



## Making trade safe by **harmonizing electronic data exchange**

International trade has expanded the global economy and has brought prosperity, but it has also acted as a pathway for the introduction and spread of plant pests.

Plant pests carried across borders have caused significant pest outbreaks and devastated widely traded crops such as maize, coffee, olives and bananas. This impacts food production chains, food security, biodiversity and the global economy.

Exported consignments require phytosanitary certificates to attest that they meet phytosanitary import requirements of the importing country. But paper certificates can be problematic to process, causing delays and are exposed to fraud that increases the risk of plant pests moving across borders.



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### About the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

The IPPC is a multilateral treaty established to protect the world's plants, agricultural products and natural resources from plant pests.

Established in 1951, IPPC is ratified by 185 countries.

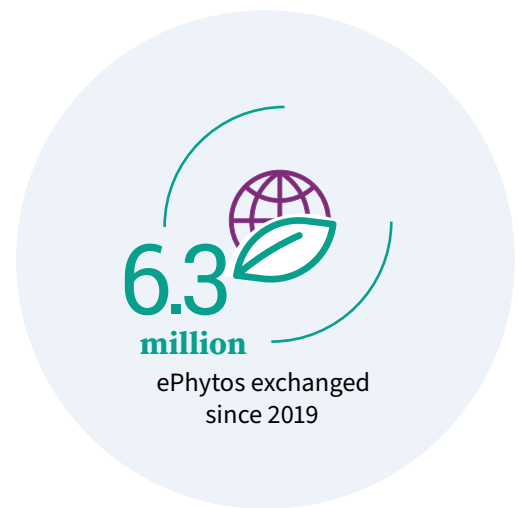
The IPPC Secretariat and community are focusing on eight **development agenda items (DAIs)** to achieve the objectives in the [IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030](#).

These agenda items, in various stages of implementation, are:

1. harmonization of electronic data exchange;
2. commodity- and pathway-specific International standard phytosanitary measures (ISPMs);
3. management of e-commerce and postal and courier pathways;
4. developing guidance on the use of third-party entities;
5. strengthening pest outbreak alert and response systems (POARS);
6. assessment and management of climate change impacts on plant health;
7. global phytosanitary research coordination; and
8. diagnostic laboratory networking.

## Challenges

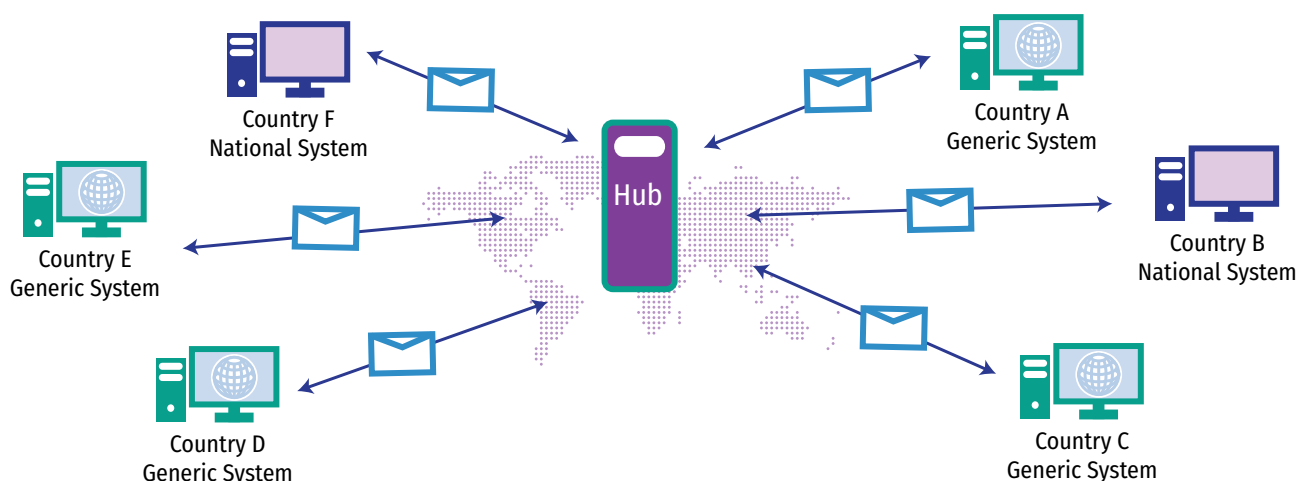
- » Plant pests disrupt international trade. Up to USD 220 billion in trade is lost annually from the global economy due to pests. They impact trade especially when importing countries reject pest-infested consignments.
- » Using paper phytosanitary certificates is costly and prone to delays, losses, damages and fraud.
- » Trade disruptions come at a high cost to the shipping industry. For example, clean up and treatment of sea containers contaminated with plant pests are expensive, including huge fines and trade losses due to delayed shipments.
- » While some countries have digitized their systems in line with the IPPC and relevant international standards for phytosanitary measures, most countries find it costly to establish and maintain bilateral digital exchanges with all trading partners.



## Solution

In 2014, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) developed the **IPPC ePhyto Solution**, a global online system that enables countries to exchange the electronic equivalent of paper phytosanitary certificates. Countries send or receive ePhytos through a centralized exchange system called the Hub that avoids the need for bilateral negotiations for establishing digital relationships.

Once a country is connected to the Hub, it can technically exchange ePhytos with all other countries which are also connected and ePhytos may be issued where accepted by the national plant protection organization (NPPO) of the importing country. Countries without a purpose-built system can use the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS), a centralized web-based system to create, send and receive ePhytos. The Hub and GeNS, both components of the IPPC ePhyto Solution, also provide harmonized information, thus reducing interceptions due to documentation non-compliance.



**Figure1.** The Hub allows countries to exchange electronic certificates with other countries connected to the Hub via a generic web-based or an existing national system containing harmonized rules for participation.



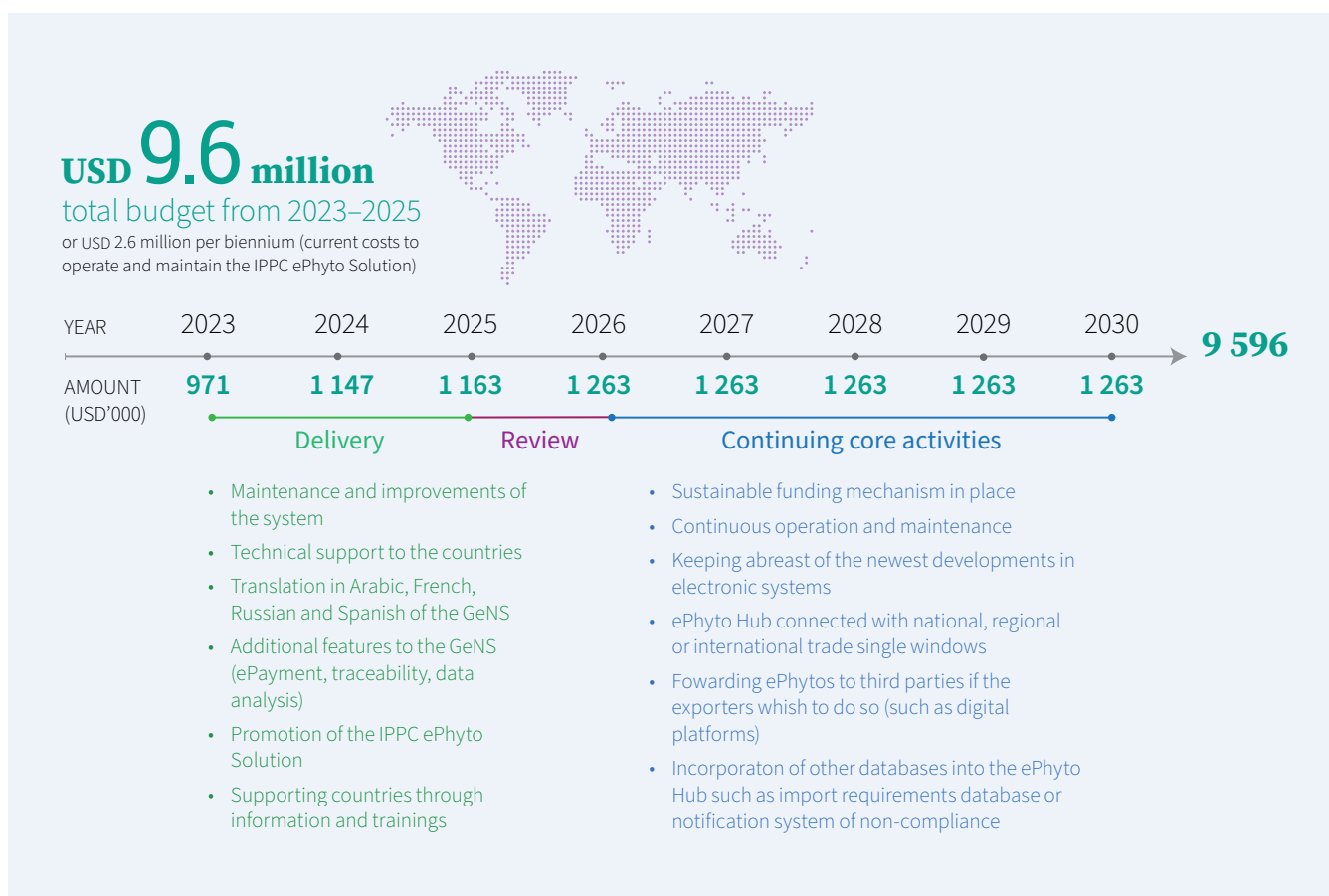
## Benefits

- » Simplifies trade
- » Reduces business transaction costs
- » Expedites clearance of compliant products
- » Eliminates fraud thus reduces risks of spreading pests
- » Significant savings on time and cost. For example, in Morocco – USD 37.4 million and USD 43.2 million of savings were generated in 2020 and 2021 respectively.<sup>1</sup>
- » Developing countries that could not afford to build electronic exchange systems can exchange ePhytos using the GeNS.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the increase in the number of phytosanitary certificates issued in one country, according to a 2023 study by the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation.



## Current status and opportunity to invest



The IPPC ePhyto Solution will help reduce transaction costs and expedite clearance of compliant products, however, adoption and usage remain low. The system must match international plant trade volumes and ensure movement of healthy plants.

To get more countries on board, the IPPC intends to:

- » conduct in person/online trainings and webinars on the IPPC ePhyto Solution in various languages;

- » convene a biennial conference to increase awareness among NPPOs and industry actors, to share successes and lessons, find solutions to challenges and discuss improvements in the IPPC ePhyto solution; and
- » originally available in English and already translated in Arabic and French, translate the GeNS platform also to Russian and Spanish to enable more countries to use the system; and
- » maintain and enhance the ePhyto Hub and GeNS.

## Why your investment matters

- » When sustainably financed, the countries using the IPPC ePhyto solution will have greater reassurance that it will continue to be available in the long term.
- » The Solution streamlines processes that will significantly save time and resources, eliminate fraud and reduce the risk of introduction or spread of plant pests.
- » By investing in ePhyto, you will help IPPC support safe international trade, including promoting International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs).



## Funding mechanism

Contact us on how you can contribute financially or in kind by sending an email to [ippc-dai@fao.org](mailto:ippc-dai@fao.org).

For other inquiries, please email Sarah Brunel at [sarah.brunel@fao.org](mailto:sarah.brunel@fao.org).

**Invest in the IPPC ePhyto Solution today and help make international trade safe.**

### CONTACT US

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### MORE RESOURCES

Web:

<https://www.ephytoexchange.org/landing/>

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjDz7aOv-Ys>



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