

Q: Climate Change? A: Trade Facilitation

Making the Link

The world is heating up. Climate change is no longer a distant threat—it's a present crisis. From extreme weather to rising sea levels, its effects are increasingly visible and disruptive. With every gram of additional CO₂ bringing us closer to climate tipping points, reducing carbon emissions is now an urgent priority.

Trade plays a major role in this challenge. Transport and logistics account for 30% of global CO₂ emissions—in part driven by inefficient, paper-heavy, outdated systems. But it doesn't have to be this way.

While trade facilitation can't solve the climate crisis alone, it can make a real difference. By digitalising procedures, cutting red tape, and improving coordination across borders, it boosts supply chain efficiency. That means goods—including perishables

like food items—spend less time idling in ports, trucks spend fewer hours in queues, and planes and ships avoid redundant trips—saving both time and carbon.

Climate action isn't just about cutting emissions at the source—it's about eliminating inefficiencies at every stage. Trade facilitation helps clear the path.

How?

Trade facilitation streamlines and digitalises paper-based procedures to enhance efficiency. In the process, it also reduces emissions—cutting paper use, physical deliveries, and other redundancies. The real-time data exchange enabled by digitalisation leads to faster, smoother border clearances, reducing the environmental footprint of every shipment.



Green Solutions for Red Tape

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscores the need for trade policies and reforms to reflect environmental concerns.

Inefficiencies in trade processes result in higher carbon emissions, and streamlined trade networks can help reduce these impacts.

Trade facilitation measures streamline the flow of information, optimise cumbersome administrative procedures and minimise delays at the border. By implementing these measures, Alliance projects help mitigate the carbon footprint of global trade.

-  **Going Digital:** Simplified, digitalised processes reduce the environmental impact of paper-based procedures and allow for more efficient movement of goods when systems face disruptions.
-  **Time:** Trade facilitation eliminates redundancies, cuts delays, and helps reduce emissions linked to transportation, ensuring goods move faster and with lower environmental impact.
-  **Coordination:** Improved collaboration between border agencies, logistics providers, and businesses ensures that trade flows smoothly, minimising emissions and ultimately contributing to more sustainable global trade practices.

The Alliance can Help

Driven by its mission to make trade faster, more cost-efficient, and sustainable, the Alliance actively implements digitalisation projects that modernise trade procedures and enhance connectivity among supply chain stakeholders. In doing so, it not only streamlines commerce but also helps reduce carbon emissions.

Our work in digitalising trade processes and implementing related best practices, demonstrates that we can grow trade while cutting emissions.

Till date, the Alliance has deployed over 20 projects involving digitalisation - including 12 ePhyto projects connecting countries to the IPPC ePhyto Hub - with several others in implementation. The Alliance has also implemented digital systems at sea and land ports in Guatemala and Bangladesh, supported the enhancement Single Windows in Ecuador and Mozambique, and digitalised key trade documents in Senegal, Tunisia and Jordan, among others.

By replacing paper-based processes with seamless digital systems, the Alliance reduces both paper consumption and vehicle emissions, driving a more sustainable global trade model.

About Us

The Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation supports governments in developing countries in implementing the WTO TFA. Alliance projects bring together governments and businesses of all sizes as equal partners to deliver targeted trade reforms. By emphasising digitalisation and delivering other best practices, Alliance projects ultimately boost trade competitiveness and business conditions, which are key drivers of inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction.

HOST ORGANISATIONS



IN COOPERATION WITH



SUPPORTED BY



Case study



Scaling Up ePhyto for a Greener, Smarter Future

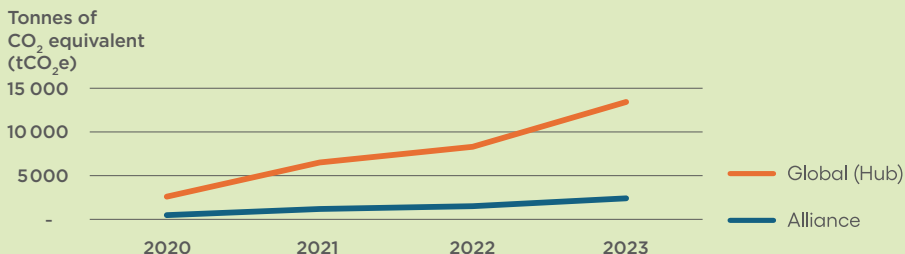
The ePhyto solution, developed by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), is transforming agricultural trade by replacing slow, paper-based phytosanitary certificates with a faster, more efficient digital alternative. By December 2024, more than 7.5 million ePhytos had been exchanged globally.

ePhytos also have a much lower carbon footprint because they eliminate the need for paper and activities related to their exchange... By 2023, the Alliance's efforts accounted for 18% of emissions saved through the IPPC system—equivalent to 5,494 tons of CO₂, or about 9,312 flights from New York to London.

However, ePhytos still make up only 5% of all phytosanitary certificates issued worldwide¹. This leaves the majority of global plant trade—worth \$1.4 trillion in 2022—relying on outdated, paper-based processes. This represents a massive, untapped opportunity to expand digital solutions.

With established international data standards and a robust global IT infrastructure in place, scaling up ePhyto adoption could unlock even greater efficiencies, cost savings, and environmental benefits.

Estimated annual CO₂ emissions savings from the ePhyto solution.
Contribution by the Alliance in relation to the IPPC Hub.



Source: IPPC secretariat (2025), Global Alliance for Trade facilitation (2025)

¹ Assuming at average value of a transaction at USD 50,000 (Duval & Hardy, 2021; World Bank, 2021), and one phytosanitary certificate per transaction. The estimate only considers the number of ePhytos exchanged through the Hub in 2022.



info@tradefacilitation.org
www.tradefacilitation.org

X @GATNews



global-alliance-for-trade-facilitation