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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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## INFORMATION ON ECUADOR'S EPHYTO CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

### COMMUNICATION FROM ECUADOR

The following communication, received on 18 March 2024, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Ecuador.

1. In June 2023, the Ecuadorian Agency for Plant and Animal Health Regulation and Control (AGROCALIDAD) began the process for the issuance of ePhyto electronic phytosanitary certificates, which would enable the country to issue phytosanitary export certificates in a new digital format.
2. With that objective in mind, Ecuador is working actively to develop the technology used in its systems and has conducted technical tests involving Musaceae and pitahaya exports with various countries. From 14 August 2023, it began to progressively issue digital phytosanitary export certificates to other countries, issuing more than 41,000 digital certificates by 29 February 2024. A total of 18,875 of those certificates are ePhyto certificates covering all Ecuadorian exports, with the exception of cut ornamental plants.
3. Ecuador will begin transmission tests with a number of interested countries with which it has already signed agreements and is equally as committed to shortly carrying out tests with those countries that require additional assurances.
4. This process represents an important step for ensuring transparency, as it provides assurances for National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) by preventing potential fraud or modifications and guaranteeing compliance with the phytosanitary standards established by each importing country.
5. Furthermore, the use of ePhyto certificates helps protect the environment, as it allows for a 100% reduction in the use of paper by eliminating the need for physical certificates. Phytosanitary export certificates can be searched and verified at: <https://guia.agrocalidad.gob.ec/agrodb/aplicaciones/mvc/CertificadoFitosanitario/CertificadoFitosanitarioDatosPublicos>.
6. It is important to point out that illegal trade based on falsified certificates has been the main cause of many environmental problems (crop loss, invasive plants and diseases). Moreover, ePhyto certificates allow for information to be obtained in real time, with the aim of helping to improve planning prior to the arrival of a shipment for the purposes of the customs risk assessment, thereby reducing the time required for administrative procedures and increasing the shelf life of products and preventing food waste.
7. Ecuador calls for collaboration from Members' representatives, particularly their NPPO focal points, in initiating the data transmission tests, with a view to increasing the number of countries using the ePhyto system.
8. Lastly, please be informed that, in the medium term, Ecuador will start to receive ePhyto electronic phytosanitary certificates from other countries.