Emerging developments and opportunities in Green Trade Facilitation

Bangkok – Thailand

4 October 2023

Simon Padilla

STDF Secretariat

Simon.Padilla@wto.org

What is the STDF?

Global partnership that helps developing countries improve their food safety, and animal and plant health capacity to meet SPS requirements and facilitate safe trade

STDF Strategy (2020-2024)

Global coordination platform

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Cross-cutting knowledge work
linked to SPS capacity building
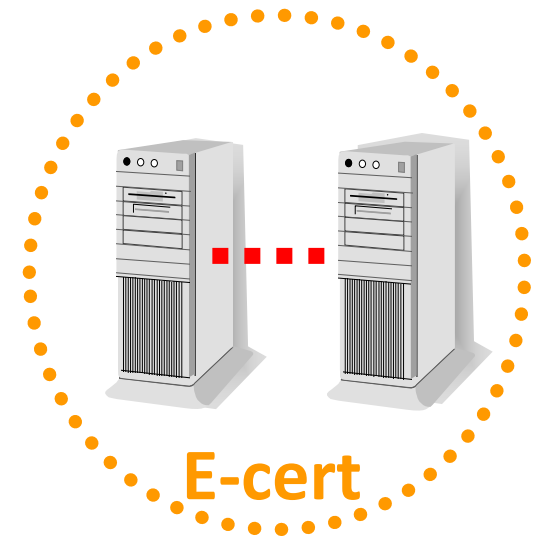(incl. electronic SPS certification)

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Funding mechanism for SPS
projects and project development

Electronic SPS certification

- How electronic SPS certification can contribute significantly to facilitating safe trade

- STDF work:

  - Seminars & workshops on SPS e-Cert (in-person & virtual)

  - ePhyto: Enhancing safe trade in plants and plant products

  - Facilitating eVet certification based on Single Window
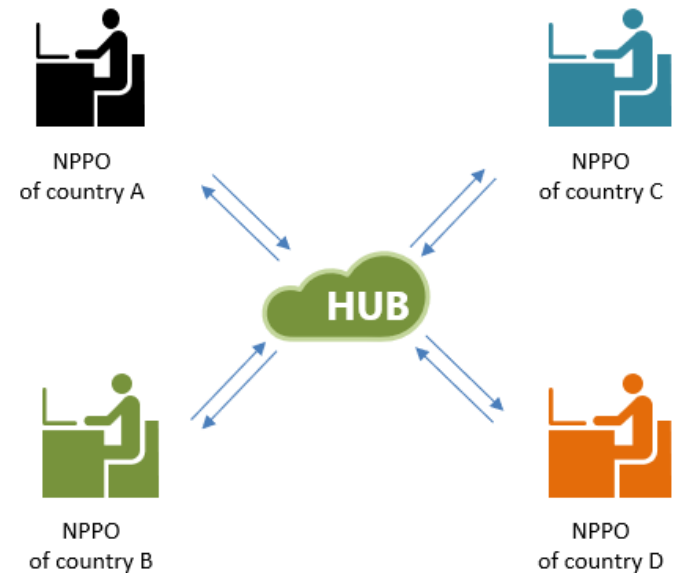
  - e-Cert Advisory Committee (ECAC)

For more information: https://www.standardsfacility.org/SPS-eCert

The ePhyto Solution (STDF/PG/504)

Why the ePhyto Solution is relevant to the STDF?

- ePhyto is the electronic equivalent of a paper phytosanitary certificate (ISPM 12)

- Reduce the need for bilateral agreements between NPPOs to transfer electronic certificates

- Collaborative effort: FAO/IPPC, UNICC, Codex, WOAH, CITES, UNCTAD, UN/CEFACT, WBG, WCO, CFIA, USDA, Australia, EU, Private Sector
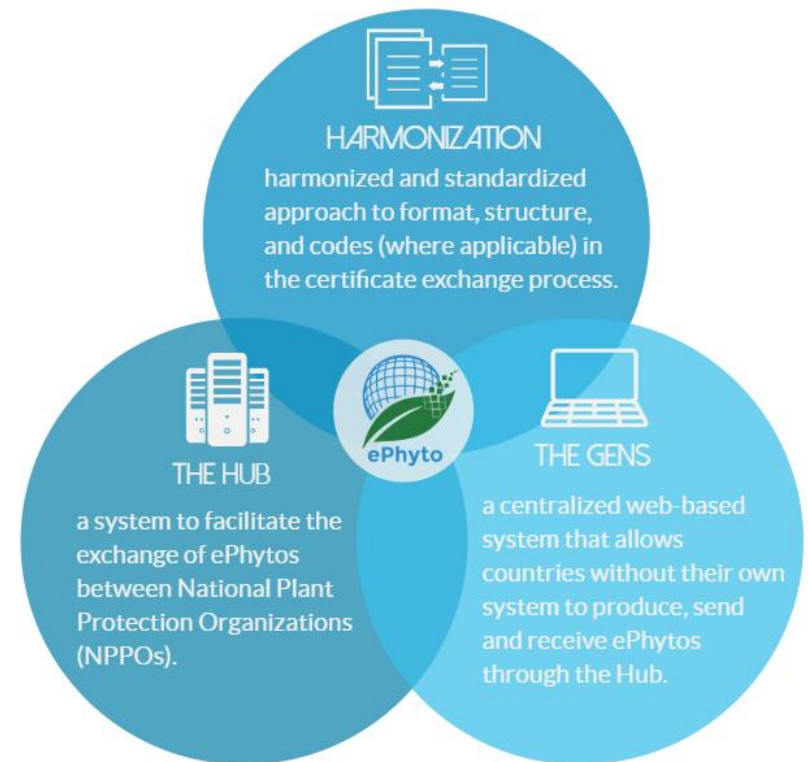
NPPO of country A

NPPO of country C

HUB

NPPO of country B

NPPO of country D

See more: standardsfacility.org/PG-504
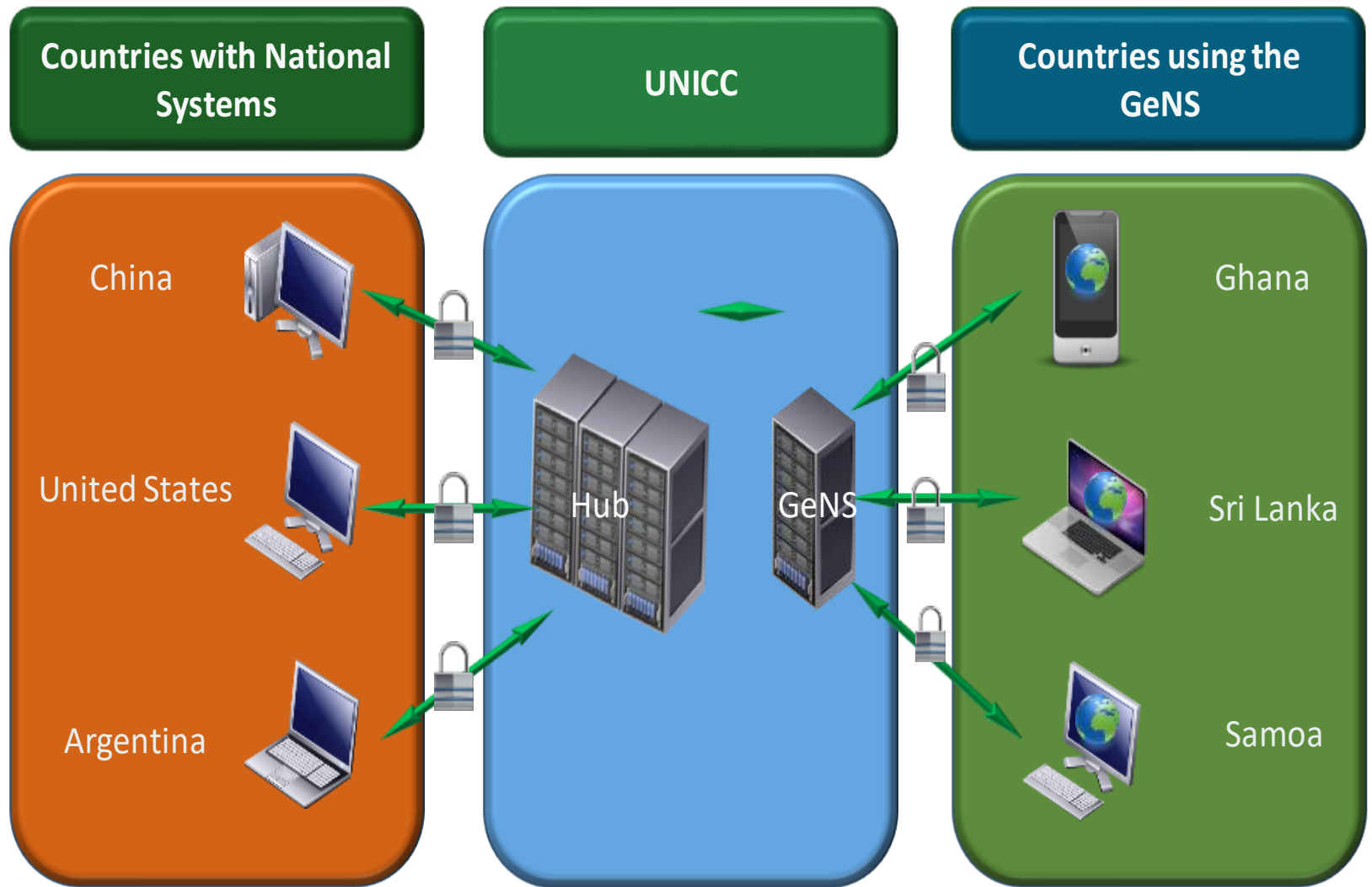
The ePhyto Solution

What is the ePhyto Solution

The ePhyto Solution is a system managed by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and designed, developed and hosted by the United Nations International computing Centre (UNICC).

The system has **3** core components: **Harmonization, the Hub and the Generic ePhyto National System**

HARMONIZATION
harmonized and standardized approach to format, structure, and codes (where applicable) in the certificate exchange process.

THE HUB
a system to facilitate the exchange of ePhytos between National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs).

THE GENS
a centralized web-based system that allows countries without their own system to produce, send and receive ePhytos through the Hub.

The ePhyto Solution (STDF/PG/504)

Countries with National Systems

- China
- United States
- Argentina

UNICC

- Hub
- GeNS

Countries using the GeNS

- Ghana
- Sri Lanka
- Samoa

The ePhyto Solution

Recent highlights

The IPPC ePhyto Solution website:
https://www.ippc.int/en/ephyto/

The IPPC ePhyto Solution training platform:
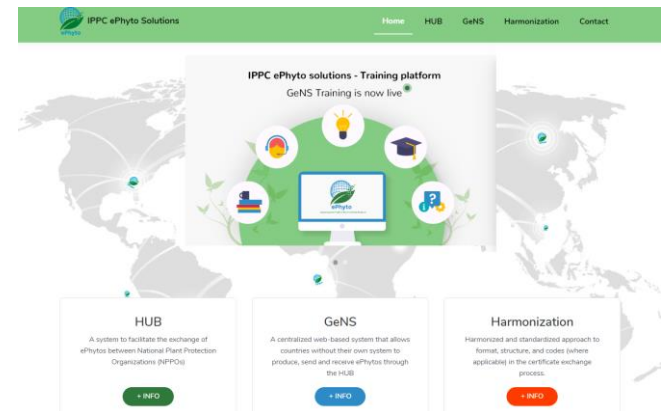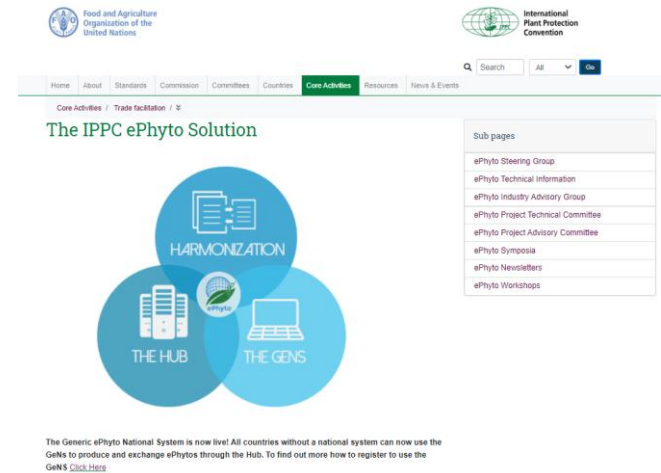https://www.ephytoexchange.org

ePhyto numbers:
120+ countries connected to the ePhyto Hub
80+ countries exchanging ePhytos
100,000+ ePhytos exchanged per month
Connection with EU TRACES system established
in 2020
+ 3 million ePhytos exchanged in 2023

Ex-post evaluation of the ePhyto Solution

Lessons

- **Harmonization** of certificates is fundamentally crucial to implementing e-certification.

- **Relatively minor investments** in digitization can have significant catalyzing effects in trade facilitation.

- Developing countries have **access and equipment challenges** that can inhibit uptake of opportunities to participate in digitization of trade documentation.

- The **private sector** is interested, engaged, and willing to contribute to improving trade facilitation in the right circumstances.

- Implementation of e-certification **does not need to be all or nothing** – a rolling implementation is both possible and effective.

  https://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_PG_504_Evaluation.pdf

Ex-post evaluation of the ePhyto Solution

Recommendations

- Continue to **improve the GeNS** to open up realization of full potential benefits: e-payment, traceability, data analysis.

- Encourage WOAH and/or other relevant regional organizations to consider **piloting a regional Veterinary/Sanitary** certificate exchange via the Hub to (1) serve as proof of concept (2) identify any needed technical adjustments for the Hub to carry additional certificate types (3) provide an example of an approach to harmonizing the certificate amongst a less-than-global group of participants, and (4) work out any technical complexities in adding additional transaction types.

- STDF use its **convening power**.

- IPPC/STDF should continue **outreach and education** efforts to bring more plant trade into ePhyto.

Advantages of SPS e-Cert

Integrity
- Electronically secured certificates
- Cross-checking in real time
- Single national register of certificates

Efficiency
- Faster processing through pre-validation
- Single view of all relevant information
- Simple maintenance of forms

Security
- Very difficult to forge
- Online verification for third parties
- Searchable database with all certificates

Time
- Computer-assisted application preparation
- Faster processing cuts export time
- Faster management through real-time status
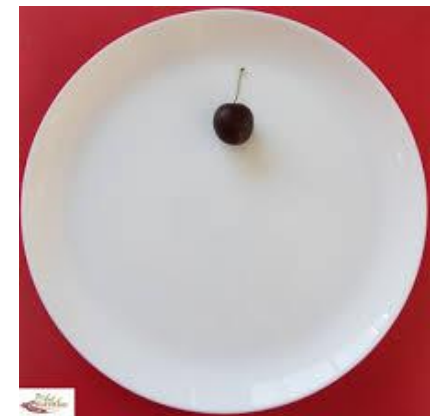
Challenges in implementing SPS e-Cert

- Weaknesses in existing paper-based systems

- Inadequate legislative framework

- Lack of political will

- Limited collaboration (public-private sector)

- Lack of standardized exchange protocols

- High costs

- IT infrastructure

Electronic SPS certification

Cherry on the cake?

- eCert is effective when countries already have **effective paper-based SPS certification system**s, including functioning institutions and adequate legislation

- eCert does **not solve systemic failures** in national SPS import / export control processes

- Avoid risk that automation delivers the cherry, **without the cake**!

Source: M. Pikart, UNECE, STDF Seminar on e-cert, 2016

Key messages

- Importance to conduct a thorough analysis of the current situation (business process, legal framework, connectivity,...)

- Further harmonization, particularly in the areas of food safety and veterinary certification

- Integration between electronic systems, such as Single Window, Customs, Blockchains (compatibility/interoperability)

- Further coordination and collaboration between international agencies active in the area of trade-related eCert

STDF donors