

16 July 2020

(20-4851)

Page: 1/2

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: Spanish

**MEASURES CONCERNING PHYTOSANITARY CERTIFICATES AIMED
AT THE FACILITATION OF TRADE IN VIEW OF ISSUES
ARISING FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

COMMUNICATION FROM COLOMBIA

The following communication, received on 16 July 2020, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Colombia.

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1. Given that the health emergency arising from the COVID-19 pandemic makes it impossible to send paper versions of phytosanitary certificates due to the reduction in, and restrictions on, international flights;
 2. Considering that steps must be taken to facilitate the export process for plants, plant products, and other regulated items, while ensuring the timely submission of phytosanitary certificates to the plant health authorities of importing Members and mitigating the risks arising from contact between inspectors and users; and
 3. Mindful that various National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) are providing alternative ways to submit plant and animal health certificates in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA) wishes to notify the following:
 - i. A new procedure has been established for issuing phytosanitary certificates that includes an electronic signature in documents through a scanned image directly from the Colombian Health Information System for Agricultural and Livestock Imports and Exports (SISPAP); a QR code is included to guarantee the authenticity of the certificate issued.
 - ii. The electronic signature has been used for certificates since 6 June 2020 in order to ensure compliance with the preventive lockdown measures recommended by the health authorities in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - iii. This new procedure for issuing phytosanitary certificates was notified, through Colombia's consulates and embassies, to NPPOs throughout the world, in accordance with International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) guidelines.
 - iv. The new phytosanitary certificates contain an electronic signature and a QR code that replaces the ICA's former physical stamp. It should be noted that the new phytosanitary certificate is an original document, not a copy, and no other version may subsequently be submitted by the importer.
 - v. Countries may validate the authenticity of certificates through the following URL: https://afrodita.ica.gov.co/consultas_cfe/AddCONSULTAS_CFEPage.aspx.
 4. Furthermore, in order to be able to count on the valuable cooperation of WTO Members, we kindly request that copies of phytosanitary certificates issued by the ICA be accepted and recognised.
 5. We have attached instructions for verifying phytosanitary certificates (in English and Spanish) through the URL and the QR code. Further information may be requested by email from asuntos.internacionales@ica.gov.co or margarita.lubo@ica.gov.co.

6. We also attach, for information purposes, models of the ICA phytosanitary certificates that will be submitted during the inspection process.

7. Lastly, Colombia emphasizes that this communication is being made for the purposes of transparency, without prejudice to the country's rights and obligations under the SPS Agreement.
