

**SPS ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ECAC)
SUMMARY REPORT OF THE 11TH VIRTUAL MEETING
26 MARCH 2025**

INTRODUCTION

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

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

2. Ms. Edith LAGET and Ms. Annelies DEUSS from the OECD presented their recently published report entitled "Sanitary and Phytosanitary Electronic Certificates: Current Practices and Benefits"¹. The report examines the current use and impact of SPS eCertification while also quantifying the benefits and challenges associated with their implementation and adoption. The report found, among other things, that the share of trade involving SPS e-certificates had increased and that these certifications prevented substantial trade losses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the report underscores the critical importance of interoperability between systems and the availability of data to realise the benefits of SPS eCertification.

DISCUSSION AND INFORMATION SHARING

3. The World Bank observed that the current discussion on SPS eCert and systems interoperability is of strong relevance to the upcoming "World Development Report" that will focus on standards. While noting the importance for digitalization systems to capture both public and private sector data, the World Bank highlighted the relevance of Single Window systems and the interoperability between Single Windows.
4. Mr. Erik Bosker stated that there are many initiatives already in place to tackle the increasing number of complex and possibly overlapping eCert systems. He referred to the importance of following CODEX and WOAHP data models for their standard certificates. Moreover, he indicated that UN/CEFACT is planning a project on the revision of Single Window interoperability and is seeking expert advice to incorporate SPS eCert into a Single Window environment.
5. The WTO provided an update on the discussions by WTO members in the SPS Committee, where eCert and interoperability have been identified as possible topics for future work. The WTO suggested that the OECD look at the disadvantages faced by countries in not adopting ePhyto. While the OECD hadn't looked into this question specifically, they had studied the trade diversions arising from not adopting eCert in general.
6. WOAHP provided an update of their recently completed work on data models and data standards for five model health certificates included in the Terrestrial Code and two model certificates included in the Aquatic Code. Furthermore, WOAHP is organizing a side event at their 92nd General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates, in hybrid mode, on Monday 26 May 2025, to present these new standards to its Members and discuss their interest in continuing to work on this issue in the future.
7. Mr. Craig Fedchok inquired if the OECD had found any instances of interoperability, where SPS eCert is integrated with other systems, while preparing the report. He also questioned if AI could be used to support interoperability. The OECD responded that they weren't looking for such instances when drafting the report but would be interested in doing so in the future, including looking at how AI is being used to ensure interoperability. Mr. Fedchok also suggested creating a working group to discuss opportunities for harmonization of processes and systems.
8. Mr. Eduardo Leite, from the Trade and Compliance Institute for Trade Facilitation, Electronic Business and Sustainability (TCI), expressed his appreciation for the OECD report and suggested

¹ The report is available at: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/sanitary-and-phytosanitary-electronic-certificates_1a5fd2e0-en.html

looking at the impact of SPS eCert on facilitating cross-border movement of perishable goods and therefore preventing food wastage. This idea was supported by the World Bank.

9. IICA provided an update on the status of the STDF-funded project entitled "Enhancing multilateral e-veterinary certification in Latin America and the Caribbean" ([STDF/PG/856](#)). IICA is close to establishing service contracts with the technical implementing partners to start the development of the system and the gender analysis. Furthermore, IICA referred to the creation of the project Technical Committee, the Advisory Committee and the Private Sector Consultative Committee. A first meeting of all these groups will be held on 3 April 2025. Regarding harmonization, IICA made reference to the existing standards prepared by the SPS standard-setting bodies, which will be considered for the development of the eVet system, and also to WCO standards for ensuring interoperability of Single Windows.
10. UNICC highlighted the importance of achieving data harmonization to ensure interoperability and also stated that some countries are struggling to achieve interoperability due to inadequate resources and tools. UNICC is also ready to collaborate with other organizations in this regard.
11. UNIDO provided information on two upcoming events related to eCert: First, a workshop on remote audit and electronic certification focussed on the ASEAN region, funded by the Australian Government, and scheduled to take place in Indonesia on 21-25 April 2025. Two surveys were conducted in ASEAN member states on: (i) remote audit and inspection practices; and (ii) SPS eCert. The workshop will be used to validate the findings of the surveys and to train the ASEAN food safety authorities on the implementation of the Codex guidelines and the creation of the ASEAN regional Single Window. Second, the Vienna Food Safety Forum, organized jointly with the STDF and the Australian Government, scheduled to take place in Vienna on 10-12 June 2025, which will focus on digital tools transforming food safety.
12. The GATF provided an update on its ePhyto project in Ukraine. Over 750 inspectors have been trained, and the necessary legislative reforms have been carried out. The project is currently working on onboarding the private sector into the system to enable private companies to request, follow up, and obtain copies of the phytosanitary certificates. The GATF also recalled instances of "integration" in Senegal and Morocco, where ePhyto certificates are distributed to national Single Windows via a feature called "channel forwarding". The GATF further updated members on their "ePhyto in Africa" initiative, which seeks to connect 70 percent of the continent with the ePhyto Hub. Preparations are ongoing for the launch of the initiative which is set to start in 2025.
13. The STDF provided an update regarding the two briefing notes that are in production: (i) on SPS eCert; and (ii) on the conclusions and recommendations of the event organized in collaboration with ALADI, IICA and TFAF on "digitalization and interoperability". The STDF is also developing a video on eCert, which is expected to be finalised during the first semester of 2025.

NEXT STEPS

14. The Secretariat thanked the participants for their inputs, and requested them to visit the [ECAC webpage](#) and share information about the various eCert related efforts and initiatives, including recent publications and future meetings.

ANNEX 1
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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