

The Third International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Global Symposium on ePhyto “ePhyto and Trade Facilitation”

**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
22 – 26 January 2018**

The IPPC hosts the 3rd Global ePhyto Symposium as a key event of 2018, with the theme of “ePhyto and Trade Facilitation”. All interested contracting parties are encouraged to attend as this symposium will be a significant activity relating to global ePhyto development, piloting and implementation on par with the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

The Standard and Trade Development Facility (STDF) affiliated with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) approved US \$1 million for the development of global Hub and Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS). The symposium will provide information about the Hub and GeNS implementation and piloting in participating countries with details about connectivity with trade facilitation initiatives.

Host

Malaysia is hosting the ePhyto symposium. Malaysia is a strong candidate due to its recent developments in electronic certification, good Information Technology capacity and world class conference facilities. The benefits associated with proximity to UNESCAP, UNNeXT, who are engaged in the STDF funded ePhyto project, are another positive reason to have the symposium in Malaysia. Malaysia is an affordable and central travel destination for African, European, North and South American delegates.

The Malaysian Government visualised the ASEAN Single Window as an electronic approach to facilitate trade and increase efficiency of the Government delivery system, as presented at the 2nd Global ePhyto Symposium. The single window is a one-stop trade facilitation system linking the trading community with relevant Government agencies and various other trade and logistics parties through one single window, which allows for a seamless and transparent process.

Hosting the symposium in Malaysia will help participants to study their National Single Window (NSW) system currently being used to simplify clearance procedures, facilitate the electronic exchange of trade-related data, and reduce cost of doing business and thereby enhancing trade facilitation and national competitiveness

The Asia & Pacific Plant Protection Commission (APPPC) has the most ePhyto pilot participants (China, Korea, New Zealand, Australia, Sri Lanka and Samoa) with strong interest from Japan and Malaysia. Malaysia participated at the APPPC ePhyto workshop, Bangkok 2014 and the 2nd Global ePhyto Symposium, Korea 2015. Japan also participated in those workshops and co-sponsored the funding proposal for Australia to support ePhyto preparedness in Vietnam. Strong interest from other emerging ePhyto countries in the region like Thailand, Indonesia and The Philippines has been expressed.

Funding and organisation

The APPPC have a budget allocation of USD 40,000 to host a regional ePhyto workshop. These funds can cover hosting and travel costs for all APPPC countries to participate in the global symposium. In June 2017, Australia contributed AUD 75,000 (USD 55,000 approx) to IPPC to support the symposium, and will provide organisational support.

Malaysia will lead the organisation of the symposium assisted by an Organising Committee with representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), IPPC, and

National Plant Protection Organisations (NPPO) from Australia and other APPPC countries. NPPO staff will be engaged to prepare the symposium, moderate the meeting, compile and publish the proceedings.

Timing

The symposium is held from 22-26 January 2018.

Venue

Berjaya Times Square Hotel, 1 Jalan Imbi, 55100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Goals and Objectives

The IPPC ePhyto project has already made significant progress in the APPPC and other Regional Plant Protection Organisations. The overall goals of the global ePhyto symposium is to enable the National Plant Protection Organisations to:

- assess the opportunities and risks associated with electronic certification.
- discuss GeNS and Hub for implementation and piloting in various countries.
- make decisions at a country level about how to prepare for a future with electronic certification.
- develop strong links between ePhyto and trade facilitation.

Achieving these goals would strengthen the regulatory capacities of the countries and facilitate more efficient phytosanitary trade. In particular, the symposium aims at achieving the following objectives:

- Update on international developments in harmonisation of phytosanitary certification and the future opportunities for electronic data exchange.
- Establish an improved and common understanding of ePhyto concepts and technical issues.
- Share and review countries current capacities, needs, and current plans for ePhyto development.
- Identify specific common issues relating to ePhyto that need to be addressed at an international, regional or country level.
- Encourage cooperation among the NPPOs and trade facilitation opportunities.
- Identify opportunities to work together and identify next steps for IPPC and its member countries to undertake ePhyto developments with various NPPOs.
- Develop strong collaborative opportunities between industry groups and similar certification bodies.

Scope

The symposium will focus and discuss the following aspects of electronic certification:

- Strengthen trade facilitation of developing countries by increasing paperless agricultural trade and building the capacity to implement e-SPS.
- International developments of GeNS and Hub by the UNICC under IPPC guidance.
- Discuss progress on GeNS and Hub implementation in participating countries.
- Harmonisation of protocols, terms and codes.
- Legislation and regulations required to enable ePhyto implementation.
- Financial and Infrastructure needs for GeNS implementation.
- Explore funding opportunities for countries to implement ePhyto Solution.
- Communication needs to build a broad and common understanding.
- Identify “Capacity Development Challenges” for countries during GeNS implementation.
- Facilitate inter agency and industry collaboration.

In addition, symposium participants will be able to share their current experiences, plans and concerns with electronic certification. This will assist countries to:

- learn from the experiences of other NPPOS.

- better engage in ePhyto discussions with their own governments and exporters.
- contribute and participate in regional developments and on-going work.

Expected Outputs

The symposium is expected to produce the following outputs:

- Develop knowledge and capacity of countries to use ePhyto for trade facilitation.
- Report on the progress of Hub and GeNS development and piloting.
- A compilation of country specific presentations on current state and future developments.
- Posting of relevant information on the IPPC website for information sharing.
- Recommendations and opportunities for member countries to identify next steps to progress ePhyto and to engage in international consultations.
- A plan identifying actions to be pursued at international, regional and national levels.
- Identify path for collaboration for ePhyto to achieve trade facilitation.
- Publish proceedings of the symposium.

Participants

The symposium aims to bring together senior officials from NPPOs (government departments), officers associated with regionals plant protection bodies (e.g. APPPC, EPPO etc.), senior officers from the IPPC, Codex Alimentarius Commission, United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC), FAO, World Customs Organisation (WCO), WTO, Regional Development Banks, Global Industry Bodies with responsibility for phytosanitary certification, NPPO information technology system officers, International and regional organizations with interests in the development and harmonization of ePhyto. Necessary arrangements have been made to invite peak industry bodies of key plant and plant products industries.

Participants have been invited to provide proposals for paper presentations, workshops/interactive sessions, posters/exhibits, virtual lightning talks, virtual posters, or colloquia addressing theme(s) relevant to ePhyto development.

Work Plan

No	Activities	August	Sept-Oct	Nov-Dec	January	February	March
1	Announcement of the symposium						
3	Invitation to NPPOs and other participants						
4	Confirmation of attendees, and finalization of program						
5	Symposium						
6	Compilation and analysis of output						
7	Writing symposium report and proceedings						

APPPC ePhyto Developments

The IPPC ePhyto project has already made significant progress in the APPPC. Australia has taken the lead on ePhyto development and implementation with developing countries in the Asia/Pacific region.

Listed below are regional developments of the GeNS undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Water resources (DAWR), Australia. The outcomes of this work would be further discussed in detail at the symposium.

- 1). The first workshop for the implementation of GeNS was hosted by the Department of Agriculture in Sri Lanka, in June 2016 with support from Dr Chin Karunaratne (DAWR).
- 2). The first GeNS workshop for Plant Quarantine Service in Samoa was conducted in August 2016 with support from Mr Shane Sela (IPPC), Mr Peter Neimanis and Dr Karunaratne (DAWR).
- 3). In October 2016, the draft Country Reports for Sri Lanka and Samoa detailing their business processes affiliated with phytosanitary process maps were finalised by the DAWR. DAWR has finalised these reports as per the country comments.
- 4). DAWR's work with Sri Lanka and Samoa preparing them to pilot the GeNS in 2017. The work is progressing well and the first Industry Awareness Session (IAS) targeting 400 stakeholders was held in Sri Lanka in December 2016. The first IAS for Samoa was also held in April 2017.
- 5). Benefit Analysis of phytosanitary certification before and after GeNS implementation is initiated by DAWR with the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. This project will facilitate regulation of business processes for countries after GeNS implementation.
- 6). In February 2017, the staff of DAWR (Mr Neimanis and Dr Karunaratne) visited Vietnam to initiate preliminary discussions for ePhyto preparedness for GeNS development as a second tranche of country. Vietnam has shared positive views for the global ePhyto solution by engaging in electronic phytosanitary certification forums with the APPPC countries, and participating in the second IPPC Global ePhyto Symposium held in Korea in 2015. The staff of DAWR are planning to visit Vietnam in August 2017 to undertake workshops in three major cities to discuss the work plan for GeNS implementation.

Background

The IPPC is an international agreement that supports harmonised requirements to prevent the movement of plant pests with traded commodities. Phytosanitary certification is an integral part of the Convention and allows NPPOs to communicate the phytosanitary status of a commodity in trade between exporting and importing countries. The IPPC has adopted the International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) 7 and ISPM 12 to provide harmonised guidance on phytosanitary certification for facilitating safe trade. In 2012, IPPC approved an appendix to ISPM 12 on electronic phytosanitary certification to provide further guidance on the exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificates. Electronic certification facilitates trade by increasing the security and efficiency of government certification processes.

In order to facilitate exchange, the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM), as the governing body of the IPPC, composed of contracting parties has advocated the development of a Hub system for ePhyto exchange. The ePhyto solution is looking to develop a standardised approach to the security and method of exchange, code sets, and message mapping to ensure that all countries are able to easily participate in electronic certification. This process will improve trade between NPPOs and remove the costs associated with individual country agreements for electronic exchange. For instance, a study done in 2014 estimated that each agreement to support electronic exchange between countries could cost as much as US \$50,000.

The ePhyto system consists of two main elements, production and receipt of ePhytos and an exchange mechanism. Exchange may be done through a Hub as proposed under this project. The Hub model is less costly than the existing paper-based methods and will significantly strengthen global harmonisation and adherence to the IPPC standards for phytosanitary certification.

The CPM-8 established an ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) and formulated its terms of reference. Furthermore, CPM-9 (2014) approved the Appendix 1 to ISPM 12 which describes the format and the contents of electronic phytosanitary certificates and their exchanges between NPPOs. A member of the CPM Bureau who provides guidance to the CPM on the strategic direction, financial and operational management, along with a member of the IPPC Secretariat are part of the ESG. These members facilitate two way communication with their respective organisations/groups.

In October 2014, APPPC hosted a workshop on Building Understanding and Preparedness for Electronic Phytosanitary Certification in Thailand. The participants established an APPPC ePhyto Working Group including Thailand, Philippines, Korea, Indonesia, China, Japan, and Malaysia with Australia as the group leader (Chair).

The second global symposium¹ on the implementation of ePhyto was hosted by the Korean Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency in Incheon City, Republic of Korea on 9 to 13 November 2015. About 80 participants attended the symposium, who came from over 50 contracting parties of IPPC along with industry and multinational organisations. The symposium was represented by participants from the Regional Plant Protection Organisations (RPPO), NPPOs, international organisations, plant industry representative organisations, and commercial firms managing electronic trade documents.

ESG submitted a project proposal to the STDF seeking funds to develop global Hub and Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) for ePhyto exchange. CPM-10 (2015) confirmed support for this project proposal and encouraged the Secretariat to implement the project. CPM-12 (2017) supported the continued work of the Secretariat and the ESG under the supervision of the Bureau and requested that the Secretariat report back to the CPM-13 on progress in implementing the ePhyto project. CPM also noted that signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with WCO to cover the common IPPC and customs areas such as ePhyto, e-commerce, sea containers, etc. would be beneficial.

¹ More details of the symposium publications are available at the IPPC web link: <https://www.ippc.int/en/ephyto/the-2nd-ippc-global-symposium-on-ephyto/>.

In October 2015, the STDF approved US \$1 million for the development of global Hub subject to extra supplementary funding of US \$275,000 being available from another donor. Canada funded a full time position to work on ePhyto with IPPC for a period of 3 years (equivalent to US \$500,000). The USA has also committed funding of US \$100,000 to the ePhyto project for at least the next three years. In June 2017, DAWR contributed AU \$575,000 to the IPPC as bridging funds to cover operational costs of the Hub/GeNS prior to long term funding solution is finalised and support hosting of the global ePhyto symposium.

The STDF funds will be utilised for the development of the global Hub and the GeNS as follows:

- a) GeNS for the production, sending and receipt of electronic phytosanitary certificates available to developing countries
- b) A global Hub accessible to NPPOs for the transfer of electronic certificates between them.

The combination of these two systems, referred to as “the ePhyto Solution” will facilitate countries (especially those with limited resources) to start exchanging electronic phytosanitary certificates for exporting and importing consignments. Countries with existing National Systems can also connect to the Hub and begin exchanging electronic certificates via their National Systems. Countries without an existing National System will have access to GeNS which will allow them to issue, send and receive electronic certificates through the Hub. This exchange based upon a single communication protocol will help in reducing costs.

This solution will expedite trade flows and facilitate border management due to ease of information flow and access. After establishment of the system, all contracting parties of the IPPC will be able to communicate phytosanitary assurances in a modern, cost effective, and globally harmonised way. The system would also compatible with existing border information management systems and is expected to build upon such systems (e.g. single window system) where possible. A readiness survey was sent to all IPPC contact points in December 2015 to select countries for an initial pilot phase of the ePhyto project. From the eighty countries that responded, fifteen were initially selected as possible participants in the initial pilot phase. Fourteen countries confirmed their willingness to participate in piloting the Hub via their National Systems or GeNS after implementation.

The ePhyto Industry Advisory Group (IAG) was established to provide practical guidance and advice to the IPPC Secretariat on the design, development and deployment of an ePhyto (electronic phytosanitary certification) Solution. The IAG will also advise the IPPC Secretariat on the feasibility of the project and its ability to facilitate efficient and effective trade flows. The IAG meets on an annual basis or maintains electronic communication.

The ePhyto Project Technical Committee (PTC) is composed of the ePhyto Steering Group, the United Nations International Computing Centre and the IPPC Secretariat. The PTC is providing leadership and guidance to the implementation of a Hub and GeNS. The PTC meets in-person 1 to 3 times per year and communicates electronically on a monthly basis.

The ePhyto Project Advisory Committee (PAC) has been established to link the ePhyto Project to other international initiatives on electronic certification. The PAC provides advice to the PTC on specific issues raised by the PTC and provides guidance on project implementation. The PAC also monitors the delivery of the project based upon the performance indicators specified in the project plan and evaluates project development by reviewing progress reports. The PAC meets on an annual basis or maintains electronic communication. The Terms of Reference for these bodies and associated meeting reports are available in the IPPC website.