Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

International Plant Protection Convention

Meeting Report   **21st January 2018, Kuala Lumpur MA**

Meeting Report of the IPPC ePhyto project Technical Committee, IPPC ePhyto Steering Group, & ePhyto Hub Pilot Countries

Participants:
Walter Alessandrini (AR, pilot contact point)
Heqin Yang (CN, pilot contact point)
Christian Dellis (US, pilot contact point)
Craig Fedchock (IPPC Secretariat)
Nico Horn (NL, pilot contact point)
Peter Neimanis (AU, Chair)
Josiah Syanda (KE)
Younes Kabbab (MAR)
Xia Jingyuan (IPPC Secretary)
Shane Sela (IPPC Secretariat)
Laura Vicaria (IPPC Secretariat)
Venkat Venkateswaran (UNICC)
Gianluca Nuzzo (UNICC)
Yim Kyu-Ock (KR, pilot contact point)
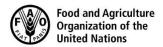
Hub Pilot Contact Points

Peter Johnston (NZ)

Opening of the meeting

The members introduced themselves, including the new Asian representative, Yang Heqin (China).

Secretary Xia made a few opening and welcoming remarks, noting the milestones achieved in 2017 and the excellent work done by the ESG in arranging the 3rd Global Symposium on ePhyto. He then provided an overview of IPPC achievements for 2017 including the emphasis on trade facilitation (2017-IPPC and Trade Facilitation) and the connection with ePhyto; five specific achievements were noted: the development of new standards (22), the development of a trade facilitation action plan, cooperation between international agencies, the International Year of Plant Health, and internal management/reorganization of the IPPC Secretariat.

The chair mentioned how important 2018 will be for the ePhyto project, and noted the increasing amount of work that can be expected, especially with the further development and finalization of the hub, further harmonization on codes and lists used for ePhyto and the rollout of the GeNS. He

noted the need for sufficient resources for sustaining the project. He also noted that thirty-nine countries will be participating in the symposium

Selection of rapporteur

Craig Fedchock was agreed to act as rapporteur.

Review of the agenda

Members reviewed the agenda for the meeting with no immediate changes.

Review of the symposium agenda

The group then moved to a review the symposium agenda.
Day one:

Mr. Peter Neimanis will facilitate the entire day. There was a review of the registration process and a mention of the opening speakers (The Minister of Agriculture, Malaysia will not be attending). As an aside, there was a mention of a limited number of participants coming from Latin America, although other regions are well-represented. Commenting on developing country presentations, the chair noted that the focus will be on implementation issues.
There was an extended discussion concerning the load on the Hub; up to 2 million messages per day is possible, although these need not be exclusive to ePhytos. The Hub presentation will provide an up to the minute status report regarding the current status of exchanges taking place. Additional discussions will take place on the margins regarding this subject.
Day Two:

Nico Horn will facilitate the entire day. Presentations on country preparedness will take place in the morning. Industry presentations will take place in the afternoon, as well as a presentation on emerging trends from UNICC.
Day Three:

Field trips – morning will work focus on understanding the Malaysian MyPhyto system. The afternoon will focus on cultural activities.
Day Four:

Craig Fedchock will facilitate the entire day. Presentations will be provided by the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Standard and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and the World Bank. The members undertook a brief discussion of Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) resources that may be available within the WTO framework. Following the TFA presentations the Symposium will then include a presentation on Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) single window and a presentation on border collaboration. This day also the working group sessions will start.
Group 1 – Business Process Reengineering

All symposium participants will attend the group 1 session regardless of the other session they attend (hub or GeNS). Marta Pardo will be presenting on the legal aspects of implementation at

Group 1. Shane Sela will provided the ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) with an overview of the proposed approach for **Group One** discussion which focused on a presentation on an the implementation guidance being developed with the World Bank Group which will be followed by a group discussion on developing a national vision for ePhyto implementation and the potential national challenges in implementation. The group also discussed what the outcomes should be for the session, noting that there will be different perspectives on vision and challenges depending on the role/country of the person attending.   There was a suggestion that the workshop participants could address six specific topics/concepts in smaller groups leading to the development of national visions.

Group 2 - Hub.

Christian Dellis and Venkat Venkateswaren will lead the session with support from Walter Alessandrini and Younes Kabbab. A live demo of the hub system in operation will be followed by a discussion on the business rules and long-term enhancements. The leaders will encourage discussion on what perceived gaps with regard to the on-boarding process (e.g. are documents sufficient, what is the change management process, how are new terms/statuses added (future needs), etc.). Also to be discussed is how the business (NPPO) and IT collaborate with each other in ensuring that all needs are met.

Group 3 - GeNS

Nico Horn and Gianluca Nuzzo will lead the session with support from Peter Neimanis and Josiah Syanda. The leaders will focus on: current status and development of the system, harmonization of the elements, review of the workflows and what should be added to the system in the future. Industry involvement in the GeNS national operation will be discussed. The discussion will also cover what could prevent a country from selecting the GeNS as an option for use including: workflow/technology and roles, border access to the system, integration with other systems, etc. Emphasis should be that the GeNS is a basic system, a starting point for countries without any system, but it will allow countries to begin exchanging with countries already participating in the Hub and may be very effective in addressing many country's needs over the long term.

Following the presentations, future plans and communications will be discussed by Peter Neimanis. Improved communications are necessary for ensuring ePhyto contacts are fully informed. The group agreed that the Symposium should result in participants leaving with some take home messages and action items to be addressed in country.   Secretary Xia will wrap-up the symposium. Xia noted that the development of a case study would be important to show the benefit of ePhyto, as well as suggesting that the ESG should work with the two SPS organizations to increase harmonization particularly in relation to paperless trade as a component to trade facilitation.

It was noted that Malaysia will draft a report of the symposium.

Contingency plan for the Hub

The group discussed recommendations for Hub failure (e.g. hub itself doesn't work and, sending or receiving country isn't working properly). With respect to technical considerations it was noted that the specifications for operating the hub include requirements for disaster recovery and specified downtimes. It was noted that these are standard for industry and other similar operations and that once the system returns to service all messages will be delivered. Similar standards have

been included for the operation of the GeNS. Should an unscheduled downtime occur, UNICC or the IPPC should notify countries of the situation and the expected recovery. Nationally, countries will need to establish their own plans for dealing with disaster recovery and downtimes unrelated to the hub and GeNS. It was also pointed out that the legal responsibility for the ePhyto has shifted from traders who were responsible for delivering the certificate to its destination, to the NPPO to deliver the ePhyto directly to the NPPO in the importing country. Since paper certificates will be required over the short term, there should be no impacts on trade resulting from a short downtime. The consensus was that each country should have a contingency plan worked out bilaterally.

Harmonization

The discussion focused on ensuring a harmonized approach for exchanges using the developed schema and ensuring that countries follow the mapping as currently set-up. The hub has proven to be effective in carrying out the exchange, but harmonization is the key to countries exchanging messages that can be read and interpreted by both sending and receiving parties. Furthermore, it was recognized that the group needs to define a nimble process for changing information on codes, lists, etc. that is responsive to NPPO and industry needs (e.g. as needed or on-the-fly, but for changes which may have more far reaching impacts on standards, operation of the systems, etc. (such as using a new status or message rejection, brand new field, etc.), there needs to be a more coordinated development and release process. Examples were given of what situation would require what approach. A suggestion was for the collaboration tool on the Hub to be used as a place for discussion and resolution of issues/changes. UNICC informed the group that this is something that is possible will need to be further developed and linked for both systems. This process should be articulated in a policy document. As to who would approve the change, simple changes would be a check-off by the IPPC Secretariat while substantial changes would be overseen by the ESG and if relevant recommended to the Standards Committee for review and endorsement. The types of changes should be classified in order to determine who approves the change. ESG members were encouraged to review the Hub admin console to look at what changes may already be necessary. The group suggested that a small working group should develop the policy which should include:
- A process for making the changes
- A list of potential changes and who is responsible for approval
- A workflow diagram for the change management process.

Venkat and Younes agreed to develop the policy.

Business modeling

Consultant Tom Butterly joined the meeting by conference call. He reported that preliminary recommendations on cost recovery are included in the report. Final recommendations will be presented to CPM 14. He reported that the surveys of users and NPPO resulted in some dramatically different conclusions including that a transaction based model was appropriate to be included in the report even though this had been dismissed previously. He also noted that both users and NPPOs strongly supported the implementation of ePhytos. The estimated initial cost estimates per certificates started at $2.70 going down to $.16 by 2024 without including capacity

development and training costs etc. As had been previously noted by the ESG, numbers for costs were highly speculative and suggested that the pilots should be used to truly determine costs. The ESG agreed that for the first five years, a donor funded approach as described in the report, should be used to fund the Solution. The ESG reiterated that consideration of a transaction based approach failed to consider a number of challenges in applying such a model including administrative costs, difficulties in collection, costs in management of the fund, etc. Since these were not made clear to participants, it was difficult for them to respond to the survey and as a result the conclusion that they supported a transaction-based model was built upon misinformation. The ESG agreed to provide further feedback to the report by mid-February.

Certificate schema validation

The group then discussed how to get countries properly harmonized in using the ePhyto schema and the process to be followed if countries fail to use the schema. A member suggested that UNICC validate the information being exchanged rather than relying on individual countries to validate their certificates before exchange. It was noted that countries had indicated a strong concern with the hub reading the information contained in the certificate and as such, members proposed that a possible validation tool for a country just starting to participate should be developed. UNICC noted that the GeNS will include a schema validation option and this could be used by countries with national systems as well. In the short term during the on-boarding process UNICC working with hub pilot countries can support the validation of new countries schema.

Hub country review of the pilot

The ESG met with representatives of hub countries to obtain feedback on the pilot.
New Zealand noted the following:
- Harmonization of the schema remains a concern. They reported difficulties in meeting the schema initially, but also that a lack of communication between countries, the UNICC and New Zealand made it difficult to harmonize. New Zealand encouraged more proactive communication.
- A defined change management process should be established. The UNICC noted that any issues requiring change are being tracked and reported on. The ESG noted that a change management process is being developed as part of pilot development;
- Guidance and technical documents are helpful;
- A pilot country agreement with UNICC should be established. The IPPC indicated that agreements could not be established on country-by-country basis and that the development of a use policy that would receive adoption by CPM should serve the same purpose;
- Concern regarding the potential implications of hub system failure and requested the establishment of a fail-over process. The ESG noted that they had considered the development of a fail-over process, but that any shutdown would be addressed in keeping with the standards in the operating agreement with IPPC which includes quick recovery. Any messages in the queue would be delivered once the system is returned. Should countries wish to address particular concerns regarding system shutdown, they would need to do so independently or with bilateral trading partners.
- The need for access to examples of XML certificates for comparison.

Korea reported that:
- That they are having no real problems, but suggested having sample XMLs would help in mapping their current certificates to the revised schema developed by the ESG,
- Requested that UNICC assist with renewal of expired security certificates.
- For further harmonization, include a serial number to permit sorting. UNICC agreed to follow-up.

Australia reported that:
- It uses two different systems one for import and one for export. The systems are therefore independent and require independent effort to enact the necessary changes to implement.

Netherlands added the following comments:
- Technically the Hub is working well.
- The experience is similar to that of NZ with regard to communications. There was a general consensus that communications between countries about their exchange during the pilot and better contact point identification are important.

Argentina noted that:
- The Hub is working well
- Following the schema is critical to exchanging certificates that can be read by both the sender and receiver
- The on-boarding process has improved.
- It is a two-day process to connect to the Hub.
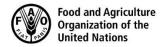- Recommended enhancing the collaboration tool.

The United States provided the following:
- They are exchanging with Argentina and expect to be exchanging with Korea and New Zealand shortly.
- Requested that UNICC develop a web service that shows all the countries actively exchanging and the direction of exchange.

The group discussed the differences between the pilot, exchanges of certificates in the production environment and business as usual operation. UNICC explained that the pilot environment is clearly separate from the production environment. The ESG reported that they viewed the pilot as being a period of testing the technical operability of the hub, which includes testing of dummy certificates in the test environment and exchanges of real certificates in the production environment. Business as usual; operation will commence when the ESG believes that the technical operability of the hub has been confirmed.

Hub country participants and ESG members agreed that ensuring a good level of coordination among the three SPS organizations is also important for future considerations for the hub, given that countries are moving to implement electronic certificates across their agriculture business lines. The group was also informed that the EU is beginning to align its import program, TRACES to the ePhyto mapping. This should allow certificates to go from third countries to TRACES.

The IPPC noted that the individual country reports submitted by hub countries will be collated, responses developed and a final report delivered to countries.

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Meeting Report   **27st January 2018, Kuala Lumpur MA**

Meeting Report of the IPPC ePhyto Project Technical Committee(PTC) & IPPC ePhyto Steering Group
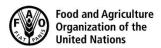
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Younes Kabbab (MAR)
Xia Jingyuan (IPPC Secretary)
Shane Sela (IPPC Secretariat)
Laura Vicaria (IPPC Secretariat)
Venkat Venkateswaran (UNICC)
Gianluca Nuzzo (UNICC)

Meeting adopted the agenda

IPPC Secretary highly recognized and praised the successful organization of the 3rd Global Symposium, and expressed his ideas on ePhyto giving guidelines to ESG members. The Secretary recommends that the focus of ESG should be shifted from development and test of HUB and GeNS to implementation phrase, Terms of Reference and the member structure of ESG need to be reviewed and revised to cater to the monitoring, evaluating, operating, communicating and promoting functions. A strategic planning shall be made to promote the ePhyto solutions.

Review and Outcomes – There was a general consensus that there remains limited knowledge in sub-Saharan Africa on ePhyto; there is a definite need for a Symposium in Africa. It was suggested that there should be one symposium in French and the other in English. Participation of African countries is not always appropriate; the right people might not always attend. Communicating about ePhyto is not adequate; the word is not being distributed adequately and further efforts need to be made to improve this. There needs to be improvements to the ePhyto website, which UNICC lead. Industry needs to be shown the benefit of the system, but it does have a mechanism to distribute information more efficiently than government. The following areas of focus were suggested:
- the need to work with national industry and RPPOs,
- the need to find out the countries that are interested.

- The need of more legal expertise to assist with legislation issues.

The topic of Digital Signatures received significant attention during the Symposium. It was recommended that some clarity should be given to the topic. The ESG agreed to discuss the topic further at their next meeting following the hub pilot and recommendations developed by a working group. The purpose of this group will be to facilitate technical implementation, help UNICC validate technical documents, and to generate a platform for countries to coordinate and cooperate with implementation tasks. UNICC will be developing the terms of reference for this group. Members agreed with the suggestion to have a **Hub/GeNS technical group made up of the technical people from participating countries**. With reference to the digital signature topic, the UNICC will develop a technical paper on this topic and the IPPC will prepare a policy paper on the topic.

The Symposium moved the project to the implementation phase. The Needs/tasks for the PTC were outlined as follows:
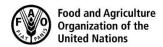- strategic plan for the future (five-year plan)
- monitoring and evaluation
- communication and resource mobilization.

Participants discussed the need to review the Terms of Reference for PTC/ESG as they currently do not cover areas such as how to address changes and selection of members. It further needs to outline the operational mechanism for coordinating with the IAG, IC, SC. **The PTC agreed to review its ToRs and come up with an adequate proposal for moving forward** For the CPM paper, there is a need to include the review of the ToRs and operations.

An issue was raised with regard to the EC TRACES system. ePhyto is global for import and export. TRACES is only for import into the EC. EC needs to work this out among themselves. Africa workshop(s) raised again, one in French, one in English.

A meeting took place on the 23rd of January with the Industry Advisory Group (IAG) and ESG members. Participants recalled that the main outcome of this meeting focused on the further development and steps towards finalizing the Business Model Report as well as **using industry assistance for piloting was considered to be the main resul**t of the meeting. It will try to engage seeds, grains, and cut flowers and develop a case study for use as a benchmark. Shane has methodology that was suggested by the World Bank and will share with the PTC. The Pilot is targeted to take place is March/April. ESG to provide final feedback of the business model report by mid-February.

Hub technical pilot – Prior to the symposium a survey was distributed to all hub pilot countries to gather an understanding of their experience in the pilot and the areas that need further work. This survey will be used to carry out an evaluation of the Hub pilot. The secretariat has provided the PTC with a document with an overview of the responses. It was agreed for the UNICC and the IPPC secretariat to review and provide responses to the issues raised. In general, **feedback has been positive and successful**. All the countries have connected with the exception of Ecuador.

There was general agreement that the Hub should be as simple as possible. The UNICC confirmed that a highlight report will be provided in the next couple of weeks. Final evaluation survey to be drafted and distributed to hub pilot countries by the end of February 2018. Some suggested questions were proposed, and some of those could be included in the work being done with industry. IPPC will develop a clear process (in letter format) to send to countries, on how to become an ePhyto member. Outlining clearly the criteria they must meet before being able to join.

GeNS update – The PTC was provided with an update of the GeNS development. Some things that had been suggested to be included in the system were discussed such as an electronic payments element, reporting issues, integration and interoperability with single windows (API already in the road map). How to discuss security was an issue as well as technical training. Translation as a part of the rollout is important – on user interface – noted as a priority for UNICC developers. The GeNS high level plan was presented with the plan for initiating the pilot set for July. GeNS countries to receive Update Letters with Chair and Josiah cc'd as requested. Last update letters were sent out in November 2017 to GeNS and NPPOS. PTC decided upon a domain name for the URL of the GeNS – country name.ePhytoexchange.org   A logo for ePhyto was decided. It will reach its final design stages by incorporating the **UN blue and IPPC green.**

In discussions on the budget, the group will review the budget document and provide additional input by mid-February.

The PTC reviewed the work plan for the next few months and noted outstanding items; these are noted on the work plan.
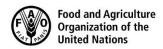
Meeting adjourned.

Action Items

Description	Responsibility	Due Date	Status
Development of Changes Policy: - A process for making the changes - A list of potential changes and who is responsible for approval - A workflow diagram for the change	Younes/Venkat	Not defined	

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management process.			
Review and update ToRs for PTC/ESG	IPPC	Mid Feb	Complete
Cost benefit analysis	IPPC	After GeNS Pilot	
African Symposium(s) proposal	Josiah/ Jounes	End of February	In process
Develop Communication plan	IPPC	Not determined	In process
Development of a technical piece by the UNICC on digital Signatures	UNICC	Not determined	
Develop a Policy Piece by the IPPC on digital signatures	IPPC	Not determined	
Hub/GeNS technical group development of TORS		14 February 2018	In process
Hub/GeNS technical group selection of members	UNICC	April 2018	Still pending
Highlight report of the Hub to be distributed to ESG	UNICC	End of Feb	Still pending
Development of final survey for Hub Pilot and distributed to Pilot countries by the end of February	UNICC/IPPC	End of Feb	In process
Process for joining the Hub needs to be established; prerequisites exist. Very simple – send a letter and get a response with the requirements to be met.	IPPC	Mid Feb	Complete

Share survey results with PTC – to be circulated.	IPPC	Mid March	
Review and comment on the budget document	IPPC	Feb	Complete
ESG to provide final feedback of BM report on OCS system	ESG	Mid Feb	Complete