



# Plant health and trade facilitation

In today's globalized world, trade is a driver for economic development. Many countries depend on trading large quantities of plants and plant products, such as grain, fruit and vegetables or timber to sustain their economies. Yet trade could introduce and spread plant pests and threaten natural plant resources, managed crops, biodiversity and forest production. Therefore, it is important to facilitate safe trade preventing the spread of plant pests avoiding unjustifiable barriers.

Core to the facilitation of safe trade is the implementation of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and its International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) that provide globally harmonized guidance for countries to manage pest risks thus effectively ensuring safe and efficient trade of plants and agricultural products, and supporting developing and developed countries in accessing new markets.

For plant health, the international standards developed under the auspices of the International Plant Protection Convention are recognized by the World Trade Organization's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement). The SPS Agreement aims to protect human, animal or plant life or health through the application of necessary measures subject to the requirement that these measures are technically justified and do not pose a disguised restriction on international trade.

In order to reduce the risk of spreading pests, plants are often required to be accompanied by printed phytosanitary certificates, issued by the national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) of the exporting country, to attest that the commodity meets the requirements of the importing country. However, trade is evolving and the IPPC should also be evolving with it.

## ePhyto

In 2014, the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) adopted Appendix 1 to ISPM 12 (*Electronic phytosanitary certificates, information on standard XML schemes and exchange mechanisms*), a crucial step towards the global harmonization of electronic certification schemes. An ePhyto solution developed by the IPPC Secretariat serves the same purpose as the old-fashioned paper equivalent. Moving towards electronic-based, paper-free technology for the exchange of certificate information will facilitate trade even more. Trade using ePhyto will become much quicker, allowing the exporting country to insert and share information almost in real time. It should also help reduce fraudulent certificates by using secure, direct exchanges between national plant protection organizations. Indeed, the development of an ePhyto system will help give developing countries a fair chance to join in the electronic exchange of data at reduced costs.



