



**ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) and
Project Technical Committee (PTC) Meeting**

Tokyo, Japan

4th-7th of December 2018

Participants:

Walter Alessandrini (AR)
Christian Dellis (US)
Nico Horn (NL)
Peter Neimanis (AU, Chair)
Josiah Syanda (KE)
Younes Kabbab (MA)
Venkat Venkateswaran (UNICC)
Gianluca Nuzzo (UNICC)
Laura Vicaria (IPPC Secretariat)
Craig Fedchock (IPPC Secretariat)

Observers:

Philippe Loopy (EU)
Teppei Shigemi (MAFF)
Natsumi Yamada (MAFF)
Kamibayashi Yuji (MAFF)
Yasuro Funaka (MAFF)

Not Present

Chen Ying (CN)

Opening of the Meeting

The Chair opened the meeting welcoming all participants and observers. He thanked the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) for their hospitality in hosting and funding the ePhyto Steering Group Meeting (ESG).

Mr. Funaka, Director of International Affairs Office of the Plant Protection Division of Japan, welcomed the ESG participants to the meeting and his best wishes for a successful result.



Meeting Arrangements

Josiah Syanda was elected rapporteur and the agenda was adopted. Document list was reviewed and access clarifications was provided, for those who had faced issues.

Recent Developments

Document three of the agenda consisted of an overview of the ePhyto specific meeting report notes of the most recent CPM, Bureau and SPG events, in which the ESG noted that the ePhyto project was viewed positively.

Report from CPM, Bureau, SPG – The Secretariat reviewed the results of the CPM, SPG and Bureau meetings in 2018, noting that the overall perspective and feeling for ePhyto is quite positive. The Secretariat noted that the chair of the IC had some concerns regarding the role of the World Bank on implementing the capacity development aspects of the project. These concerns have hopefully been addressed in new language that specifies the role that the Bank will play vis-à-vis the IPPC; the Bank will defer to the IPPC on phytosanitary issues, and will follow IPPC direction and guidance in the implementation of ISPMs and all other phytosanitary matters. The goal is to develop positive synergies that will facilitate safe trade in plants and plant products. The ESG also discussed presenting ePhyto at the upcoming CPM, donor funding, and prioritization of the next group of countries to access the GeNS. The group agreed that a good assessment of the preparedness of interested countries is necessary in order to filter out those that are not ready right away to access the Hub through the GeNS. Additional discussion covered how French and other overseas territories will work (issuance through TRACES).

Shane Sela the previous project manager had since the last ESG meeting in Dublin left. The ESG noted the limited support at this crucial stage of the project and it was agreed to reach out to the Bureau for an in-kind contribution that could provide support remotely.

Each Regional representative then provided the group with a general overview of the most recent developments in their region:

NAPPO: In October 2018 the annual meeting took place, in which a demonstration of the system was made. In this demonstration the validation tool was emphasized. It went very well. Mexico has shown good progress, but due to political obstacles it may not be ready until March. Canada has also been progressing steadily in building its own system with expectations of completion by early 2019. The Caribbean countries have shown great enthusiasm for the GeNS system and are motivated in a potential ePhyto (GeNS specific) Workshop in July/Aug of 2019. The USA has been involved in Industry Case studies which have gone through smoothly. A more complicated

case is currently in progress, in which a letter of credit is needed. If this goes through it will be a good accomplishment.

Latin America: Argentina hosted in September a very successful regional workshop where countries demonstrated great interest and motivation to form part of ePhyto. This Workshop in fact gave both SENASA and members of the ESG that attended a better understanding of specific country interest- in particular what they are thinking of joining, whether the Hub or the GeNS. Based on feedback we can expect many countries to join the system in early 2019. A report of this workshop is yet to be produced and will be drafted in the early months of 2019. It was further reported that Ecuador is very close to exchanging and that Guatemala had shown interest in using the GeNS once ready.

The African Region: the region remains very interested in having a regional workshop (which is currently in its initial stages of organization and confirmation). South Africa is working on a national system and has a great deal of interest in joining ePhyto. Ghana's participation in the GeNS pilot is moving along, although it is taking a little bit longer than hoped. Zambia, Burundi and Uganda are all also interested in using the GeNS system. Kenya has updated its national system and hopes to begin exchanging (send and receive) beginning in early 2019.

Europe: reported that the Netherlands is doing the most in the region, Russia is trying to begin the process, as is Israel (although mapping is a problem). There are a number of issues relative to imports coming into the EC and the EEC, i.e., who gets the certificate – the importing port country or the final destination which may change to another country than the one initially sent to. In his new capacity as the head of EPPO, Nico will set up an EPPO ePhyto coordination committee. With new EU legislation coming into force in 2019, the expectation is that the number of phytos required will raise drastically. The EU also provided an update on the TRACES system. 4 years ago a phyto pilot was launched. A new platform is opened since 2018 and all entry phytos will be mandatory in TRACES by end of 2019. 13 countries have now joined the system, and another 16 will be ready by the summer of 2020. The hope is that by the summer of 2019, the phyto portion will have all countries using it. Countries are being allowed to electronically sign documents where needed but an electronic certificate toward EU must be signed to replace the paper. Europe also made a request to have a test of an interface between TRACES and the Hub. The use of TRACES for export will be optional for member states but the transmission through a single EU connection point to ePHYTO mandatory.

Near East: Morocco is going connect to the Hub through a specific project funded by Global Alliance and will be working with UNICC. Jordan intends to use the GeNS system, but the country

is not yet ready. Oman is interested in potentially hosting the NENA workshop on ePhyto, but they have not clarified this position. To stimulate interest, Morocco will give a demonstration of the ePhyto GeNS. Communications continue to go back and forth for the Near East Africa workshop. It was decided for the dates of the NENA workshop to be shifted to April 16-17 2019 based on a reassessment of the project proposal and its budget. The ESG will also meet at this location on either the front or back margins of the workshop (this is yet to be decided).

The Southwest Pacific: due to system delays Australia has faced some difficulties and will not be ready to exchange in production until mid 2019. Regionally countries have shown interest and dedication to the system. China continues to work on their mapping. Samoa and Sri Lanka have recently began testing out the GeNS. India has also began to actively engage. The APPPC workshop which will take place the week after this meeting will provide a clear picture of where countries stand vis a vis the Hub. ASEAN single window remains a challenge, but the intent is for the single window to connect to the Hub.

Finalization of Key Reports

The strategic Implementation Plan: a report drafted to provide a strategic overview for the next five years as the project reaches its final stages and the system becomes independent. This document was drafted and distributed to the ESG in several occasions and at this stage a final discussion took place to finalize it and stamp it ready for CPM14. The ESG reviewed the documents and provided feedback and recommendations which were directly applied. One key point that was agreed on was the need to allocate a team to push the strategic plan through. The document was edited and modified directly. Its revised version will be sent to the ESG on the 17th of December and open for final feedback until mid January.

The Donor Engagement Strategy: The donor engagement strategy is a subtext of the Strategic Implementation Plan discussed above. The document provides a financial overview of the funds that will be required as well as the methods recommended to encourage donor engagement. The ESG was informed that the Secretariat had sent out a funding appeal, but that no response had yet been received. A second appeal specific to ePhyto has been drafted out but not yet sent. The Secretariat will be sharing this document with the ESG for revision. It was suggested to ask the main hub countries to contribute a small amount of 50K, highlighting that at this stage the main focus will be on covering the operational funding requirements. Industry as a potential contributor was also discussed. It was recommended that to avoid bias any contribution should be made through the Industry Advisory Group (IAG) as a group. One important element to the interaction with donors is the reporting back. ESG members (some who are donor countries themselves) strongly highlighted the importance of reporting back to donors on the expenditure of their contribution. The IPPC secretariat confirmed that they will be reporting back to donors as recommended. The revised document will be distributed to the ESG for final revision, with feedback deadline of mid January 2019.

Communications Strategy: the communications strategy is a subtext of the Strategic Implementation Plan discussed above. The objective of this strategy is to outline clear communication goals and approach to ensure maximum engagement and understanding (both from a technical and business perspective) of the ePhyto Solution System. The ESG agreed on the set up of ePhyto Specific Wikipedia page and LinkedIn. These will be set up in the early months of 2019. This was the first official draft of the document and was discussed in detail with the ESG members. Their comments and recommendations were noted. The revised document will be distributed to the ESG for final revision, with feedback deadline of mid January 2019.

Hub Development:

The IPPC ePhyto Hub has been in operation and service since the summer of 2018. At the time of the meeting over 26 countries had registered to use the Hub and were either onboarding or in production. The discussion therefore focused on areas related to technical implementation, the status of registered countries and the progress and characteristics of the validation tool.

The UNICC provides a monthly report to provide the ESG with a progress overview of the system. The structure and content review of this report was discussed. Based on the discussion regarding the report and also the Hub Consul the following action items and decisions were agreed on.

Action: Secretariat to follow up on countries that have registered but have not yet received their approval

Action: Secretariat to send the UNICC the list of countries that are not officially UN recognized and therefore should not be on the list.

Decision: with reference to the Hub console display, it should be made more informative and all countries should be requested to review their settings. Thus changing the overview to ability to send and receive

Decision: change the display from “certificates” to “messages

Decision: to add to the hub consul a note that if you plant to register for the GeNS you do not have to register for the Hub- as it will be done automatically.

The UNICC reviewed the list of enhancements that had been recently applied. The recommendation of a landing page where users were directed to the HuB and GeNS was presented. The ESG agreed to this approach and further suggested that the IPPC ePhyto page should be directed to the landing place once ready. The New landing page will be the source of all information and access to the system.

The ESG reviewed the progress of the validation tool and harmonization target. Some modifications to the mapping were discussed referring to attachments and the date of the certificate and its replacement.

With reference to code management, the global list has been imported onto the Hub. As new codes are added The ESG was posed the question on how to manage the updating of this list. It was

agreed that every six months the UNICC (via use of a logarithm) will retrieve all newly added codes, these will be reviewed and approved by the ESG and then added to the global list.

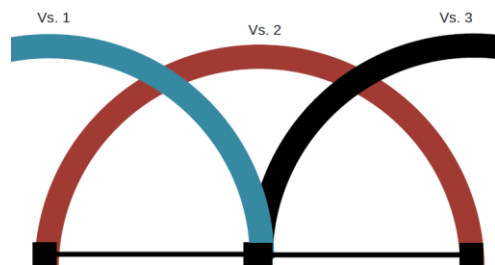
The discussion of change management regarding versions of the Hub resulted in a lengthy discussion. The UNICC proposed to manage changes on a once a year basis with the ability of the Hub to support only two versions at a time (View illustration: Hub Version Support). The following decisions were based on this discussion:

- The system will maintain two versions (the newest and the latest) you can only move to the next version once all countries have adopted the newest version.
- Changes will be presented in a paper in CPM- approved and then each country has a years time to adjust.
- The envelopes need to now display the version numbers that each country is using

It was agreed that further detailed discussion of the above agreed terms is needed at the next ESG. The UNICC presented a recommended workflow for change management based on identifying standard change and non standard change. The ESG reviewed this workflow, provided feedback and approved. This workflow will be uploaded on the exchange site and the ePhyto general platform. Final workflow in Appendix I.

[\(Power Point available here\)](#)

Illustration: Hub Version Support



With reference to the discussion of how system version should alternate, the above illustration depicts the support of two system version at the time. The ESG agreed on this approach.

[\(Power Point full overview of feature changes available here\)](#)

Harmonization of Product Description

The product description list, while drafted, is not being used by the countries. Countries were encouraged to use the codes. The ESG agreed for these code lists to be translated.

Decision: the list of codes, should be used to guide users, and for more to be added based on GeNS use



EU Legislation for Electronic certificates

The observer from the European Commission (EC) reviewed the latest information regarding the upcoming implementation for electronic certification. In addition, the EC observer informed the ESG of his role within the UNCEFACT as well as his membership on the OIE eCert effort. He affirmed his willingness to work with both groups to ensure ePhyto activities and processes are taken into full consideration in terms of developing synergies and cost-effective measures. He additionally volunteered to work with the World Customs Organization on ePhyto-data model interoperability activities.

New Operations (accept, reject, non-compliance)

the group noted that the UNCEFACT numbering system has eliminated “657” for re-export certificate. The EC observer volunteered to take the initiative to interact with the UNCEFACT to initiate work to make the necessary changes. After review of UNCEFACT, the group learned that the link for the mapping was to the wrong list. Problem has been solved, although there is a need for a new code for non-compliance. Work will continue on this topic for further review by the group.

Digital Signature

The topic of digital signatures has been on the table for some time, and its inclusion in the ePhyto System debated significantly. In order to take a step forward in the decision towards this feature the UNICC will be preparing a paper on this topic, outlining its pros and cons and options. However EU and other countries require electronic signature to enable paperless phytosanitary transactions. EU proposes a pilot on digital signature for both HUB and GeNS.

The GeNS

The Generic ePhyto National System, is functional and available for pilot countries to initiate their pre-pilot phase. The releases at this stage include NPPO perspective, ePhyto Management and Trader perspective. The pilot countries (Ghana, Samoa and Sri Lanka) have been on boarded and are currently running the pre-pilot phase. The countries have been provided the customization document, the training material and user guide. It was agreed for the UNICC to draft an easy guide on certificate process.

The UNICC ran a demonstration of the system, explaining its structure and operations. The ESG provided feedback and recommendations on individual features of the system. The follow specific system decisions were made:

- Understanding of the term Applicant organization: organization users (admin) – which are added, separately there are exporters- this is not a role but an entity

- Process: the NPPO approves the admin organization, as user of the system. The admin user or the NPPO(this is up to each country) approve the added exporters
- Creation of a local entry should have mandatory English language.
- Glossary to be developed outlining the different roles in the system and their relation

The GeNS Pilot was discussed in detail. The UNICC clarified that the pre pilot phased consisted on the countries testing in UAT. Once the pilot countries move into testing in production, this becomes the pilot phase. The time frame of the pre-pilot and pilot phase is likely to go from November 2018 to February 2019. In terms of the evaluation process, the UNICC will carry out an evaluation against the specifications document (internal evaluation before going into production). The ESG will then also write an evaluation report based on the evaluation criteria that were developed. Based on this objective the need for a questionnaire to be drafted and circulated to pilot countries to gather their feedback was identified.

Industry Advisory Group

The Chair of the ePhyto Industry Advisory Group (IAG) joined participants via phone. She provided an overview of the current progress of the Industry Case studies, explaining that at that given stage there had been three gain case studies and one seed case study. The feedback at this early stage had been positive. A minimal obstacle that has been observed in the process is the hesitation from personnel on treating and using ePhytos. Thus some time will need to be dedicated to train staff accordingly. The IAG chair also informed the ESG of the communications campaign that was agreed up in the last IAG conference call. In collaboration with the Secretariat content will be developed for the IAG to use and distribute among their contacts with the objective to generate more understanding about ePhyto and primarily drive involvement in the case study. Further to this is also the understanding that industry can shape significantly government policies, a factor that is being taken into account when looking at ePhyto and the communications campaign that is in development. It was agreed for a folder contain key texts and documents to be shared with the IAG and ABCD participants for background information.

The IAG Chair informed the ESG about the ABCD's meeting taking place in Geneva Switzerland on the 31th of January. The IAG meeting in parallel to that was discussed. The ESG had provided input to the draft agenda would be shared with the IAG members for further revision. It was agreed for the strategic plan to be circulated to the IAG for further input.

The ESG reviewed the IAG Case study questions and made multiple modifications. The new set of questions were template and shared with the IAG Chair for further feedback. Further action and distribution is needed but will be defined at a later stage. The tracking and data collection behind these surveys requires clarification and further discussion, which will take place at the IAG meeting on the 30th of January.

Independent Mid-Term Review

As part of the project requirements set forth by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), specific terms of reference (TORs) are required for the undertaking of a mid-term review



of the project. This TOR was drafted and shared with the ESG for review. The ESG discussed the document and provided feedback. The Secretariat will modify the document based on feedback and distribute for final feedback in mid December.

Capacity Development/ Implementation

The ESG/PTC discussed implementation guides development. The process in general will make use of the documentation already available.

Inter agency collaboration

Due to technical difficulties it was not possible to connect to with the agency representatives.

The secretariat provided an overview of their efforts:

WCO: the Secretariat has signed a memorandum of cooperation with the WCO. The ePhyto team specifically has been working with them for the past few months in effort to investigate opportunities of alignment.

ASEAN SW: the Secretariat invited an ASEAN representative to the PAC meeting in the summer of 2018. Since then a letter of cooperation has been sent to them to further advance cooperation. No response has yet been received.

ePhyto Communications Content

The ESG/PTC conducted lengthy discussions on communications. Significant comments were contributed to ePhyto social media presence. The development of a LinkedIn and Wikipedia ePhyto specific account was approved. Participants identified the need to make a clear identification of the different groups and the type of content they should receiving (pilot countries, registered countries, NPPOS, IAG, PAC, ESG ect).

The ePhyto website needs to be renovated and its content revised. It was agreed that the secretariat in collaboration with the UNICC will develop a plan for re-design of the site- with the ePhyto main page remaining under IPPC and the rest directing to a specific UNICC ePhyto site. The ESG agreed to include donor recognition on the website- acknowledging that with industry this needs to be done with caution. The group provided significant input into the proposed ePhyto video, reviewing the storyboard presentation and providing significant positive editorial comments and suggestions. The story board will be re-designed based on feedback and shared with the ESG for a final review. The IAG and PAC will also be involved in this final review.

Regional Workshop

The secretariat in cooperation with the NENA representatives of the ESG has been working in advancing the organization of an ePhyto NENA workshop in Oman. The project proposal has been sent over to the ministry representatives. A reply is expected in the coming weeks. Following some prior budget concerns the proposal was reviewed. The workshop was shortened and the budget reviewed. Furthermore the ESG agreed for the workshop to take place on the 16-17 of April of



2019. Once a reply from the ministry is received further logistical organization meetings will be arranged.

Budget

The IPPC presented a financial update which noted that overall funds remaining for the project stood at approximately \$705,000. UNICC informed that there will be an estimated \$130,000 carryover of funds from the contract which will be applied to next year's expenses. After a detailed review of the budget, the ESG/PTC made a strong request for better clarity in the budget presentation which the Secretariat promised to provide by mid-January.

Work Plan

The work tracked was discussed and reviewed by the ESG. The updated and cleaned up version of the work-tracker will be shared with the ESG for final review and direct access in mid-December.

Closing

The meeting concluded with the chair thanking all participants for their time and dedication to the ePhyto Solution project. Following the confirmation of the NENA workshop the next ESG meeting collation will also be determined.



Action List

Action Item	Owner	Due Date	Status
Reach out to Bureau for contribution to balance ephyto team support	IPPC		Pending
Determine a set of criteria and instruction on how to join the GeNS- a "How to Join the GeNs" Document for the IPPC site	Laura and Peter		Pending
The pre-requisites of the GeNS to be shared as these would be useful for the GeNS workshop in the Caribbean (linked with the above task)	UNICC/ Peter/Laura		Pending
Latin America Workshop Report	Alessandrini		
Follow up on South African Registration	Josiah	-	Complete
Strategic Implementation Plan – Craig to distribute to ESG for feedback. ESG to provide feedback by mid January	Craig /ESG	Mid January (Feedback)	Complete
ePhyto Funding Appeal to be share with the ESG for input	Craig	ASAP	Pending
IPPC to report back to donor countries on contribution expenditure	Craig		Pending
Donor Engagement strategy – Craig to distribute to ESG for feedback. ESG to provide feedback by mid January	Craig /January	Mid January (Feedback)	Complete
Philippe to send information regarding the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation.	Philippe	ASAP	Pending
Communications strategy – Laura to distribute to ESG for feedback. ESG to provide feedback by mid January	Laura/ESG	Mid January (feedback)	Complete
Set up Wikipedia and LinkedIn pages for ePhyto	Laura	By early Feb	Complete
Secretariat to follow up on countries that have registered but have not yet received their approval	Secretariat		Progress
Secretariat to send the UNICC the list of countries that are not officially UN recognized and therefore should not be on the list.			Pending
Product Code list to be translated	Secretariat		Progress
UNICC to provide paper on the digital signature	UNICC	Mid Feb	Pending
UNICC to draft an easy guide of certificate process with their status	UNICC		Pending
UNICC to draft a glossary on the different roles in the system and their relation	UNICC		Pending



UNICC to carry out GeNS evaluation against system Specifications	UNICC		Pending
ESG to write GeNS evaluation report based on Evaluation criteria previously drafted	Secretariat		Pending
Questionnaire for GeNS evaluation to be 1.drafted and approved 2. circulated to GeNS pilot countries for approval	Secretariat/ ESG		Pending
IAG draft agenda to be shared with IAG for input	Laura	Asap	Complete
Strategic Implementation Plan to be shared with IAG for input	Craig		Complete
Provide folder with ePhyto information to IAG/BCDs	Laura	Before IAG meeting	Complete
Distribute mid term review TOR to the ESG for final review	Craig	Mid Jan	Progress
Hiring of consultant to carry out the review	Craig	Mid Jan	Pending
The IAG case study content needs to be posted on the collaboration tool	UNICC/ Vicaria		Pending
Re-design of ePhyto Website	UNICC/Vicaria		Progress
ePhyto Video to be redrafted based on feedback	Vicaria		Complete
Second draft of video storyboard to be shared with ESG/PAC/IAG for final review	Vicaria		Decision change to have final approval by Secretariat and ESG Chair- Complete
Reviewed ePhyto budget to be sent to the ESG	Craig	Mid January	Pending
Work-tracker to be shared with the ESG	Vicaria	Mid December	Complete

APPENDIX I

