EPHYTO IMPLEMENTATION CASE STORY

QUESTIONNAIRE

Country	Uganda
NPPO	The National Plant Protection Organisation Uganda is the Department of Crop Inspection and Certification **(DCIC), in the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries.**
Contact Person	Paul Mwambu, Commissioner Crop Inspection and Certification Alternate contact: Joyce Brenda Kisingiri**,** Senior Agricultural Inspector-Phytosanitary (See Contact detail at end of case story)
Designation	--
Date	16 April 2021

TYPE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Please indicate if you have implemented ePhyto through: - Your own National System or - The IPPC Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS)
Uganda has implemented the IPPC Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) in 2020
Briefly describe your ePhyto implementation setup (maximum 150 words)
Uganda implemented the IPPC ePhyto GeNS, which is designed, monitored, managed and supported by the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC). Uganda has an assigned IP address which is the subdomain used to access the system (ug.ephytoexchange.org/). The system provides user access according to the user level rights - that is to say company user, NPPO assistant, NPPO officer, NPPO inspector and NPPO administrator. To access the system, a user needs access to the computer with a browser, Internet and user credentials. Companies apply for registration which is approved by the Uganda NPPO Country Administrator to gain access and transact through the system. The application once generated is received by the Inspectors and Inspection is conducted. Once the report is approved the Uganda NPPO officer can issue a certificate. A certificate is sent to the ePhyto Hub hence accessed by the GeNS user partner countries. The main administration base for the GeNS in Uganda is at the Ministry of Agriculture Head Quarter Offices However the NPPO Inspectors currently man 8 Border Inspection Points, three inland terminals, 74 packing houses for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and several grading halls for other export commodities. The International Airport has 6 control points. The NPPO is in advanced stages to expand its operations to the several inland custom bonded warehouses and Field Zonal Offices.

Please also indicate briefly (maximum 150 words) the main reasons for your choice of implementation model (i.e. GeNS or National System)
NPPO Uganda opted to use the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) due to the following reasons; - Its capability to send and receive e-Phytos as well as producing paper phytosanitary certificates (PCs).This meant that we could facilitate trading safely with our trading partners through secure electronic transmission of PCs, while still providing paper PCs, for those countries that are yet to join the e-Phyto. This system provides confidence to the importing country through reliability of the issued document that can be authenticated via https://ug.ephytoexchange.org - The GeNS is an IT system based on 'web-technology'; the users of the system do not need any specific IT setup on their computers. - Thirdly, NPPO Uganda could drastically reduce the volume of paper procurements, hence the money for the manual PCs as well as reduce the storage space for records. - Fourthly, the e-Phyto would reduce the business transaction costs for Uganda's exporting community by reducing the travel time and expenses to submit application requests for and receive Phytosanitary certificates. - The ePhyto would reduce on the documentation non compliances due to typing errors and loss through travel. - Collection of reliable trade statistics in real time for report writing and inform major decisions.

BASIC ePHYTO STATISTICS FOR YOUR COUNTRY

How many ePhytos do you transmit and receive per month through the IPPC ePhyto Hub (average over the past 3 months)?
- Export = 7,200 - Re-Export = N/A - Import = We would like to commence with this module as soon as possible.

What main countries are you exchanging ePhytos with via the IPPC ePhyto Hub?
Some of these include, the European Union Community Member States such as Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Norway, United States of America, Argentina and South Africa.

Are there new countries to and from which you are now trading as a result of implementing ePhyto?
Currently it has been observed that more destination markets have come on board since the introduction of the ePhyto. Though, this is not yet confirmed, could be attributed to the straightforward procedure introduced by the GeNS ePhyto system.

PROJECT DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

How did you organise the implementation of ePhyto in your country? Was a project team or steering group established to guide the project?
Yes

If yes, who participated in the team – what agencies and at what level (we do not need to know the specific names of the team members)?
NPPO Uganda was supported by the IPPC e-Phyto regional Manager. He facilitated the initial communication between the IPPC e-Phyto development team at the United Nations international Computing Centre (UNICC) and NPPO Uganda. He further visited Uganda, to interface with the Administration and together with the Head of NPPO Uganda, highlighted the benefits of using the system, which were justified by the past reports and the recently concluded European FVO DG SANTE audit for the official controls.   NPPO Uganda appointed a head project manager- Alternate IPPC Contact point who oversaw the day to day project implementation.   Day to day project development responsibility was charged with the appointed NPPO Uganda GeNS Administrator. He was tasked with liaising with the ePhyto Regional Coordinator, the IPPC ePhyto Development Team and the national stakeholders.

How were the key Stakeholders identified?
NPPO Uganda recognized the two major groups, the National and the Regional and International stakeholders.   The national stakeholders were easily identified since they were two major groups. The NPPO Uganda Inspectors tasked with inspection and certification of consignments moving in international trade and the exporting community (exporters).   The regional and international community comprised of the regional and international Plant Protection offices or their equivalent and the importers in the destination countries as well as the IPPC.

What process did you have for consulting with these key stakeholders?
The Head of NPPO Uganda, who is the Commissioner Crop Inspection and Certification, wrote a notification/ sensitization letter that was disseminated to stakeholders using various channels.   The letters were both electronically transmitted and hand delivered to relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies, to all exporters, through their Apex Bodies, placed on notice boards and also shared via whatsapp messages on various social media commodity platforms. The letter provided information on the GeNS system, the intent to implement it, the method of enrolment of stakeholders on the GeNS and the timelines.

Were the stakeholders engaged in the design of the ePhyto service?
The major stakeholders consulted in the design of the system were the NPPO Uganda staff, the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries' National Task Force on Phytosanitary matters and to some extent the Fruits and Vegetable Exporting community.

What process did you undertake to get buy-in from senior management in your NPPO?
Based on the past experiences and gaps detailed in various reports on official phytosanitary controls in Uganda, the NPPO embarked on a journey to convince Senior Management on the need to embrace and quickly implement the GeNS ePhyto system. Some of the key issues to be addressed by the GeNS were, to strengthen official controls through provision of mechanisms to contracting parties to authenticate issued PCs guided by ISPM 12, implement ISPM 23 for inspection and certification of export consignments, address the need for availability of real time reliable statistical trade data to help in decision making such as, justification for increase of inspector numbers deployed at particular inspection points. Furthermore, the Head of NPPO Uganda, gave a brief on the international visit to the launch of the GeNS which was further augmented by the information provided by the ePhyto Africa Regional Coordinator through his interface with the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries' National Task Force on Phytosanitary matters provided a solution to the existing gaps. Thus the Senior Management team approved the launch of the GeNS ePhyto system in Uganda.

Did you do a Business Process Analysis (BPA) of the existing paper processes before designing and implementing the ePhyto service (including a cost comparison)?
Yes, though not elaborately documented. Based on the process description of the issuance of paper PCs, time involved for both NPPO Uganda staff and exporting clients as well as money spent by public and private sector.

If yes, did you use this to develop the new procedures?
Yes

Was any other research undertaken?
No

Was there a pilot project? If yes, please describe (e.g. what countries and or products were chosen)?
The pilot project involved the horticulture sector, this is the flowers, fruits and vegetables export sector. This sector mainly exports to the European Union.

How long did it take from the initial discussions on ePhyto in your country to the first exchange of Production ePhytos through the Hub?
7 months.

Did implementing ePhyto take more or less time than you expected?
It took less time than we had anticipated.

What was your biggest challenge to overcome in implementing ePhyto in your country?
Training the various sectors and individuals involved on use to the system.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Was there resistance from any specific sectors or agencies in establishing the service? If so, how was this handled?
Yes, there was hesitation by various exporters to embrace the system. They thought the process would be more bureaucratic, punctuated with delays and expensive. These uncertainties were handled using four approaches. First, the project implementers engaged the NPPO Uganda Inspectors, through trainings on the friendliness of the GeNS as well as the solutions it could provide to the current challenges experienced by NPPO Uganda. Secondly, NPPO Uganda deployed its staff to engage in one on one continuous sensitization for the exporters, on the benefits to them by using the GeNS -ePhyto system. Thirdly, NPPO Uganda drew up a stakeholder engagement work plan which included a series of sensitization, trainings and enrolment dates. Lastly NPPO Uganda hired an Information Technologist who is charged with liaising with the ePhyto development Team, provision of support to users both NPPO Uganda Inspectors and exporters, registration and training of new users.

Was a specific Change Management programme implemented? If so, please describe.
No, not really.

What kind of training was provided for users?
The Africa Regional ePhyto Coordinator visited Uganda and conducted the initial training for NPPO Uganda Inspectors and the Heads of the Horticulture Associations. Thereafter, stakeholder trainings were organized by the Project Implementation Team. The training followed the information package on the IPPC website for the GeNS. The trainings and embracement of the GeNS has been successful due to the involvement of the Head of NPPO Uganda.

Do you provide any helpdesk or customer service?
Yes, the Information Technologist provides this support function.

COMMUNICATIONS

How were the stakeholders kept informed about the ePhyto implementation progress?
Stakeholders were kept informed on the ePhyto implementation progress through letters and response to the email and telephone inquiries.

How did you promote ePhyto to the business community, other stakeholders?
Particular NPPO UGANDA Inspectors are assigned to inspect and certify specific commodities. These Inspectors were charged with sensitizing the clients they serve. NPPO Uganda introduced a system, whereby any intending exporter is introduced to the project implementing team, by the commodity Inspector. Then the team would request for all client details to be registered in the GeNS, which is then used to register the exporter immediately. The whole process takes about 5 minutes only.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

How did you monitor and evaluate progress in implementing ePhyto and in achieving the project objectives? What Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) did you use?
Key performance indicators used are: -   Number of Crop Commodity Sectors and exporters enrolled onto the GeNS. -   Number of Inspectors trained and issuing phytosanitary certificates through the GeNS -   Download of reports (Phytosanitary certificates issued monthly, per commodity, per destinations, per Clients, per Inspectors etc) -   Number of complaints received from the system users -   Number of contracting parties willing to receive and send ePhytos certificate to and from Uganda

BENEFITS OBTAINED

What are the main benefits generated by the introduction of ePhyto?
(1)   **For your NPPO** -   NPPO Uganda is able to serve clients better, by inspecting and issuing Phytosanitary certificates for complying consignments in time. -   No system delays due to unavailability of manual Phytosanitary certificates -   The NPPO has been able to reduce the documentary non-compliances (errors, forgeries) since official data is inputted by Inspectors and system enrolment is transparent. -   NPPO Uganda has made budgetary savings by not procuring anymore manual phytosanitary certificates. -   Data is now available, accurate and real time. -   NPPO Uganda now has a direct communication link to NPPO destination markets, and able to respond to their queries in time and appropriately. (2)   **For Companies** -   Exporting companies are assured of a service in and on time. They do not need to worry about the unavailability of the manual certificates. -   Exporters are assured of transmission of the Phytosanitary certificates to destination NPPOs, hence in case of loss of the hard copy certificates enroute, the destination will have copies. -   Reduced interceptions due to documentation error, because most of the information is inserted and verified by the NPPO. -   Exporting companies are able to keep better and accurate data for reference and follow up. (3)   **Others?** -   Destination trading partner NPPOs are able to have the confidence in the systems for issuance of phytosanitary certificates by NPPO Uganda.

What problems did it solve?
-    The confidence and trust by contracting parties for issued phytosanitary certificates from Uganda increased. -   NPPO Uganda drastically reduced and eventually eliminated procurements for paper as well as reduced the storage space for records. -   The ePhyto reduced on the documentation non-compliances due to typing errors and loss through travel. -   NPPO Uganda is able to collect reliable trade statistics in real time for report writing and inform major decisions.

| - | The exporters enjoy reduced business transaction costs for travel time and expenses to submit application requests for and receive Phytosanitary certificates. |

Is it possible to put a dollar value on the benefits achieved?
No, it is not possible at all to put a dollar value on the benefits of the GeNS to Uganda. The achievements are way beyond the initial imagination and the potential for growth is still huge.

COSTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

How much did it cost to establish ePhyto in your country?
Major costs involved purchase of some laptops for key inspectors and internet bundles by users.

What were the main costs areas?
Internet availability

What are the ongoing operational costs (annual)?
Internet costs for both the public and private sector with additional paper costs for the private sector where destinations still use paper certificates.

Do you charge for issuing a Phytosanitary Certificate? If yes, what is the charge per certificate?
Yes, currently the fee is USD 1.63, soon to be increased to about USD 6.80

Are there any additional user fees for ePhyto?
None at all.

If yes, Do the revenues generated cover operational costs?
N/A

Are the revenues (if any) reinvested in the facility?
N/A, all revenue is Non Tax Revenue deposited on the Government Consolidated Fund.

How will the facility/service be sustained over the coming years?
In the future, it is envisaged that the revenues will be increased and ring fenced for NPPO utilisation at source to cater for such operational costs.

FUNDING SOURCE(S)

How was the implementation of ePhyto funded?
NPPO Uganda implemented GeNS through its own resources and the technical assistance of the IPPC ePhyto development team at UNICC. NPPO Uganda, through the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries, provided an airplane ticket to the ePhyto Africa Regional Coordinator to visit Uganda and conduct the initial training as well as meet the Senior Management and the Phytosanitary Task Force.
Did you receive Donor Support? If so, please describe.
Please see above

CAPACITY BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Describe any capacity building or technical assistance you received, including the source:
(1)   **to conceptualise and design your country's approach to ePhyto** The IPPC e-Phyto development team at the UNICC worked with the Uganda NPPO to customise the GeNS implementation to suite Uganda's needs. The Uganda NPPO team is constantly communicating with the IPPC ePhyto Team. The IPPC ePhyto Team's turnaround time to address system development requests is on average 3 hours to 6 hours while to address operational challenges is a maximum of one hour. Furthermore, the training package on the IPPC website has been a resourceful tool kit.
(2)   **to actually implement ePhyto** Internal self -training, virtual support from the IPPC ePhyto team and the ePhyto Africa Regional Coordinator.

LEGISLATION CHANGES REQUIRED

Were any specific legislation changes necessary?
Yes
If so, what was the process and how long did this take?
Thankfully, the onset of the GeNS coincided with the revision of the Plant Protection and Health Regulations for Import and Export. Hence this has facilitated the provision for e-Phyto sanitary certificates.
How is the privacy of information protected?
The GeNS provides for various administrative rights for different user levels. Furthermore, Inspectors employed in the National Plant Protection Organisation are sworn in on oath to ensure confidentiality of government business and that of clients. The GeNS system is not considered a public system hence the client's information is secure.

TECHNOLOGY

What were the additional hardware or software or Internet facilities required to introduce ePhyto in your NPPO?
NPPO Uganda had to ensure Inspectors have laptops or tablets.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

What are the main lessons learned from implementing this service?
- Exporters and importers will embrace an efficient working system that facilitates trade and reduces transaction costs.
- The implementing NPPO has to provide great customer service. This facilitates continued enrolment and embracing of the system by exporters
- The world is interconnected very closely
- Continuous improvement is key

What were the crucial success factors?
- Dedicated ePhyto Hub, which does not require support funds from contracting parties.
- Support from the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries Top Policy Organ and the Head NPPO Uganda,
- Connection to the rest of the NPPOs
- Initial training for NPPO Inspectors,
- Quick turnaround solutions,
- Consistency and no breakdowns
- System ability to provide reports
- Sector by sector commodity training and sensitisation,
- The system compatibility with other systems in place.

What were the greatest obstacles?
Ensuring each Inspector has a laptop connected to Internet

What are the biggest obstacles to further development of the Facility/service?
Translation of the phytosanitary certificate to various languages and the NPPOs being able to issue phytosanitary certificates in various languages.

Are you or other colleagues available to be resources to other countries implementing ePhyto?
Yes, we are available.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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