EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN PLANT PROTECTION ORGANIZATION

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Conclusions from the EPPO Workshop on Electronic Certificates and associated IT Systems

Baku, 2014-04-29/30

- ePhyto will provide benefits to plant quarantine control, NPPOs, customs control and traders. International harmonisation under the IPPC is essential for ePhyto, covering the format, content and transfer and security of the ePhyto "message". The workshop encourages EPPO member countries to take the next steps in the moves towards implementation of the IPPC ePhyto. Harmonisation is needed whether or not an international hub (a temporary secure repository for electronic certificates which can be accessed by a number of countries) is established to deposit and collect e-Phytos. Hubs and bilateral arrangements are not mutually incompatible.

- Use of EPPO codes for pests and hosts is strongly encouraged as the best option for international standards.

- IPPC are developing a global set of commodity codes and commodity class codes. EPPO will keep in contact with that work as it develops and experts within the region will assist. Customs' CN codes are not tailored to phytosanitary needs, but should be used in addition to IPPC commodity codes because they form a bridge between phytosanitary documentation and Customs systems. This is particularly important where a "single window" operates for Customs and other regulatory areas.

- A lot of systems are being developed which could link in future with ePhyto
  - Some are linked to other forms of certification (e.g. Animal Health, Food)
  - We need to ensure that new developments are compatible with the IPPC harmonisation of ePhyto and do not make it harder to implement in future
  - We need to avoid reinventing the wheel, use components from elsewhere and continue to learn from other areas such the secure message systems used in banking
  - We can draw on resources which might be available for advancing trade facilitation in general (e.g. UNCTAD, STDF)

- Some specific issues will need to be addressed by the EU in relation to how e-Phyto can be implemented within the EU, and how it will link to TRACES.

- Coding systems need to allow for uncertainty (e.g. with the possibility in EPPO codes of making entries at different taxonomic levels) but be sufficiently specific to trigger the relevant requirements (e.g. the species may determine whether a consignment is prohibited or not, so genus may not be sufficient in some cases). Codes are language independent and can in principle be decoded into any language.

- Automation can be more easily justified where transaction numbers are large. Countries do not necessarily need to establish their own systems but can collaborate or use existing systems and components. Where transactions are few or complex people may be more efficient than systems. In any case some consistency of approach is needed. The benefits are greater where systems can link with industry systems.

- Fallback arrangements need to be developed and communicated before any ePhyto system is implemented to guard against IT system failures.

- With IT developments when you start large you may end up nowhere! And what looks like one big system is usually lots of small systems successfully joined together over time. NPPOs need to know what they need and not over-elaborate. IT experts should meet the needs of NPPOs – they are not in charge!

- ePhyto does not solve all problems with issue and use of certificates which already exist with paper certificates
    - Continuing need to link certificate with physical consignment
    - Continuing need to know the importing country requirements in order to meet them