESSION

EPHYTO REVIEW OF RECENT INCIDENTS

AGENDA ITEM 13.1.1

(Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat in collaboration with the ESG Chair)

- [1] The IPPC ePhyto Solution continues to expand steadily, with a consistent increase in adoption and in the volume of electronic phytosanitary certificate exchanges. The system is now a critical component of safe and efficient trade between countries. The IPPC Secretariat regularly monitors system performance and maintains close engagement with countries to support the resolution of operational issues as they arise.
- [2] In January 2026, the ePhyto platform experienced over 33 hours of reduced service availability linked to a technical update performed by UNICC to maintain secure connections between the IPPC ePhyto Hub, the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS), and national systems.
- [3] Due to a planned change freeze¹ between service partners, this update was not implemented in time, causing the expiration of the ePhyto Solution public SSL certificate² in early January. As a result, some GeNS users were unable to access the system during a time frame of about 33 hours. While initial measures restored access for most GeNS users, an incomplete configuration caused further disruption for some countries exchanging certificates through the Hub.
- [4] Additional corrective actions were undertaken following further analysis, and the remaining issues were resolved shortly thereafter. Despite the technical fixes, the impact of the incident³ extended over several weeks for a limited number of countries, reflecting differences in national system configurations and local operating environments.
- [5] While the issues affecting users of the GeNS were resolved and verified shortly after the incident was closed, users connected through the ePhyto Hub experienced more prolonged impacts, as resolution required additional corrective actions within some national systems.
- [6] Service reliability is essential to maintaining trust in the IPPC ePhyto Solution. In response to these incidents, the IPPC Secretariat has agreed with the service provider on a set of preventive measures to strengthen coordination, communication, and incident handling going forward. These measures include:
 - (1) **Planning and communication:** All technical interventions, except those required to address emergencies, will be communicated to the IPPC Secretariat at least 2 weeks in advance, announced to countries, and implemented, as per the change management process⁴.

¹ The Change Freeze in IT context is a scheduled, temporary period during which no significant changes, updates, or modifications are allowed to be made to systems, software, or project deliverables.

² is a digital credential that helps keep online communications secure and trustworthy.

³ an unplanned interruption, reduction in quality, or failure of an IT service, component, or application

⁴ CPM 2026/12 Paper : <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/95380/>

- (2) **Exception handling during change freeze periods:** When urgent action is required to prevent service disruption, a change freeze override should be followed by the service provider, provided they are promptly communicated, justified, and executed in line with the existing change management process validation steps.
 - (3) **Clear responsibilities for user support and incident management:** Roles between the IPPC Secretariat and service providers have been clarified to ensure timely identification, escalation, and resolution of service availability issues, including improved handling of user reports regardless of their origin.
 - (4) **Improved management of changes affecting connectivity:** Any change that could affect system connectivity will consider the diversity of national systems. Such changes will be carefully assessed, scheduled, and communicated in advance, with clear guidance to support countries in preparing for them.
- [7] Future updates of this nature, including upcoming security renewals, will follow this strengthened approach and be communicated to countries well ahead of implementation.

Recommendations

- [8] The CPM is invited to:
- (1) *note* the report of the January 2026 incidents.
 - (2) *note* the actions of the secretariat as preventive measures and *make* additional recommendations.