



**ePhyto Project Advisory Committee Meeting
World Trade Organization
Geneva, CH
29th January 2019**

Participants

Members	Observers	IPPC Secretariat
Barbara Cooper (Chair)	Simon Padilla (STDF)	Craig Fedchock
Bill Gain (World Bank)	Alejandra Danielson Castillo (IGTC)	Laura Vicaria
Shane Sela (World Bank)		
Diana Tellechea (OIE)	Andres Von Felten (Federal office for Agriculture, CH)	
Tojo Kusuma (WCO)	Cindy Squires (International Wood Production Association)	
Peter Neimanis (ESG Chair)		
Benno Slot (Netherlands Food and Consumer product Safety Authority)		
Philippe Loopuyt (European Commission)		

Opening of the meeting:

The Chair opened the meetings and thanked all present for their participation. Brief introductions were made, the agenda and document list were reviewed. The discussion of the closure of the STDF project was added to the agenda.

Progress on the ePhyto Solution project

The secretariat presented on the main advancements of the ePhyto project since the last PAC meeting in the summer of 2018. The main topics consisted of;

- The Hub being fully operational in June of 2018, with a current status of 26 registered countries
- The G-20 endorsement of the IPPC's efforts in building the ePhyto System
- The IPPC ePhyto Global Symposium that took place in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia
- The Latin America Workshop which took place in Argentina with 18 country representatives
- The Asia Pacific Workshop which took place in Tokyo with 28 country representatives
- The Generic ePhyto National System entering its pre-pilot phase including pilot countries Samoa, Sri Lanka and Ghana

A demo of the GeNS was given, outlining the system characteristics and its simplicity of use.

There was general discussion about the above advancements. The chair highlighted that the ultimate goal is to go paperless, acknowledging of course that convincing countries to abandoned paper will be challenging particularly since many other trade documents are not yet at this stage nor are many



industries able to use electronic data in support of trade requirements for a paper certificate. The World Bank representatives also commented that many African countries will benefit from the development of a mobile application given the widespread reliance on data over wired and wireless internet services in Africa. They encouraged its development. This was noted by the Secretariat, acknowledging that the completion of the GeNS pilot is the priority at this stage and once finished additional features such as the mobile app will be discussed in more detail.

The STDF project timeline of the ePhyto Solution system is set for November 2019. The Secretariat was confident that the project will be ready for closure by that time. The STDF representative clarified that an extension (if needed) was possible upon request. The Secretariat will follow up on the latter after the submission of the June 2019 project progress report, when there will be more clarity on the number of countries working in production, and thus the reality of being able to close the project by the expected date in November 2019.

The ePhyto 5 year Strategic Plan

The Secretariat has drafted the IPPC ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan 2019-2023 with the purpose of outlining the main objectives to ensure the sustainable operation of the ePhyto system as it completes its project phase and goes into operation. This document has been circulated several times and is reaching its final draft form. The document will be presented at CPM 14 for approval. The PAC discussed the strategic plan in detail focusing primarily on the funding challenges ahead. The World Bank noted that it is working with the IPPC Secretariat to develop a memorandum of understanding that would assist the Secretariat in implementing ePhyto in developing and least developed countries as part of broader collaboration on trade facilitation. The World Bank reported that it will look to obtain donor support for the work. It was suggested the the Secretariat should actively seek commitments for donor support from developed countries to support the ongoing sustained operation of the system.

Participants felt that this would incentivise further financial support from other countries and industry. It was further recommended to include industry objectives into the funding model. The model should also incorporate other certificate agencies that may join in the long run. The discussion related to the funding challenges concluded with the recognition that only once the project was finished and clear evidence of its benefits will become available can effective advocacy efforts initiate.

The STDF highlighted, that the main challenge is the sustainability of the project after it has been completed. This is essential and needs to be defined. What the STDF wants to see is the 5 year strategic plan approved at CPM14 but also see some evidence of how the outlined objectives will be insured, by applying methods such as the MOU suggested above.

In reference to the section on governance, it was agreed that further clarity is needed, stating that the PAC will be dissolved by the end of the project and that a separate committee of cooperation is essential to maintaining the sustainability of the ePhyto Solution and in ensuring that the synergies needed in advancing electronic certificates continue to be maintained over time. The STDF agreed to review its potential leadership in maintaining a coordination committee [Action Item]. A modified Strategic Plan will be circulated to the PAC for final review [Action Item].



Ongoing work with the Industry Advisory Group (IAG)

The Industry Advisory Group has been working hard on executing a set of case studies that aim to analyse the commercial, customs and regulatory impacts of implementing the ePhyto Solution. The objective of these case studies is to highlight the areas that need further improvement but also to gather data that will demonstrate the benefits of the ePhyto solution.

The Secretariat briefly shared with the group the document that AIFS has shared with them on collecting such feedback.

The IAG chair, present as an observer at the PAC meeting, provided a brief overview of their current findings. The majority of the case studies at this stage are in grain, with the exception of one seed case study. The IAG chair reflected on the current feedback method, based on their recent experience in order to obtain fruitful answers from phone calls and the needed consistent follow up. This is a process that is time-consuming and needs to be reviewed. Participants also identified the need to determine the time frame of the case studies, and how many case studies in total would be needed to complete the analysis.

The chair suggested that perhaps it is a question of rethinking about the objective and the aim behind the case study. This may then perhaps reshape the approach that we are taking. We were reminded that the objective of the case study was also to be able to quantify the benefits of the system. The PAC acknowledged the work of the IAG in advancing the case studies. The PAC made the recommendation for the IAG to wait until more countries joined the production level of registration before participating in more case studies, as current flows are repetitive. However, if industries approaches IAG with interest to perform case studies, regardless of flows and countries, case studies will continue. Further to this the PAC also encouraged the IAG to carry out case studies reflecting the manual process in order to have a benchmark as the case studies go forward. The IAG chair took these recommendations in consideration and will be discussing them further at the upcoming IAG meeting taking place the following day. The IAG chair also ensured that proper reporting of these funds will be determined.

With reference to ePhyto communications efforts, the IAG chair presented the newly drafted IAG case study fact sheet that was developed in collaboration with the Secretariat. The PAC reacted positively towards this factsheet and recommended that it gets finalized quickly for further distribution and advocacy efforts. The IAG reiterated its interest and motivation to speak about ePhyto in their separate meetings sharing the latter discussed fact sheet but also any other form of presentations that will be developed in the near future. Referring to the upcoming CPM in April of 2019, it was recommended for the IAG to speak at set event.

Future of the PAC

The ePhyto Solution Project will be completed and closed on 30 November 2019. The PAC was a committee set up based on the requirement of the project plan. The objective of the PAC was to ensure the integration of the electronic community and their collaboration in the development of the ePhyto Solution. Based on the TORS of the project, the existence of this committee will remain until the end of the project. It was highlighted that the PAC provides a strong governance role in ensuring ongoing



collaboration on electronic initiatives and also provides a means to ensure sustainability of the ePhyto Solution. It was proposed that the committee could be restored following the project term.

The STDF representative highlighted that they are currently exploring the possibility of setting up a working group specific to electronic certification. Participants recognized that this would be a good space for future collaboration and coordination between the work of Codex and the OIE (in the area of eCert) and the ePhyto Solution, after project completion. The PAC recommended the development of a renewed Committee modeled on the PAC and under the auspices of the STDF, and encouraged the Secretariat to make this recommendation in its final report. The STDF representative will be following up on this matter once a final decision is made [Action Item].

Work by other international organizations

CITES- CITES representative was not able to attend in person. [A brief report was provided](#)

TRACES - Significant efforts has been ongoing to connect to the Hub. It was estimated for the connection to be completed by the end of the year. In the coming weeks further discussion with the technical teams will take place to identify the best form of connection (per country or the whole EU). Discussions with the WCO and UNCEFACT have taken place to work together to align with each other and ePhyto. A committee to drive this form of collaboration will be set up.

WCO – the WCO and the IPPC have been working to align the data model. Several calls have been set up to facilitate this process and identify the areas of alignment between the two projects. In addition to this the IPPC and the WCO have also signed an MOU to drive further collaboration between the two organizations. The WCO will be sending the IPPC a set of questions to close gaps previously identified. Future calls have been recommended to be set up after the distribution of these questions.

CODEX - the CCFICS Working Group is developing a guideline on paperless certification that generally outlines the process of using a harmonized electronic certificates. This document is still under development.

OIE- The OIE has recently received funding from the STDF to undertake an analysis of what its member countries may need in order to implement electronic veterinary certification. As part of this project, 12 countries (6 developed and 6 developing) have been selected for an assessment of needs. A steering committee of countries and organizations has been established. They all met in July 2018 where an implementation plan was agreed. A set of surveys were identified, covering all 12 countries. It was further explained that a consultant will be drafting a set of recommendations based on the output of these survey.

UNCEFACT - As previously mentioned the UNCEFACT is collaborating with the WCO for further alignment. Further to this, there has been significant effort in the development of the conformity certificate and its mapping development.

Any Other Business



The Australian representatives (ESG chair and PAC chair) spoke about their efforts to test a non phyto commodity exchange through the Hub. This exchange would take place between Australia and New Zealand. It was announced that a document will be drafted and share with the PAC regarding this trial, in order to obtain approval on whether or not to go forward with the trial [Action Item].

Date and Venue of the Next meeting

The PAC decided that by the completion of the next STDF report in June 2019 , depending on its outcome and the advancement of the project by that stage, will the need for a PAC meeting be determined. This June report will also determine if a project extension is needed.

Closing of the Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their participation. The meeting was adjourned.

Action Items:

Action	Owner	Status
Strategic plan to be modified to include text referring to the governance, clearly outlining that the PAC will be dissolved and a separate committee of cooperation is encouraged to be established.	Fedchock	
Modified Strategic Plan to be circulated to the PAC for final review.	Fedchock	
STDF to follow up on the set up of a working group specific to electronic certification, under the auspices of the STDF.	Padilla	
Paper related to non-phyto exchange through the Hub between Australia and New Zealand to be distributed the PAC for approval.	Cooper	