Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES
15-17 NOVEMBER 2023

COMMUNICATION FROM CÔTE D'IVOIRE

The following document, received on 15 November 2023, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire.

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Item 2(a) Information on Côte d'Ivoire's e-phyto certification system

1.1. On 3 May 2023, Côte d'Ivoire officially transitioned to the issuance of electronic phytosanitary (ePhyto) certificates. This system covers Côte d'Ivoire's foreign trade in plants and plant products.

1.2. This reform falls within the context of the implementation of the Agreement on SPS Measures and also seeks to facilitate trade by streamlining Côte d'Ivoire's export and re-export operations.

1.3. It should be noted that in Côte d'Ivoire, as in most countries, the purpose of issuing phytosanitary certificates is to certify that exported goods are free from dangerous pests, in order to prevent their introduction and spread in the countries of destination of the goods.

1.4. To this end, Côte d'Ivoire adopted, from the outset, the model phytosanitary certificates of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

1.5. However, paper-based certificates have long shown their limits in terms of trade, insofar as they have imposed various constraints on both the phytosanitary administration and private operators, resulting in administrative delays, high costs for the dispatch of documents, and the risk of damage or loss, or the risk of fraud and falsification of paper-based phytosanitary certificates, which could sully or discredit the country's exports in the eyes of its foreign partners.

1.6. That is why, in the age of digitalization, Côte d'Ivoire has chosen to introduce a process whereby phytosanitary certificates are issued electronically, thus facilitating trade and making it safer, faster and less expensive.

1.7. Naturally, the new electronic certificate draws and builds on the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM 12) on the principles and guidelines for the issuance of phytosanitary certificates, as set out in the IPPC.

1.8. Côte d'Ivoire's ePhyto system has been implemented under the Ministry responsible for agriculture, but through the Single Window for Foreign Trade (GUCE-CI) platform, which is overseen by the Ministry responsible for trade.

1.9. In 2013, Côte d'Ivoire established a Single Window for Foreign Trade, which now includes some 20 modules covering specific steps and procedures related to foreign trade formalities. The ePhyto System is one of the modules.

1.10. The first phase of the project was implemented between 2018 and 2022, and involved the creation, development and implementation of Version 1 (V1) of the ePhyto module, which was

limited to online requests for phytosanitary certificates followed by the issuance of paper-based phytosanitary certificates.

1.11. As of 2021, Côte d'Ivoire has developed and implemented phase 2 of this project, thus digitalizing both requests for and the issuance of ePhyto certificates. Therefore, since 3 May this year, all exporters of plants or plant products have had their phytosanitary certificates issued electronically.

1.12. Specifically, the functionalities of the e-certification platform allow requests to be made and validated online and ePhyto certificates to be created and sent to requesting economic operators in Côte d'Ivoire. The functionalities also allow ePhyto certificates to be received from external economic partners and facilitate the exchange of ePhyto certificates between the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) of Côte d'Ivoire (DPVCQ) and other NPPOs around the world.

1.13. As such, the electronic platform has effectively facilitated safe and sustainable trade with the country's partners. It has also minimized fraud and improved transparency, reliability and traceability, owing to, in particular, the inclusion of an electronic signature system and QR code. For the administration especially, the system has made it possible to have better statistical records on phytosanitary issues.

1.14. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Single Window also includes an e-inspection module that allows the phytosanitary administration and other authorities responsible for inspections to schedule one-time coordinated inspection visits with a view to reducing the number of inspections for any given operator.

1.15. Several stakeholders are involved in this reform at the national level, namely the Directorate for Plant Protection, Control and Quality (NPPO), the Single Window for Foreign Trade, exporters and forwarding agents.

1.16. The project has also benefited from the support of international technical and financial partners, such as the IPPC Secretariat; the Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Programme, implemented by the World Bank Group (IFC) with funding from the European Union, USAID, the Netherlands and German cooperation; and the Competitive Value Chains for Jobs and Economic Transformation Project, also funded by the World Bank.

1.17. However, the roll-out of the ePhyto system faces a number of challenges, including:

- Training all phytosanitary inspectors and private operators in the proper use of the ePhyto module and making the system operational at all land and rail entry points;
- Constructing or installing appropriate infrastructure for efficient inspections at land and rail entry points;
- Providing digital tablets with Internet connection to inspectors for data entry during inspections.

1.18. Looking forward, Côte d'Ivoire also plans to develop a similar module for veterinary certification, eVeto, which will be included as a module of the Single Window for Foreign Trade and will apply to trade in meat and fish products.

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