

**SPS ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ECAC)
SUMMARY REPORT OF THE NINETH VIRTUAL MEETING
13 NOVEMBER 2024**

1 INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretariat (represented by Mr Simon Padilla) welcomed participants and provided a brief introduction on the purpose of the meeting. A list of participants is available in Annex 1.

2 INFORMATION SHARING

2. IPPC provided some recent statistics on the use of the ePhyto Solution, naming new countries that have recently joined the Hub and have started exchanging ePhytos in 2024. In collaboration with the GATF, efforts have continued to support the implementation of the ePhyto Solution in those countries where it is not yet being used. The "ePhyto Africa Initiative" is currently under development by a consortium of partners, namely: the GATF, the IPPC Secretariat, TradeMark Africa, AU-IAPSC, AfCFTA, ISF, UNICC, and the STDF. The objective of this initiative is to connect at least 70% of all African countries to the ePhyto Hub over a 36-month period. The initiative's governance structure as well as its branding are being discussed. Once these discussions have been completed, work will begin on seeking funding to launch the initiative. The ePhyto Sustainable Funding Mechanism was approved by IPPC Contracting Parties at CPM-18 in April 2024. The sustainable funding mechanism was adopted for a transitional period, and the Focus Group on Sustainable Funding was tasked with continuing to explore alternative options to adjust the model for presentation at the next CPM in 2025. Lastly, the IPPC noted that the FAO Investment Centre in partnership with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) have been conducting a study on the trade benefits related to the implementation of the IPPC ePhyto solution.

3. The GATF is continuing to provide support to various countries (such as Cambodia, Fiji, Mauritania, Nigeria and Ukraine), with the implementation of the IPPC ePhyto Solution. This support consists of tailored technical assistance in the implementation of the IPPC ePhyto Solution in project countries, training and capacity building, adjustments to the legal frameworks, if necessary, and support for related ePayment implementation.¹

4. WOHAI has convened a group of technical experts to develop reference data models and standards for the model health certificates in the Terrestrial and Aquatic Animal Health Codes. Five model health certificates have been included in the Terrestrial Code and two in the Aquatic Code. These electronic certificates follow the UN/CEFACT data standards to ensure alignment with the Codex digital certificate, which will facilitate data exchange between trading partners as countries move away from paper certificates.

5. The African Alliance for e-Commerce (AACE) participated for the first time in an ECAC meeting and provided information about its work to promote the concept of national and regional Single Windows. This aligns with international recommendations to boost development of inter and intra-regional trade in Africa. AACE has worked on the integration of electronic certificates of origin and ePhytos into Single Windows, with the primary objective of achieving interoperability with the Single Window environment in the African region and with other regions of the world.²

6. IICA updated members on the STDF-funded project "Enhancing multilateral e-veterinary certification in Latin America and the Caribbean" ([STDF/PG/856](#)) that started in May 2024. IICA has been carrying out preparatory work focused on building the project governing structure, which will be similar to the one of the ePhyto project. A Project Technical Committee, consisting of technical experts, will be in charge of developing the eVet System; a Project Advisory Committee, composed of experts from international and regional organizations, will provide strategic guidance and advice during implementation; and a Private Sector Consultative Committee, consisting of interested industry groups, will provide inputs during the development of the system and contribute with awareness raising and outreach among private sector users. IICA will partner with UNICC to develop

¹ More information available at: <https://www.tradefacilitation.org/our-projects/>

² More information available at: <https://african-alliance.org>

the multilateral electronic veterinary scheme, leveraging prior experience with the development of the IPPC ePhyto Solution.

7. Codex provided updates on the work related to Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification where the revision of the Codex guidelines for design, production, issuance and use of generic official certificates to include electronic certification; and the principles and guidelines on the use of remote audit and inspection in regulatory frameworks, had been completed. In addition, new work will start in relation to the standardisation of the representation of sanitary requirements for electronic certificates, and also on digitization of national food control systems. Codex encouraged countries to participate in this work and contribute with their knowledge and expertise. Finally, on food labelling - the work related to the development of Guidelines on the provision of food information for pre-packaged foods to be offered via e-commerce; and the use of technology to provide food information in food labelling, had also been completed and would be adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission in November 2024.

8. UNIDO shared information on the Africa Trade Competitiveness Project that will pilot electronic food safety certification and accreditation in selected African countries, based on needs assessments, system conceptualization, and awareness raising programs. Reference was also made to a new project that will benefit the ASEAN and CPTPP regions that will collect data on the use and challenges of electronic certification and remote audit. The final objective is the development of readiness guidelines to support the adoption of electronic certification. Finally, the 2025 Vienna Food Safety Forum was announced, where innovations in food safety, including electronic certification, will be discussed.

9. ISF informed members on past and ongoing ePhyto workshops organized to bring together the public and private sector to adopt not only the ePhyto solution but digitalization of trade documentation for plants and plant products. The ISF also expressed its interest in participating and collaborating in the private sector group of the [STDF/PG/856](#) eVet project.

10. The STDF updated members on: (i) a new version of the STDF eCert briefing note that will incorporate the latest developments in SPS eCert and digitalization of trade documentation and procedures; (ii) a short video on SPS eCert and digitalization that is being developed by a smaller group of ECAC interested members, showcasing Morocco as a pilot country; and (iii) a joint STDF, TFAF (Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility), IICA and ALADI (Latin American Integration Association) event that will look at approaches to integrate SPS digital initiatives (such as ePhyto and eVet) into national or regional Single Window systems to ensure interoperability, to be held in Montevideo, Uruguay in November 2024. Finally, the STDF, in the framework of its new Strategy 2025-30, is exploring the possibility of expanding the scope of this practitioner group to also share information about other innovation initiatives and digital technologies to build SPS capacity.

3 NEXT STEPS

11. The Secretariat thanked participants for their inputs and encouraged them to make use of the [ECAC website](#) that will be updated in early 2025, to track various eCert related efforts, including planned and ongoing activities.

ANNEX 1
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Organization	E-mail
Nogaye Diagne Diop Youssef AHOUI	AAEC	nddiop@african-alliance.org ; yahouzi@portnet.ma ;
Sandrine BAYENDI LOUDIT Saliou Niassy Luiza Mbura Munyua	AU-IAPSC	Bayendiloudi@africa-union.org ; NiassyS@africa-union.org ; MunyuaL@africa-union.org ;
Mary Lucy Oronje	CABI	M.Oronje@cabi.org ;
Rodrigo Robles	Chile	rodrigo.robles@sag.gob.cl ;
Patrick Sekitoleko	CODEX Secretariat	Patrick.Sekitoleko@fao.org ;
Marie-Helene Kestemont	COLEAD	marie-helene.kestemont@colead.link ;
Eleonora Dupouy	FAO	Eleonora.Dupouy@fao.org ;
Horrys Friaca	IICA	horrys.friaca@iica.int ;
Dominique Menon	IPPC	dominique.menon@fao.org ;
Rose Souza Richards	ISF	R.SouzaRichards@worldseed.org ;
Bosker Erik	Netherlands	e.bosker@minlnv.nl ;
Constantin Ciuta	UNCTAD	constantin.ciuta@unctad.org ;
Natalia FERNANDEZ-CEDI	UNIDO	L.FERNANDEZ-CEDI@unido.org ;
Joyce Bowling-Heyward	WOAH	j.bowling-heyward@woah.org ;
Kateryna Onul	World Bank Group	konul@ifc.org ;
Tom Butterly	WEF/GATF	Tom.Butterly@weforum.org ;
Simon Padilla Pablo Jenkins Catalina Pulido Nydiene Razafindrahaingo Aichetou Ba Morgane Martin Paola Michelutti	STDF	simon.padilla@wto.org ; Pablo.jenkins@wto.org ; catalina.pulido@wto.org ; nydiene.razafindrahaingo@wto.org ; aichetou.ba@wto.org ; morgane.martin@wto.org ; paola.michelutti@wto.org ;