

EPHYTO IMPLEMENTATION CASE STORY

QUESTIONNAIRE

Country	Panamá
NPPO	Dirección Nacional de Sanidad Vegetal, Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario
Contact Person	Pablo Rodriguez G./ Rubén Serracín U.
Designation	National Director/ Chief of Phytosanitary Certification Department
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TYPE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Please indicate if you have implemented ePhyto through:

- Your own National System?
- or
- The IPPC Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS)?

Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS)

Briefly describe your ePhyto implementation setup (maximum 150 words)

Panama registered in the IPPC ePhyto solution in April 2021 and began the electronic exchange with the USA on September 15 of the same year. These two stages occurred when there were still serious restrictions due to COVID-19.

In the first instance, we received collaboration from the IPPC ePhyto Steering Group, the United Nations International Computer Center (UNICC), SENASA Argentina, and the USDA. with the Onboarding document questionnaire, a requirement for registration in GeNS.

Representatives of the NPPOs of Chile and the Dominican Republic trained four (4) regulatory level officials of the Department of Phytosanitary Certification in the functionalities of the GeNS system. For the first phase of implementation, it was agreed to start with two provinces, in which exporters were selected to train them in GeNS. Subsequently, we added more exporters and other provinces.

Please also indicate briefly (maximum 150 words) the main reasons for your choice of implementation model (i.e. GeNS or National System)

Panama does not have its own national system for the issuance of Phytosanitary Certificates that's why GeNS was chosen, which is available to all contracting parties of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and has the harmonized information in the Phytosanitary Certificates.

The use of GeNS is free, so NPPOs do not need to make investments in system development, maintenance and improvements. It is a friendly, versatile and intuitive platform, quickly adopted by users. It also has online tutorials to facilitate the training of exporters and NPPO technicians.

BASIC ePHYTO STATISTICS FOR YOUR COUNTRY

<p>How many ePhytos do you transmit and receive per month through the IPPC ePhyto Hub (average over the past 3 months)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Export = 603 - Re-Export = N/A - Import = 796 - Note: Panama also uses the GeNS to issue Phytosanitary Certificates in PDF format to more than 50 countries, with which electronic exchange agreements have not yet been formalized. For these countries, an average of 1,289 certificates per month were processed in GeNS.
<p>What main countries are you exchanging ePhytos with via the IPPC ePhyto Hub?</p>
<p>USA, European Union, Northern Ireland, Switzerland, Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica and Guatemala.</p>
<p>Are there new countries to and from which you are now trading as a result of implementing ePhyto?</p>
<p>No</p>

PROJECT DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

<p>How did you organise the implementation of ePhyto in your country? Was a project team or steering group established to guide the project?</p>
<p>The implementation was in charge of the technical staff of the Phytosanitary Certification Department with the support of the ePhyto Steering Group of the IPPC and the collaboration of the NPPOs of the USA, Argentina, Chile and the Dominican Republic.</p>
<p>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)?</p>
<p>Four (4) technicians from the regulatory level of the Department of Phytosanitary Certification of the National Directorate of Plant Health (ONPF of Panama) participated.</p>
<p>How were the key Stakeholders identified?</p>
<p>The NPPO database in which exporters of regulated articles, inspectors and phytosanitary certification officers are registered served to identify and select the Stakeholders.</p>
<p>What process did you have for consulting with these key stakeholders?</p>
<p>First of all, they asked about the convenience of using a technological platform to manage electronic phytosanitary certificates that would be sent to the country of destination in real time and would eliminate paper. Then, they were consulted and convened for training sessions on GeNS, in order to introduce them to the tool.</p>
<p>Were the stakeholders engaged in the design of the ePhyto service?</p>
<p>Yes, they were. NPPO technical staff, exporters, port administrators, logistics agents, customs brokers, among others, participated in the activities for the implementation of ePhyto.</p>
<p>What process did you undertake to get buy-in from senior management in your NPPO?</p>

In the midst of mobility restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary to find technological solutions that would guarantee the continuity of trade, so it was an appropriate environment for the implementation of ePhyto. With these conditions, it was easy to convince decision makers about the convenience and advantages of ePhyto.
Did you do a Business Process Analysis (BPA) of the existing paper processes before designing and implementing the ePhyto service (including a cost comparison)?
No, we did not.
If yes, did you use this to develop the new procedures?
N/A
Was any other research undertaken?
No
Was there a pilot project? If yes, please describe (e.g. what countries and or products were chosen)?
<p>Yes, there was a pilot plan.</p> <p>In August 2021, we started the ePhyto GeNS training process in two provinces. The theoretical-practical training events were organized separately in half-day sessions for representatives of exporting companies and for technicians.</p> <p>Twenty representatives of 12 companies that export cucurbits, pineapple, coffee and bananas to the USA were trained, in addition to 19 inspectors and officials from the NPPO, who would be in charge of attending to the phytosanitary certification processes in GeNS and reinforcing the knowledge of the exporters acquired in the training.</p> <p>To start the electronic exchange with the USA, some phytosanitary certificates were sent for a week in the test environment of the GeNS system and confirmation was received from USDA-APHIS that they were receiving the phytosanitary certificates issued by Panama.</p> <p>In September 2021, we began the electronic transmission of electronic certificates through the ePhyto "hub" to the USA.</p>
How long did it take from the initial discussions on ePhyto in your country to the first exchange of Production ePhytos through the Hub?
1 year
Did implementing ePhyto take more or less time than you expected?
It took less time than expected.
What was your biggest challenge to overcome in implementing ePhyto in your country?
Raise awareness of the importance of ePhyto among decision makers and some NPPO inspectors and officials.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Was there resistance from any specific sectors or agencies in establishing the service? If so, how was this handled?
No. Generally speaking, ePhyto was very well received by stakeholders.
Was a specific Change Management programme implemented? If so, please describe.
It was not necessary.
What kind of training was provided for users?
Theoretical-practical days of four (4) hours for exporters, logistics agents, port administrators, other external users, inspectors and officers of the NPPO. It was very helpful to have a test environment GeNS site for the trainings. Some training days were virtual and others face-to-face.
Do you provide any helpdesk or customer service?
No. The NPPO regulatory level official team was in charge of the queries from external users.

COMMUNICATIONS

How were the stakeholders kept informed about the ePhyto implementation progress?
The stakeholders were informed through training activities, virtual and face-to-face meetings, participation in fairs, social networks, web pages of the Ministry of Agriculture, radio programs, newspapers, among others.
How did you promote ePhyto to the business community, other stakeholders?
Through publications on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, meetings with associations of exporters and administrators of seaports, participation in fairs, radio programs, newspapers, social networks, among others.

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?
We monitor the number of exporters using ePhyto GeNS, the number of phytosanitary certificates issued in GeNS and of these how many are electronic.

BENEFITS OBTAINED

What are the main benefits generated by the introduction of ePhyto?
<p>(1) For your NPPO Greater transparency, reduction in counterfeiting, availability of information at all times, traceability throughout the process of issuing phytosanitary certificates, the use of the platform is free, it does not require investment in development and improvements by the NPPO, 24/7 availability.</p> <p>(2) For Companies Friendly process, agile procedures, reduction in costs associated with messaging, immediate availability of information and at any time, importers receive certificates in real time and can verify them, certificate replacement processes are very easy.</p>
What problems did it solve?
With the implementation of ePhyto GeNS, the transition from the manual process to a robust and friendly electronic platform was facilitated, with an extremely low investment.
Is it possible to put a dollar value on the benefits achieved?
There is a reduction in operating costs for all users, but we do not have economic studies to prove it.

COSTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

How much did it cost to establish ePhyto in your country?
We do not have an economic analysis; however, it is estimated that the main costs were those related to training and the mobilization of regulatory personnel to these events.
What were the main costs areas?
Expenses associated with the salary of regulatory personnel and their mobilization to training events.
What are the ongoing operational costs (annual)?
None.
Do you charge for issuing a Phytosanitary Certificate? If yes, what is the charge per certificate?
Yes, \$15.00/certificate
Are there any additional user fees for ePhyto?
No
If yes, Do the revenues generated cover operational costs?
N/A
Are the revenues (if any) reinvested in the facility?
N/A
How will the facility/service be sustained over the coming years?
The sustainability of the service is analyzed by the IPPC and the contracting parties. The ONPF includes in its budget the costs associated with the provision of internet, the provision of computer equipment and the salary of inspectors and officers.

FUNDING SOURCE(S)

How was the implementation of ePhyto funded?
Funds were only needed for training internal and external users, which were financed with operating funds from the NPPO.
Did you receive Donor Support? If so, please describe.
No

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 We received technical assistance from the ePhyto Steering Group of the IPPC, the United Nations International Computer Center (UNICC), SENASA Argentina, and the USDA.
(2) to actually implement ePhyto Technical assistance for the training of trainers of the NPPO of the Dominican Republic and Chile.

LEGISLATION CHANGES REQUIRED

Were any specific legislation changes necessary?
No
If so, what was the process and how long did this take?
N/A
How is the privacy of information protected?
GeNS security is handled by UNICC, with high standards.

TECHNOLOGY

What were the additional hardware or software or Internet facilities required to introduce ePhyto in your NPPO?
It was not necessary to make new investments.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

What are the main lessons learned from implementing this service?
Global solutions such as ePhyto can be implemented at low cost and very quickly thanks to horizontal cooperation between NPPOs and the effective intervention of specialized IPPC groups.
What were the crucial success factors?
The acceptance of the GeNS by external users, the teamwork with the IPPC, cooperating NPPOs and the support of the technical and administrative staff of our NPPO.
What were the greatest obstacles?
The main obstacle so far is reaching agreements for electronic exchanges with some NPPOs of important trading partners.
What are the biggest obstacles to further development of the Facility/service?
The poor communication and responses of some NPPOs, which are requested to exchange electronically.
Are you or other colleagues available to be resources to other countries implementing ePhyto?
Yes.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Website:	www.mida.gob.pa
Contact details	- Pablo Rodríguez prodriguez@mida.gob.pa - Rubén Serracín U. rserracin@mida.gob.pa