



ePhyto Factsheet #5

ePhyto Steering Group Newsletter

The second meeting of the ePhyto Steering Group

The ePhyto Steering Group held its second meeting in Wageningen, Netherlands from 30 June to 2 July 2014.

The meeting of the ePhyto Steering Group was hosted by the National Plant Protection Organization of the Netherlands at their head office.

The ePhyto Steering Group was pleased to welcome a new member to the group. Welcome to Mr Josiah Syanda of the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service.

Message from the chair of the ePhyto Steering Group – Nico Horn

"It was my pleasure to host the second meeting of the IPPC ePhyto Steering Group. We had very good discussions with sweets and cookies (luckily not the digital ones) from all over the world. That set the pleasant and hardworking atmosphere of the meeting and contributed to the results. In this Newsletter you will read more on this meeting. We realize that there is a lot of work ahead to make progress with ePhyto.

During the meeting we had experts join our discussions. This made it clear to us that we need much more experts involved than the limited number we have in the Steering Group. So the Steering Group will involve experts from all over the world to ensure progress with ePhyto is a global effort. The more experts are involved, the better the result and the better the understanding of ePhyto worldwide."

ePhyto outcomes from CPM-9 (2014)

CPM-9 approved Appendix 1 to ISPM 12 during its annual meeting in Rome in April 2014. After country consultation and discussions in the Standards Committee, there were no substantial concerns raised by any IPPC contracting parties.

Contracting parties raised detailed questions and made productive suggestions on a range of issues including security; cost; capacity and opportunities for potential support; implications for border controls and transit requirements; implications for free trade; potential co-existence of more than one ePhyto system; standards and compatibility.

Some contracting parties also questioned the legal implications of NPPOs charging for transmission of phytosanitary certification data through an ePhyto system and the IPPC charging for the use of an ePhyto hub.

What is an ePhyto?

- ePhyto is short for "electronic phytosanitary certificate". An ePhyto is the electronic version of a phytosanitary certificate.
- All the information contained in a paper phytosanitary certificate is also detailed in the ePhyto.
- ePhytos can be exchanged electronically between NPPOs.
- ePhytos should be produced in accordance with ISPM 12 and its Appendix 1. ePhytos contain phytosanitary data in XML format.

What is an ePhyto system?

- An ePhyto system is the IT system by which phytosanitary certificates are produced and exchanged electronically between NPPOs.
- ePhyto exchange means the sending and receiving of ePhytos between two countries.
- Point-to-point exchange is when the ePhyto exchange is directly between the NPPO of the exporting country and the NPPO of the importing country.
- Single point exchange is the option when the ePhyto exchange between NPPOs of several exporting countries and NPPOs of several importing countries is through a single location.

Also, importantly the CPM-9:

- 1) *noted* the activities of the ePhyto Steering Group
- 2) *noted* the summary of the ePhyto Hub Feasibility Study provided in CPM 2014/INF/13
- 3) *noted* the recommendations in the summary of the ePhyto Hub Feasibility Study provided in CPM 2014/INF/13
- 4) *supported* the continued work of the ePhyto Steering Group under the oversight of the CPM Bureau
- 5) *encouraged* the ePhyto Steering Group urgently to continue its work including:
 - increasing awareness
 - facilitating capacity development opportunities (with the Capacity Development Committee)
 - finalising procedures for maintenance of harmonised terms, codes and transmission protocols
 - updating transmission protocols and the databases of harmonised terms and codes
 - continuing with the analysis of a possible ePhyto hub taking into account the recommendations in the summary of the ePhyto Hub Feasibility Study provided in CPM 2014/INF/13; and,
- 6) *requested* the CPM Bureau to report back to CPM-10 (2015) on the progress made on ePhyto, including the issues raised by contracting parties referred to above, and providing adequate information to the CPM to make decisions on how to proceed with ePhyto.

Work streams of the ePhyto Steering Group

The ePhyto Steering Group has grouped a number of projects into four main work streams:

- ◆ Harmonisation of terms
- ◆ Hub development
- ◆ Awareness raising
- ◆ Capacity development

The work streams align with discussions and outcomes from the CPM. The ePhyto Steering Group convenes a teleconference every month to ensure progress on work streams.

Harmonization of terms

The harmonization of ePhyto terms is outlined in Appendix 1 to ISPM 12. Harmonisation is important in the development of IT systems to ensure consistency and compatibility.

The ePhyto Steering Group is working on refining existing international lists (eg. Packages and treatment types) to be more phytosanitary specific and align commodity classes with IPPC terminology. The ePhyto Steering Group has also developed procedures to ensure that the lists are subject to revision and kept current.

Benefits of ePhytos

The use of a single global standard, ISPM 12:2011 (Phytosanitary Certificates), for electronic phytosanitary certification (ePhyto) provides a number of benefits, in comparison to paper-based phytosanitary certification, to both exporting and importing countries:

- reduce possibilities for fraudulent documentation
- reduce data entry and validation functions by NPPO staff
- improve security in transmission of certificate documentation
- improve planning for the arrival and clearance of plants and plant products at customs
- reduce delays in receiving replacement phytosanitary certificates
- maximize the investment by building on existing initiatives
- reduce ongoing and costly bilateral arrangements
- ability to link into the World Customs Organization "One Window" initiative and harmonize codes and processes

Hub development

The hub concept is a "single point exchange" where the ePhyto exchange between NPPOs of several exporting countries and NPPOs of several importing countries is through a single location.

The ePhyto Steering Group is preparing a Request for Quote to obtain an accurate costing of a potential hub. The potential hub will serve as a 'virtual post office' where by countries have a single point to send and receive ePhytos.

The CPM is keen to explore the hub option due to the benefits to countries developing ePhyto systems.

Use this link to obtain a copy of the [Hub Feasibility Study](#).

Awareness raising

Raising awareness amongst contracting parties will be critical for the success of the ePhyto concept. To that end, the ePhyto Steering Group will continue to work on a series of fact sheets, standard powerpoint presentations and regional workshops to progress the understanding and support for the ePhyto concept.

Capacity development

Capacity development is important to the implementation of ePhyto to provide assistance to developing countries.

The ePhyto Steering Group is developing a proposal with the IPPC Capacity Development Committee (CDC). The proposal will consider input from regional ePhyto workshops with the aim of securing funding to promote ePhyto globally.

Initial discussions with the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) of the WTO have indicated interest in supporting the ePhyto concept within the IPPC as it aligns with their vision and mission. The ePhyto Steering Group will continue to work with the STDF to determine how the ePhyto project may receive support and funding.

ePhyto discussion at CPM-10 (2015)

The CPM has requested that the ePhyto Steering Group, through the CPM Bureau, report back to CPM-10 specifically on a detailed costing of a potential Hub. The ePhyto Steering Group will also report on all ePhyto developments and will facilitate a side session with demonstrations on ePhyto at CPM10.

Additional resources

The IPPC website has a lot of information on the history of ePhyto development – use the links below to find out more information:

- [IPPC ePhyto – home page](#)
- [IPPC ePhyto – Steering Group and recent developments](#)
- [IPPC ePhyto – codes and schema](#)

Contact us

ePhyto Steering Group

International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 5705 4812 | Fax: +39 06 5705 4819
Email: ippc@fao.org | Web: www.ippc.int