Report from the APPPC ePhyto Working Group to CPM10

ePhyto developments within the APPPC

The APPPC hosted a Workshop on Building Understanding and Preparedness for Electronic Phytosanitary Certification in Bangkok, Thailand in October, 2014. The objectives of the workshop were to discuss the opportunities and risks of electronic certification and provide information to allow country level decisions about how to prepare for future implementation of electronic certification. The workshop was well patronised with over forty officials from twenty countries from the region participated in this meeting. Country participants ranged from IT experts, phytosanitary experts and departmental executives. Experts from the Netherlands and the IPPC Secretariat also attended. Participants were required to submit a completed survey prior to the workshop.

The workshop covered:

1. Introduction to ePhyto
2. Common concepts, terms and definitions (including the Hub concept)
3. Country reports
4. Report on survey results
5. Successes, challenges and new emerging issues
6. Harmonisation of data requirements and transmission protocols
7. Preparation and implementation of ISPM 12 Appendix 1
8. Legislative and regulatory requirements
9. Infrastructure requirements
10. Communication and capacity development challenges
11. Next steps and action plan

The work of CPM and the IPPC ePhyto Steering group was specifically noted.

The results of the APPPC ePhyto survey highlighted that the Asian Pacific region already has a high uptake and development of electronic certification solutions. Of particular note, 10 countries have a system to electronically produce phytosanitary certificates; 5 countries can send ePhytos; 5 countries can receive ePhytos (not all the same countries); 14 countries are interested in model legislation; and 12 countries are interested in a generic domestic ePhyto system.

The discussion continued with a detailed analysis of the results under the following headings:
- benefits: inc. security of documents, more rapid information transfer
- obstacles: inc. possible problems re compatibility with single window systems, need for legislation changes in some countries
- industry's role: inc, need for enhanced public awareness and participation in systems design
- constraints to the hub: inc, security not clear, costs not estimated yet
- elements of model legislation: inc, what do countries need?
- elements of a generic ePhyto system: inc issuance and sending, receipt and processing

The workshop conducted a number of smaller group discussion session where participants were invited to think about actions and next steps that are required to progress the development of an IPPC ePhyto system. This was considered at several levels – action at an individual country level, action at a regional APPPC level, action to be taken by the ePhytos Steering Group and action at the CPM level. Participants developed a series of recommendations for an action plan for ePhyto within the APPPC region.

Participants agreed that the APPPC should establish an APPPC ePhyto working group. A number of countries expressed interest in joining an APPPC ePhyto working group including Thailand, Philippines, Korea, Indonesia, China, Japan, Malaysia and Australia. Australia has initiated proceedings and is group leader. The group has finalised their terms of reference and will prepare a forward work plan for presentation at the APPPC later in 2015. The working group will also continue to implement the workshop recommendations for action at the country and regional APPPC level.

Key outcomes: The workshop was considered a success by participants as it significantly improved understanding of ePhyto and how countries in the APPPC can be well positioned to actively participate in future ePhyto developments. The workshop developed a detailed, tiered ePhyto workplan and established the APPPC ePhyto Working Group. The Working Group will progress the workplan for endorsement at the APPPC later in 2015.

Further information regarding the workshop (including all presentations) is available on the APPPC website at:
http://www.apppc.org/content/ephyto?qt-apppc_news_events_publication_we=0#publication