The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat and the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation are collaborating to help governments in developing and least developed countries make trade simpler, faster and more cost-effective while strengthening plant health protection and consumer safety. They aim to do this by supporting countries to introduce electronic phytosanitary certificates, or ePhytos.

The IPPC Secretariat is part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and aims to secure international trade in plants and plant products by controlling the introduction and spread of pests.

The Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation is a public-private partnership for trade-led growth. It aims to bring governments and businesses together as equal partners to help developing and least developed countries implement the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

Introducing the ePhyto Solution will help countries to implement key articles of the TFA:

• Article 7.9 Perishable Goods
• Article 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements

Phytosanitary certificates are official documents issued by governments to confirm that shipments of plants and plant products being traded internationally are free of pests and diseases and therefore safe to import.

Until recently, these certificates were always physical paper documents which were transferred between different parties by post, courier or other physical means. These paper certificates can take days to obtain and are prone to errors, loss, theft and counterfeiting.

This slows down trade and at worst results in spoiled goods, additional demurrage charges and frustrated customers and governments.

**THE CHALLENGE**

**THE JOURNEY OF A PHYTOSANITARY CERTIFICATE**

National authority in exporting country

Exporter

Various intermediaries

Importer

National authority in importing country
The IPPC Secretariat with support from the United Nations International Computing Centre (UN ICC) has developed the ePhyto Solution to bring phytosanitary certification into the digital era.

The ePhyto Solution allows countries to electronically exchange ePhytos with each other through a central hub, quickly, accurately and at low cost. The risk of loss, damage or fraud to the certificate is greatly reduced, as is the administrative burden on both border agencies and business. The collaborative nature of the project also paves the way for countries to exchange other types of data with trading partners.

Countries have two options in implementing the ePhyto Solution. They can either produce ePhytos and exchange them with the UNICC ePhyto Hub directly via their own national online platform or they can use the IPPC’s web-based application, the General ePhyto National System (GeNS).

HOW THE IPPC AND GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR TRADE FACILITATION CAN HELP

In preparation for introducing the ePhyto Solution, countries must carry out a thorough analysis of their business process for trade in plants and plant products and assess whether to use a national system or GeNS. Most importantly, a country must have the political commitment and the support of its business community.

The Alliance and IPPC Secretariat can support countries at any stage of the process by coordinating meetings between government and business, guiding countries through the business process analysis, delivering training to public and private sector representatives and assisting in deploying the IT solutions. Assistance is also available to countries who have made initial installations but need further support to ensure full adoption. All Alliance projects focus on producing measurable reductions in the time and cost of trade for both governments and businesses. These results can help governments demonstrate how they are improving the business environment in their country while strengthening plant and public health protection.
IN PRACTICE: MOROCCO

The Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation has been supporting the Office National de Sécurité Sanitaire des Produits Alimentaires (ONSSA) and agri-food sector to introduce the ePhyto Solution. The Alliance project, led by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), assists Morocco in implementing the TFA and in deploying its ambitious plan to fully digitalise all import and export operations towards achieving ‘zero paper’ by 2021.

The project team including ONSSA experts carried out a full business process analysis, facilitated training in ePhyto programming for ONSSA officials with UN ICC experts, and supported technical preparations for the pilot. With the project’s focus on the importance of knowledge exchange and international best practice, an ePhyto expert from the United States travelled to Morocco to share insights into introducing ePhyto, and the Alliance organised a technical visit for Moroccan government and agri-food industry representatives to the Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands to glean lessons in how to operationalise ePhyto and e-signature procedures.

The first international exchange of ePhytos between Morocco and the United States took place in March 2020, making Morocco one of the first African countries to fully integrate ePhyto into their national trade system.

The project team is working with ONSSA and agri-food companies throughout 2020 to organise awareness and information days for traders and measure the impact of the introduction of ePhytos for traders and government agencies alike.

To find out more, visit www.tradefacilitation.org www.ippc.int/en/ephyto
or contact us at info@tradefacilitation.org

ABOUT THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR TRADE FACILITATION

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THE ePHYTO SOLUTION 2020 3