STDF PROJECT GRANT (PG)

APPLICATION FORM

Project Title	Enhancing multilateral e-veterinary certification in Latin America and the Caribbean
Objective	Developing a pilot for a generic multilateral e-veterinary certification scheme for trade in animals and products of animal origin
Budget requested from STDF	US$853,600 with 10% overhead
In kind contribution	US$200,000
Total project budget	US$1,053,600 * considered the regional scope with 1 LDC.
Full name and contact details of the requesting organization(s)	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) - Sede Central 600 m. Noreste del Cruce Ipís-Coronado Vásquez de Coronado, San Isidro 11101 – Costa Rica. San José, Costa Rica Phone: (+506) 2216 0222 Email: iicahq@iica.int
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I.   BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

1.   Relevance for the STDF

With the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, governments and industry partners around the world are actively seeking solutions to move goods across borders more quickly and efficiently.

Paperless SPS systems can improve traceability throughout SPS supply chains, lower food waste, cut trade times and costs, reduce fraudulent certificates, and build trust among trading partners[1] [2]. Some of the proven benefits of multilateral electronic certification schemes could be summarized as following[3]:

- Reduced potential for fraudulent certificates.

- reduced data entry and validation activities by national authorities improving efficiencies.

- Improved security in the transmission of certificates when compared with paper certificates.

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[1] https://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/e_Cert_Briefing_note_EN.pdf
[2] https://www.standardsfacility.org/SPS-eCert
[3] https://www.ephytoexchange.org/landing/harmonization/index.html

- Efficiencies in arrival and clearance of certified products at the point of entry.

- Reduced delays in receiving replacement certificates when required.

- Use of existing systems in facilitating electronic certification reducing development costs.

- Reduced number of bilateral agreements between national authorities for the transferring of electronic certificates.

- Potential linkage with "Single Window" initiatives and harmonization of codes and processes.

As previously identified by the Project STDF/PG/609[4] - *Development of a framework to facilitate e-veterinary certification for international trade on the basis of a single window system* - there is a significant lack of the capability for digital interaction between business and the Veterinary Services at the national level, including border management and the availability of a national export documentation system. At international level, there is also a lack of capacities to exchange certificate information electronically with trading partners.

Recognizing the importance of the issue at the international level and aiming at addressing the implementation status of electronic veterinary certification in the Americas, IICA and STDF hosted this year a physical Hemispherical Workshop on Electronic SPS Certification in the Americas[5] (July 25-27, 2023, IICA Headquarters, San José, Costa Rica). The event brought together experts from 29 IICA Member States and provided a platform to exchange lessons learned on electronic SPS certification and discuss ways to pilot test a regional approach for the exchange of electronic veterinary certificates. The event was structured around plenary and breakout sessions to maximize the benefits of in-person debates. As a result of the forum, an outcome document was produced with consensus conclusions[6] on the different points discussed during the plenary sessions.

In preparation for the Workshop, IICA and STDF conducted a survey with IICA Member States[7]. 32 out of 34 IICA members answered questions related to the implementation status of electronic veterinary certification in their territories. Limited capacities for electronic veterinary certification exchange were indicated by the survey results, especially at multilateral level.

As expressed by the survey results and in the workshop conclusions, participants considered that the development of a system/protocol for the issuance and multilateral exchange of electronic veterinary certificates would facilitate the import and export processes of live animals and products of animal origin. Especially for those countries that do not have national systems in place for this purpose. Therefore, participants expressed their interest in being part of future initiatives aimed at developing a system for the generation and multilateral exchange of electronic veterinary certificates, accessible to all potential stakeholders. Additionally, countries representatives expressed their interest in receiving the support of IICA and the STDF for the development of such a system and this interest should be reflected in a resolution of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA).

More details on the survey results and conclusions of the workshop will be examined in further parts of this project proposal.

To address the situation identified by the Project STDF/PG/609 and by the IICA-STDF Survey, this project proposal aims at developing a pilot for a multilateral e-veterinary certification scheme for international trade, focusing on the Latin America and Caribbean Regions (LAC).

This project proposal is of relevance to the STDF for the following reasons:

It focuses on one of the STDF topics of interest, notably electronic SPS certification. STDF's work in this area aims to support the use of electronic SPS certificates in developing countries. This work

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[4] https://www.standardsfacility.org/PG-609
[5] IICA-STDF Workshop on Electronic SPS Certification in the Americas
[6] Conclusions - IICA-STDF Workshop on Electronic SPS Certification in the Americas
[7] IICA-STDF Electronic Veterinary Certification Survey – Aug 2023

should also be seen in the broader context of the WTO SPS Agreement and also the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which aims to simplify and streamline trade documentation.

According to the STDF Strategy 2020-2024[8] and the STDF Work Plan 2022[9] STDF's knowledge work on thematic topics identifies and promotes good practices to improve SPS capacity development outcomes (including public-private partnerships, electronic SPS certification and good regulatory practices).

This project proposal builds on previous work by the STDF and its partners. Specially, but not limited to the Project STDF/PG/609 and also the Project STDF/PG/504 - *An ePhyto Solution: Enhancing Safe Trade in Plants and Plant Products[10]*.

An ePhyto is the electronic equivalent of a phytosanitary certificate in XML format. All the information contained in a paper phytosanitary certificate is also in the ePhyto. ePhytos are produced in accordance with ISPM 12. The IPPC ePhyto Solution consists of three main elements. A central server (Hub) to facilitate the transfer of electronic phytosanitary certificates between countries, either from and to their own national electronic system or by using a Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS). GeNS is a web-based system that can produce and receive ePhytos, to allow countries that do not have a national electronic system to produce, send and receive ePhytos. Harmonization is the third element of the ePhyto Solution. The structure and transmission of ePhytos will follow a harmonized format through the use of standardized mapping, codes and lists[11].

Since its implementation in 2017 the ePhyto Solution has facilitated the electronic multilateral exchange of international phytosanitary certificates, improving the security and speed of such transactions in a higher cost-effective manner comparing to the traditional exchange of paper certificates. As of 20 October 2023, 85 countries are already exchanging certificates using the ePhyto "Hub" with a total of 4,491,870 exchanged certificates. Another 34 countries are currently testing the exchange of certificates via the ePhyto "Hub" with a total of 299,432 test certificates exchanged[12]. Concerning the ePhyto "GeNS" system, 28 countries are already exchanging certificates using the "GeNS" with a total of 417,402 exchanged certificates. Additionally, 22 countries are currently testing the exchange of certificates via "GeNS" with a total of 1,581 test certificates exchanged. The adoption of the "GeNS" system and the adherence of new countries keeps increasing and with 52,589 certificates exchanged in the last two months only[13].

Considering the benefits of e-veterinary certification in improving traceability throughout SPS supply chains, cutting trade times and costs, reducing fraudulent certificates, and building trust among trading partners, this project proposal focuses on the veterinary public health interface and the linkages between human, animal health and trade. Additionally, it benefits from the use of international standards and guidance developed by the WOAH[14], the Codex Alimentarius[15] and the IPPC[16, 17] on electronic certification.

By examining the situation of e-veterinary certification in the Latin America and Caribbean Region and Sub-Regions (Northern, Central, Caribbean, Andean and Southern), examples of best practices and solutions on the matter will be used for the development of a e-veterinary certification scheme for the multilateral exchange of veterinary certificates.

Aiming at contributing to improving regional harmonization by the development of a framework for multilateral e-veterinary certification exchange, based on single window principles, this project proposal will take into consideration existing e-veterinary certification experiences of LAC countries and international standards. As such, to the extent possible, the resulting e-veterinary certification scheme should be compatible with other relevant e-veterinary certification schemes and harmonized

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[8] https://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_Strategy_2020-2024.pdf
[9] https://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_Work_Plan_2022.pdf
[10] https://standardsfacility.org/PG-504
[11] https://www.ippc.int/en/ephyto/
[12] https://www.ephytoexchange.org/landing/hub/index.html
[13] https://www.ephytoexchange.org/landing/gens/index.html
[14] 2021 OIE - Terrestrial Animal Health Code – Article Chapter 5.2.; Article 5.2.4.
[15] CXG 38/2001
[16] ISPM 12 Phytosanitary Certificates
[17] https://www.ippc.int/en/ephyto/

single window protocols in other regions of the world and become available as an international public good for countries interested in using it.

2.   SPS context and specific issue/problem to be addressed

Livestock is of key importance for Latin America and the Caribbean and is a basic source for the food security of local populations. The livestock sector accounts for 46% of the agricultural gross domestic product of Latin America, and has grown at an annual rate of 3.7%, higher than the average global growth rate (2.1%). Although Latin America and the Caribbean account for only 13.5% of the world's population, they produce a little over 23% of beef and buffalo meat and 21.40% of poultry at global level. In the case of eggs and milk, the region contributes more than 10% and 11.2% by weight, respectively. The livestock sector has boomed in recent decades, particularly in the Southern Cone, due to the growth in world demand. This rapid growth has enabled Latin America to become the region that exports most beef and poultry worldwide. Some of the favorable regional expectations are nevertheless offset by concerns over the high costs of animal feed (60-70% of total production costs), the limited availability of quality forage and inefficient use of available food resources affecting productivity; the increased risk of transboundary animal pests and diseases; threats associated with the degradation of natural resources and the negative impact of climate change on the livestock sector[18].

On animal health relevant issues, it is important to highlight that, besides Venezuela, all the countries and territories in the Americas and Caribbean Regions are free of foot and mouth disease (FMD) with or without vaccination. FMD is endemic in several parts of Asia and in most of Africa and the Middle East. Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Central and North America, and continental Western Europe are currently free of FMD[19].

In regard to the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) the Americas largest beef exporting countries are recognized by WOAH under negligible (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, United States of America and Uruguay) or controlled (Ecuador) risk status[20].

The Latin America and Caribbean Regions have dramatically improved their SPS situation in the past 20 years. To date, the WOAH PVS evaluation has been applied in 27 countries of the region from 2006 to 2023 (Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Rep., Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela). Positive overall evaluation in critical competencies was observed on the 22 public available evaluation and follow up reports (Argentina, Belize (2009 & 2014), Bolivia (2008 & 2014), Brazil (2007, 2014 & 2015), Canada, Chile, Colombia (2015 & 2019), Costa Rica (2010 & 2011), Dominican Republic, Haiti, Panamá, Paraguay (2009 & 2017) and Uruguay (2007 & 2014))[21].

International veterinary certificates describing the animal health and public health import requirements that are fulfilled by the exported commodities are essential to ensure safe international trade. Increasingly, electronic certification is being used. However, the understanding of its implementation among Veterinary Services remains limited. In addition, implementing of e-veterinary certification can be challenging, particularly in developing countries where it can be technically complex and expensive[22].

According to the IICA-STDF survey[6], responded to by 32 countries of the Americas[23], 62.5% (20) of respondents do not issue any form of electronic veterinary certificate. Only, 37.5% (12) of the countries issue some form of electronic veterinary certificate for exports. From those countries, 83.33% (10) exchange electronic veterinary certificates exclusively on a bilateral basis and only

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[18] http://www.fao.org/americas/priorities/produccion-pecuaria/en/

[19] https://www.oie.int/en/disease/foot-and-mouth-disease/#ui-id-2

[20] https://www.oie.int/en/disease/bovine-spongiform-encephalopathy/#ui-id-2

[21] https://www.oie.int/en/what-we-offer/improving-veterinary-services/pvs-pathway/evaluation/pvs-evaluation-reports/

[22] https://www.oie.int/en/what-we-offer/safe-trade-and-movement-of-animals/electronic-veterinary-certification/

[23] Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, CostaRica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, Uruguay.

25% (3) issue those certificates via their single window systems. Even among those 12 countries declaring electronic veterinary certification, some limitations on their exchanging capabilities were observed for at least 5 respondents (system currently in a pilot stage; limited to a single trade partner platform (EU-Traces) and specific products).

When consulted about their willingness to consider joining a multilateral protocol for exchanging electronic veterinary certificates with multiple countries, 93.75% (30) of the respondents confirmed their interest. Only 6.25% (2) countries denied such intention. Similarly, once asked about the foreseen value in the development of a generic multilateral exchange system as a way of fostering the use of electronic veterinary certification in Latin America and the Caribbean Regions, 87.10% (27) of the countries confirmed such initiative as worthy.

The results of the survey were then corroborated by the group discussions and reflected in the Workshop conclusions, as following:

- IICA Member States represented at the session[24] recognized the progress made by the international standard setting organizations (Codex and WOAH) in the preparation of guidelines on electronic certification for animals and products of animal origin.

- The representatives reviewed existing initiatives in the region for generating and exchanging electronic veterinary certificates. Several national initiatives at the bilateral level as well as the regional level (Pacific Alliance, SIECA, etc.) were identified.

- However, the representatives recognize that there is no mechanism for the multilateral exchange of electronic veterinary certificates that is accessible to all stakeholders.

- In this sense, the representatives consider that the development of a harmonized protocol for the issuance and multilateral exchange of electronic veterinary certificates would facilitate the import and export processes of live animals and products of animal origin. This is especially true for those countries that do not have national systems in place for this purpose.

- Therefore, participants expressed their interest in being part of future initiatives aimed at developing a mechanism for the generation and multilateral exchange of electronic veterinary certificates accessible to all potential stakeholders.

- Representatives noted their interest in receiving the support of IICA and the STDF for the development of a mechanism for the issuance and exchange of electronic veterinary certificates and this should be reflected in a resolution of the Interamerican Board of Agriculture.

3. Links with national/regional development plans, policies, strategies, etc.

By addressing the implementation status of e-veterinary certification systems in LAC countries, this project also seeks to identify and support existing national plans, policies, or strategies with recommendations on potential areas for development. Countries' experience with the implementation of the ePhyto Solution will be considered among related policies and strategies. Many LAC countries have relevant experience with twenty-two countries already exchanging ePhytos, and four testing the IPPC ePhyto Solution.[25]

The development of a generic e-veterinary certification scheme for international trade, based on single window principles and its expected positive results link this project with the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement[26] main objectives as stated in Section I, Article 7 (Release and Clearance of Goods – Paragraphs 1, 7.3, 8.1 and 8.2), Article 10 (Formalities Connected with Importation, Exportation and Transit – Paragraphs 2, 3 (Use of International Standards), 4 (Single Window) and

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[24] Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, United States, Grenada, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Rep. Dominicana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, San Vicent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay.

[25] https://www.ephytoexchange.org/landing/. Exchanging: Argentina, The Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, French Guyana, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, Panamá, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Trinidad y Tobago. Testing: Belize, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

[26] WT/L/940;

7 (Common Border Procedures and Uniform Documentation Requirements)) and Article 12 (Customs Cooperation – Paragraphs 6)

The project proposal is in line with the recommendations of FAO Commission on Livestock Development for Latin America and the Caribbean (CODEGALAC). Especially, concerning the need to "update the use of innovative technologies in order to improve prevention mechanisms and surveillance systems" in Mesoamerica[27]. For the Southern Cone and Andean sub regions[28], even though CODEGALAC recognizes the advances in animal health, in particular the great asset of disease-free territories, the risk of entry and expansion of new pathogens is indicated. Improving the use of information technologies and communication was recommended. Moreover, strengthening the capacity of official veterinary services and public-private livestock sector organizations to support permanent active and passive surveillance of controlled, emerging diseases and pests, with a regional focus on border areas.

The project proposal is also connected with the strategic objectives defined by the 34 Ministers of Agriculture of the Americas as reflected in IICA's Medium Term Plan 2022-2026[29]. Particularly, to "Improve international and regional trade for countries in the region". Cooperation with regional integration agencies, the promotion and development of agro-industrial international trade, the examination of sanitary issues with trans-border implications, and capacity building to meet sanitary and technical standards.

Additionally, this project proposal is also in line with the following guidelines of IICA programs on International Trade and Regional Integration and Agricultural Health, Food Safety and Food Quality:

- to provide support to member countries to improve their access to international markets, deepen their regional integration and increase their contribution to agrifood system transformation.

- to promote intraregional trade, with a view to diversifying trade partners and reducing the negative impact of shocks on international markets, while promoting regulatory convergence and trade facilitation.

- Develop capacities to adopt best practices and to tackle emerging issues, in a bid to strengthen national and regional capacities in prevention, preparation, management and response to emerging issues and sanitary and phytosanitary emergencies, by promoting the use of new technologies and knowledge management and the development of effective prevention and control programs for zoonotic diseases, to reduce their impact on public health.

The project proposal is also linked with the following Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) lines of work for the agricultural sector[30]:

- Modernization of Agricultural Services: the financing of public services and agricultural goods can greatly contribute to improving productivity, environmental sustainability and socioeconomic equity in the agricultural sector. Investment in research, farming extension and animal and plant health services help increase competitiveness in the agro-industrial chains. These services support food production, exports and family agriculture; promote regional development; and increase the income of small and medium farmers. They are fundamental to helping mitigate the effects of climate change and promoting food security.

- Improving Market Access for Farmers: to integrate farmers into value chains, giving them business management tools and access to dynamic markets. The IDB also supports technology adoption, compliance with quality requirements and safety, and public-private partnerships to finance priority investments in the development of value chains. It also funds market intelligence and tools to support the development of agri-food exports.

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[27] http://www.fao.org/3/BU276/bu276.pdf
[28] http://www.fao.org/3/bo069s/bo069s.pdf
[29] IICA MTP 2022-2026
[30] https://www.iadb.org/en/topics/agriculture/investment-agricultural-services

4.   Past, ongoing or planned programmes and projects

The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA-2014), at its main interface with the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (1995), addresses the need to reduce procedures related to international trade. More specifically, Article 10 of the TFA aims to minimize the incidence and complexity of import, export and transit procedures, while seeking to reduce and simplify documentation requirements. Article 10 of the TFA establishes, for example:

- That members should review their requirements and ensure they are aimed at fast clearance, reduced compliance time and cost for traders,

- That members restrict trade as little as possible and remove restrictions if they are no longer needed;

- That members accept paper or electronic copies of the supporting documents necessary for importation;

- Use international standards as a basis for import, export or transit procedures;

- That members seek the establishment of single windows that allow traders to present documentation through a single point of entry.

In this sense, the International Organizations recognized by the WTO SPS Agreement as competent to develop international standards on SPS matters have been intensifying their efforts to support their members with updated guidelines on the electronic certification of agri-food products.

Concerning the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), its general guidelines on phytosanitary certification established by ISPM 12 (originally published in 2001, and updated in 2022) contains, since 2014, an Appendix 1 dedicated exclusively to the use of electronic phytosanitary certification. The Appendix 1 of the ISPM 12 states that the structure of the XML messages is based on the XML schema for sanitary and phytosanitary data of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT).

The standard has been crucial for the establishment of the ePhyto system for the electronic issuance and exchange of phytosanitary certificates administered by the IPPC.

For sanitary or veterinary certificates, both the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) and the Codex Alimentarius have applicable standards.

For the part applicable to the safety of edible products of animal origin, the Codex Alimentarius standards would be the most relevant.

In its "Guidelines for the Design, Preparation, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates (CXG 38-2011)" - Approved in 2001 - the last revision carried out in 2021 incorporated an Annex II related to the "Electronic Exchange of Official Certificates" This guideline address:

- Existing Exchange Mechanisms to Retrieve Certificate Information
- Uses standard data and message structure of UN/CEFACT
- An example of an electronic certificate for food.

For the part specifically related to animal health and zoonosis, the WOAH guidelines contained in Chapter 5 of its Terrestrial Animal Health Code should be considered. More specifically its article 5.2.4. about electronic certification. In addition to the general guidelines on the certification procedure, subparagraph b of item 1 establishes that:

> "When exchanging electronic certificates and in order to fully utilise electronic data exchange the Veterinary Authorities should use internationally standardised language, message structure and exchange protocols. Guidance for electronic certification in standardised Extensible Markup Language (XML) as well as secure exchange mechanisms between Veterinary Authorities is provided by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)."

Despite their standards for electronic certification, neither Codex nor WOAH have their own electronic system for the issuance and exchange of veterinary certificates. There is significant room for advancement in the area of electronic veterinary certification. The work of the IPPC with ePhyto, together with the UN/CEFACT guidelines, can serve as a model for the elaboration of harmonized veterinary electronic certification systems.

In 2016 and 2017, during WOAH General Session, WOAH Members expressed the need for more concrete guidance and support from the WOAH for establishing e-veterinary certification systems that would improve their participation in international trade. This led to the development and approval of the STDF/PG/609 Project on the "Development of a framework to facilitate e-veterinary certification for international trade on the basis of single window system". The project aimed at gaining a better understanding of current practices implemented by some WOAH Members, both developed and developing, as well as relevant work in other international organizations on e-certification and single window[3].

The implementation of the STDF project (STDF/PG/609) was managed by WOAH on behalf of the five applicant countries Cambodia, Eswatini, Nigeria, Paraguay and Zimbabwe.

The findings included drivers for e-certification and challenges faced by Members[31].

- Specific relations between e-veterinary certification, digital government strategy and single window were not very apparent.

- With regard to the benefits, improved efficiency is considered by all countries to be of major importance. The countries that apply e-veterinary certification verified most of the benefits, including improved market access and enhanced authenticity and integrity.

- Developing countries expect first and foremost that e-veterinary certification will reduce their clearance times.

- Financial resources were seen as the biggest challenge in all cases and that developing countries saw IT infrastructure as a major concern.

- Political will and the willingness of the private sector was not seen as a challenge.

- During the in-country visits, a common finding was the lack of capacity to exchange certificate information internationally by electronic means. The capacity to operate electronically at the national level varied considerably, ranging from everything still on paper, to some processes supporting digital procedures and finally to fully digital processes.

As captured by the Project STDF/PG/609, Paraguay's experience is representative of the mentioned findings. Paraguay's National Service for Animal Quality and Health (SENACSA) has electronic systems for processing and issuing (printing on paper) of Health Certificates. SENACSA through Single Windows has the technical capacity to carry out electronic exchanges of veterinary certificates. However, Paraguay has no electronic veterinary certification system nor exchanges veterinary certificates in electronic form. The livestock industry is the principal industry in Paraguay. The country imports livestock animals mainly from neighboring countries, such as Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. In terms of beef exports, the private sector, which includes the food industry and farmers, is aware of the importance and significance of introducing electronic veterinary certificate systems to cover these exports.

Given that there is already a single window system in Paraguay, the rationale exists for the introduction of electronic certification on the basis of a single window system. Paraguay already possesses the basic framework and infrastructure, such as the single window system, to introduce an electronic veterinary certification system for use with its exporting and importing countries.

Concerning imports, a majority of the exchanges would come from Mercosur countries. One of the pressing issues for Paraguay is to introduce an electronic veterinary certificate system for the exportation of beef to Russia in order to maintain and ensure the reliability of the export certificates issued by Paraguay. From this perspective, Paraguay expects to be able to benefit from its knowledge

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[31] https://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/A-Veterinary_certification_0.pdf

and experience in the application of relevant international standards, recommendations and guidelines.

In addition to the Project STDF/PG/609, this project proposal also takes into consideration the Project STDF/PG/504 - *An ePhyto Solution: Enhancing Safe Trade in Plants and Plant Products*[32] and the acquired IPPC experience on the ePhyto Solution[33]. Especially the experience with the development and use of the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) - a centralized system to facilitate the generation and exchange of ePhytos. It is a multi-tenant web-based system developed for countries without their own system to generate ePhytos, send and receive them electronically.

This project proposal seeks to replicate the following positive attributes of GeNS:

- Allows developing countries to participate regardless of the capacity of their infrastructure;
- Avoids the costs that are produced by connation agreements between countries;
- Facilitates the inclusion of national systems development by countries;
- Creates homogenous conditions for trade;
- Establishes a defined exchange mechanism and a standardized UN/CEFACT scheme;
- Designed for use in low-bandwidth environments and works with most computers/devices and browsers.

Within the framework of project RG-T1207, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has been promoting the common use of recommendations from international organizations such as the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the UN/CEFAT and international best practices. Based on this, the IDB seeks to achieve the interconnection of national foreign trade single windows (VUCE), as well as the regional exchange of data and reliable and efficient electronic information in real time, thus pointing towards the establishment of the Inter-American Network of Single Windows for Foreign Trade (RedVUCE). RedVUCE is open to all countries of the Western Hemisphere that wish to join and subscribe to the following principles and objectives:

1. Promote the use of electronic trade windows as an instrument to support the public and private sectors in their efforts to facilitate trade.

2. Become a regional forum that allows the creation, centralization, and dissemination of knowledge based on analysis, studies, and exchange of experiences and best practices of existing trade windows in the region and in the rest of the world.

3. Promote the integration of trade windows in the region and the electronic exchange of data and documents.[34]

RedVUCE's "First deliverable: Analysis of standards for harmonization of data and documents" brings relevant recommendations for the harmonization of electronic phytosanitary and sanitary certificates[35].

There are also some noteworthy cases of IICA Member States working towards eVet exchange and being early adopters in this area. For example, in recent years, Chile has been working towards a standard XML for the exchange of e-sanitary certificates with the European Union and with other Pacific Alliance member countries (i.e., Colombia, Mexico, and Peru). And since August 2022, Chile and Korea have been exchanging electronic certificates for all animal and aquaculture products[36].

5.   Public-public or public-private cooperation

The collection and exchange of data and practical experiences among IICA Members is the cooperative basis of this Project Proposal.

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[32] https://www.standardsfacility.org/PG-504
[33] https://www.ippc.int/en/ephyto/
[34] https://www.redvuce.org/docs/entregable_diagnostico_recomendaciones_chile2013.doc
[35] https://www.redvuce.org/docs/entregable_investigacion_estandares_chile2013.pdf
[36] Electronic Sanitary Certificates For Trade In Animal Products - OCDE Paper 190

As a result, the Government sector of IICA Member States will be equipped with regional public goods and tools for an increased performance on their certification duties, which, ultimately, will benefit their exporters and producers. Moreover, the project proposes capacity building and sensibilization activities to foster public and private partnerships in IICA Member States for the implementation of e-veterinary certification systems.

More specifically, representatives of the public sector (national government, intergovernmental organization and standard setting bodies) will have a relevant contribution to this project, by taking part in its Technical Committee and also its Advisory Committee, depending on the needs and specifications of each, as described in the related terms of reference (Appendix 4). Such participation will promote the transfer of knowledge and experiences accumulated by public sector stakeholders directly into the project governance structure. Also, it will assure the alignment of the project to the most recent developments on eVet certification being conducted internationally by public stakeholders at all different levels.

Private sector stakeholders will also contribute to this project by participating in its Technical and Advisory Committees together with representatives of public sector and also by conforming a Private Sector Consultative Group. Engaging the industry is of essence to make sure the interests of final beneficiaries of eVet certification advantages are properly reflected in outcomes of the project. Private sector will be represented by relevant industry and trade associations. Their role will contribute to sensitizing private companies and government authorities in their participation in the project activities, testing phases and further implementation of the project outcomes/products. Terms of reference for the Private Sector Consultative Group are detailed in Appendix 4).

6. Ownership and stakeholder commitment

Ministries/Secretariats of Agriculture of IICA Member States (animal health & food safety authorities) will be invited to participate in the project as partners in the data collecting process, indicating technical specialists/officers to participate in the project Technical and Advisory Committees and participating in the Regional Workshops. In doing so, IICA Member States will feed the information exchange process and collaborate for the elaboration of the project outputs.

Moreover, a group of IICA Member States will be selected to participate as "pilot countries" supporting more closely the development of the generic multilateral electronic veterinary system proposed by this project, hosting and testing it in partnership with the Project Team.

During the IICA-STDF Workshop on Electronic SPS Certification[4], matters concerning desirable pre-requisites for "Pilot Countries" were discussed by the Participants.

Latin-American Countries (Spanish Speaking Group) considered the following pre-requisites:

- Countries that have some previous experience (e.g. countries that have already started with some previous work on electronic veterinary certification).

- Countries that have some kind of exchange of veterinary certificates.

- Political-institutional commitment – designation of responsibilities.

- Capable of ensuring continuity/sustainability during the pilot.

- Potential candidates to take part in a pilot experience: Mexico, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru, Dominican Republic (Honduras and Bolivia – pending consultation).

North America and Caribbean Countries (English Speaking Group) came up with the following desirable pre-requisites for "Pilot Countries":

- Having a country that is a net importer/exporter.

- Countries willingness to provide resources to participate – financial and human (technical capacity), this includes IT capacity and having good internet flow.

- Country must be established on the Single Window platform at the 3rd or 4th level (if the Single Window solution is chosen)

- Select countries from developed and developing regions.

- Spanish / English balance

- Have a legal framework that allows for exchange electronic data (do a check list to determine where you are)

- Technical and Political Directorate buy-in

These elements will be taken into account by the Project's Implementing Team when deciding on criteria for the selection of the pilot countries. These elements are considerably in line with the following criteria used for the selection of "Pilot Countries" by the ePhyto STDF/PG/504 project[37]:

- The "best fit" countries are those countries that require minimum capacity development to implement the ePhyto Solution including: i. require no/or minimum assistance to adapt their existing national systems to connect to the hub; ii. require minimal business process reengineering for deployment of the GeNS at a pilot scale iii. have sufficient resources to support testing; iv. have sufficient trade to demonstrate that the Solution is operating effectively.

- The final selection of countries to participate in use of the GeNS is based upon in-country assessments of the candidate country's readiness to participate relatively quickly in implementing a system.

Besides the natural involvement of the Americas Ministries/Secretariats of Agriculture in IICA activities as Member States and part of IICA main administrative body (Inter-American Board of Agriculture), the established relationship and solid political links built by IICA in all its Member States assures a high level of countries engagement.

IICA's physical presence in all its Member States also secures institutional linkages with the main private sector stakeholders of the livestock sector. Most are regular partners of IICA and will be invited for the capacity building and sensibilization workshops. In doing so, IICA will leverage established relationships and existing cooperation mechanisms (agreements, memorandums of understanding) with private sector stakeholders and regional representations of International Standards Setting Bodies, such as the WOAH Americas, the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (Codex CCLAC) and Regional Plant Protection Organizations.

II.   PROJECT GOAL, OBJECTIVE, OUTPUTS & ACTIVITIES (LOGICAL FRAMEWORK)

7.   Project Goal / Impact

An increased level of harmonization and adoption of e-veterinary certification in LAC.

8.   Target Beneficiaries

Livestock producers and exporters: expanded international market access may increase commercial opportunities for local producers. Small producers carrying out livestock activities account for a major proportion of small farmers in countries of the region and hold a significant proportion of grasslands and cattle ranches. The potential contribution of this sector to the agricultural economy of countries in the region and food security depends in most cases on the ability to receive appropriate animal health and veterinary services, technical assistance and other support services required to access markets and ensure the sustainability of associated production systems.

Consumers: international trade flows in both ways. Most of the countries of the region are importers and exporters of livestock products. By ensuring safe international trade and improving market access, e-veterinary certification may result in a safer, more diverse and less costly food supply.

Government sector: veterinary and food safety authorities will benefit from an optimized certification system to support their duties. Expected gains in transparency, traceability, agility, security and

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[37] https://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_PG_504_application_final.pdf

trust with reduced labor and operational costs are among the potential benefits for the Government Sector.

(a) Gender-related issues

One of many advantages of e-certification is to allow the sending and receiving of certificates without physical attendance at a designated window, and ultimately 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. Removing physical and time restrictions helps everybody so as to permit their easy involvement in export and import transactions[38], but especially helps women to cope with their local hardships (double journey, household affairs, lack of proper transportation, childcare, urban security commonly observed in developing LAC countries).

9. Project objective, outputs and activities (including logical framework and work plan)

This project proposal aims at developing a pilot for a generic e-veterinary certification scheme, based on single window principles, for the multilateral exchange of veterinary certificates in Latin America and Caribbean Regions. An increased adoption of e-veterinary certification is expected with potential benefits on safe international trade and market access.

The following sequence of implementation activities/steps and outputs will be generated in a stepwise approach, with an evaluation after each phase to determine the feasibility of success for the next phase:

1) Analysis of current e-vet certification schemes in the Americas: aiming at identifying the technical characteristics of existing e-veterinary certification systems, their available infrastructures, regulatory frameworks, main trade/exchange partners and technical demands of each country, an evaluation team, led by experts on the matter, will work closely with IICA Member States to gather and analyze related information. The results of the IICA-STDF Survey on Electronic Veterinary Certification will be used as preliminary guidance in identifying countries with electronic veterinary certification schemes in place. The results of such analysis would be compiled and serve as a basis for the design of the pilot generic multilateral e-veterinary certification scheme in the next step.

2) Development of a beta version of the generic multilateral e-veterinary certification scheme: based on the information gathered on the previous step, a pilot for a generic e-veterinary certification scheme will be designed and developed. The generic scheme should consider and seek compatibility to other systems already used in the LAC region, main importers and international standards (WOAH[10], Codex[11], IPPC[39], UN/CEFACT[40], WCO Data Model[41]). Additionally, it will look carefully at the interconnection between animal health and food safety aspects of products of animal origin. The interconnection between animal health and food safety is thoroughly considered on the planned structured of the e-vet certification scheme as an indivisible dyad of public veterinary certificates used for the international trade of products of animal origin. In this regard, full consideration will be given to related animal health (WOAH) and food safety (Codex Alimentarius) internation standards. Once developed, it will become available as an international public good for every country interested in using it. It is expected that the availability of a generic e-veterinary certification scheme, could increase the application and the harmonization level of e-veterinary certification in LAC. Details on each step for the development of the Generic e-veterinary certification scheme are displayed in further paragraphs of this section.

3) Pilot implementation of the generic e-vet certification scheme: based on the IICA-STDF Workshop on Electronic SPS Certification in the Americas[4] debates and direct follow-up consultations with LAC Authorities, three countries will be selected for the implementation of the generic e-veterinary certification scheme in their own national certification routines. The pilot phase would serve to test the generic e-veterinary certification scheme in real life conditions and approve the concept.

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[38] https://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_PG_609_OIE_FINAL.pdf
[39] ISPM 12, Appendix 1
[40] UN/CEFACT Implementation Guide – E-Certification – SPS Part
[41] WCO Data Model

4) Development of guidance on e-veterinary certification: based on the experiences acquired with the development and implementation of outputs #1, #2 and especially #3, guidance will be developed with the objective of promoting the implementation of the generic e-veterinary certification scheme by other LAC Countries.

5) Regional capacity building and sensibilization workshops: once outputs #1, #2, #3 and #4 are ready, the workshops will spread the information about the project outputs and promote their adoption by LAC countries.

After the project is completed and derived products are made available as public goods for interested countries, an increased exchange of e-vet certificates in LAC is expected, with an improved level of harmonization. Once pilot projects are implemented (Output 3), actual e-vet certificates will be exchanged between those 3-5 countries via the generic multilateral e-veterinary certification system (scheme). As the generic e-veterinary certification scheme becomes available as an international public good, other countries may adopt it as well and increase the exchange of e-veterinary certificates while fostering harmonization.

The current lack of a generic multilateral e-veterinary certification system or regional guidance on e-vet certification does not contribute to the establishment of harmonized exchange protocols for e-vet certificates. Trusting the harmonizing factor of a generic multilateral scheme and regional guidance documents, combined with regional capacity building and sensibilization activities, a behavioral change is expected in the sense of directing national e-vet initiatives towards a harmonized environment for the exchange of e-vet certification.

Instead of countries investing in designing their own e-vet certification systems, based on their national experiences, the use of the generic multilateral scheme and guidance documents would facilitate the process, reduce costs, and accelerate the implementation of e-vet systems in LAC, while promoting harmonization based on common guidance/parameters.

Moreover, the implementation of the pilot exchanges of e-vet certificates, based on the implementation outputs #1 and #2, will represent a significant practical contribution which could be replicated by other interested countries. The pilot exchanges would also serve for the validation of the practical use of the generic multilateral e-veterinary certification scheme and related implementation guidance documents developed under outputs #2 and #3.

In order to give special consideration to aspects related to sustainability and replicability of project results in other regions, the project implementation plan takes into consideration the need for full compliance with relevant international standards/guidance (WOAH, Codex, IPPC, UN/CEFACT, WCO Data Model) using the FAO/IPPC ePhyto as a benchmark. Together with the cost-benefit analysis (Activity 3 output 1) and the guidance for the implementation of the generic e-vet certification scheme (Activity 2 output 4), the sustainability and replicability of the project results in other regions is secured.

Detailed description of steps for the development of each output:

Inception phase

Before starting with the implementation of each output, the following cross-cutting, preparatory activities, will be conducted by the IICA team in charge of implementing the project:

ICPa) Establishing the technical and advisory committees and the Private Sector Consultative Committee

Using IICA's network and contacts established with national experts during the IICA-STDF Workshop, seasoned officers from the region will be selected and invited to participate in the committees. National officers in charge of electronic veterinary certification systems in their countries will be invited to be part of the Technical Committee. Key officers/personnel of relevant intergovernmental organization and standards setting bodies, that express an interest in doing so, will be invited to participate in the Advisory Committee.

The participation of the private sector is considered as a crucial component of the project. Engaging the industry is considered of essence to make sure the interests of final beneficiaries of eVet

certification are properly reflected in outcomes of the project. Thus, private sector representatives will participate in the project's Technical and Advisory Committees together with representatives of public sector and also by conforming a Private Sector Consultative Group. Private sector will be represented by relevant industry and trade associations. Their role will contribute to sensitizing private companies and government authorities for their full participation in the project activities, testing phases and further implementation of the project outcomes. Relevant industry and trade associations representatives will be invited to take part in the Private Sector Consultative Committee which will also be represented, by one participant, in the Technical Committee and another one in the Advisory Committees. Terms of reference in the Appendix 4.

ICPb) Establishing cooperation agreement with Technical Implementing Partners (TIPs)

Aiming at counting with a robust technological support for the elaboration and the implementation of the technical solutions proposed in the project, IICA will seek cooperation from external partners with undisputable reputation, know-how and complementary resources, as following:

United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC)[42]

The UNICC has over 50 years of experience as the largest strategic partner for digital solutions and cybersecurity within the United Nations system, designing and deploying digital tools and programmes to support over 90 partners in fulfilling their mandates. UNICC hosted data is protected by the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. The UNICC operates on a cost-recovery basis, has an extensive know-how in working with IT and consultancy service providers, software and hardware suppliers.

Considering the need for assuring confidentiality and inviolability of data as well as a neutral and cyber-secure server to act as a "hub" and host the proposed multilateral generic e-veterinary certification system, IICA will propose a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for computer services with a framework for the establishment of complementary agreements outlining the details of the IT cooperation.

The UNICC has supported the implementation of other similar projects, such as the IPPC ePhyto Solution, and has accumulated significant knowledge in the hardware and software requirements for the operation of the proposed multilateral generic e-veterinary certification system and a related exchange "Hub". Considering all those elements, UNICC will be primarily considered for work as "Main Technical Implementing Partner" (M-TIP) in this project.

International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

Considering its successful use for the multilateral exchange of international phytosanitary certificates, the IPPC ePhyto solution (GeNS and Hub) will be used as benchmark and base for adaptation and further development into the generic electronic veterinary scheme proposed in this Project. As such, the need for a technical cooperation agreement with the IPPC for such purposes will be addressed in the inception phase as well.

Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)[43]

The CITEL is an entity of the Organization of American States (OAS) with the main objective of facilitating and promoting, by all means available to it, the continuing development of telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICT) in the Hemisphere, in pursuance of sustainable development.

Among its main functions, CITEL is equipped to:

1. To serve as the Organization's leading advisory body in all matters relating to telecommunications/ICT in the Hemisphere.

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[42] United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC)
[43] Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)

2. To promote or undertake studies and programs for the orderly development of telecommunications/ICT networks, utilizing the most suitable and efficient systems available.

3. To maintain ongoing contact with the various international governmental and nongovernmental organizations in the field of telecommunications/ICT, and to promote the coordination of their activities with those of the member states of the Organization.

4. To request the cooperation of world or regional governmental organizations, especially the ITU and the Caribbean Telecommunications Union, and of international entities working in the field of telecommunications/ICT that enjoy consultative status with the United Nations or maintain cooperative relations with the Organization.

5. To analyze and propose different forms of financing to support the plans and projects of CITEL.

As a sister entity of the Inter-American System, IICA will establish consultations with CITEL for the establishment of a cooperation agreement with UNICC and IPPC while, in parallel, addressing the technical cooperation support that could be granted by CITEL on the hardware and software requirements for the operation of the proposed multilateral generic e-veterinary certification system and a host central server.

ICPc) Developing terms of reference and agreements with Technical Implementing Partners (TIPs)

Assisted by IICA's Contract/Legal Area, terms of reference and a time-limited project agreement will be established between IICA and preferred TIPs for the design and development of a generic multilateral electronic veterinary certification scheme, comprised by a central server and a web-based system for the generation and exchange of certificates.

Outcomes of the Inception phase

- Technical Committee, Advisory Committee, Private Sector Consulting Committee.

- Project Agreement with TIPs.

1) Analysis of current e-vet certification schemes in the Americas

IICA in association with preferred Technical Implementing Partners (TIPs - Potentially UNICC and/or CITEL), the technological characteristics of the IPPC ePhyto Solution (benchmark) and the electronic veterinary certification systems currently in activity in the region will be jointly analyzed.

1.1)   Data gathering and country specific analysis
According to the IICA-STDF Survey on electronic veterinary certification, 12 countries of the Americas issue some sort of electronic veterinary certification. The analysis of such systems will be primarily based on the exchange of technical information by virtual means, complemented by in-person technical visits of IT experts from TIPs for an in-depth analysis of technological details. Electronic surveys and questionnaires to be specifically developed for this purpose could be used in this phase.

The terms of reference/criteria for the analysis will be developed by the project management team, in partnership with its technical partners and Technical Committee.

1.2)   Multi-country analysis and Analytical report
Compilation and examination of main results obtained in country-specific analysis to be performed by the IT experts from TIPs in charge of data collection and analysis of countries' electronic veterinary systems.

1.3)   Cost-benefit analysis
Based on the data collected in the activities 1.1 and 1.2 and, taking into account the capacities of the countries, a cost-benefit analysis on the development of the generic system will be conducted with the support of experts/consultants in such analytical realm.

1.4)   Validation of the analytical report
         Revision by the Technical Committee of the first version of the analytical report and
         incorporation pending clarification by IT experts from TIPs.

Outcome of the analysis of current e-vet certification schemes in the Americas

-     Analytical report with a joint assessment of the technological characteristics of the IPPC
      ePhyto Solution (benchmark), the electronic veterinary certification systems currently in
      activity in the region, together with a cost-benefit analysis on the development of the generic
      system.

-     Evaluation of Output 1 to determine the feasibility of success for the next phase.

2) Development of a Beta Version of the Generic Multilateral E-Veterinary Certification Scheme

Based on the analytical report resulted from the previous phase, the following steps will be
implemented:

2.1) Revision of the technical specifications for the central server and the generic electronic
certification system.

The following benchmark technical specifications and/or operating conditions of the IPPC ePhyto
Solution will be revised, taking into account the particularities and needs identified by the analytical
report on the existing electronic veterinary systems/schemes of the region.

For the central server, the following technical specifications/standards[44] will be considered for
revision and update:

-     Authentication of systems that contact the hub through X.509 certificates.

-     Sender identity verified through X.509 certificates.

-     Single Web Services Description Language (WSDL).

-     UN/CEFACT schema v12B.

-     Exchange protocol is Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) over HTTPS.

-     Retrieving messages from the hub will be through a push or pull method.

For the generic electronic certification system, the following operating conditions/standards[45] will be
considered for revision and update:

-     Compatibility with international standards (IPPC – ISPM 12 + WOAH Terrestrial Code –
      Chapter 5, Codex - CXG 38-2011, UN/CEFACT, WCO Data Model).

-     Provides ePhyto storage.

-     Ensures authenticity of the received ePhytos.

-     Provides data extraction.

-     Allows printing of certificate data on paper.

-     Designed for use in low bandwidth environment and works with most computers/ devices
      and browsers.

2.2) Establishment of a central server test version and related user policy.

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[44] https://www.ephytoexchange.org/landing/hub/index.html
[45] https://www.ephytoexchange.org/landing/gens/index.html

The Main Technical Implementing Partner (M-TIP) of the project will establish a pilot central server based on the revised technical specifications/standards achieved in step 2.1. Preliminary testing with mock generic electronic veterinary certification system/s and fictional data will be performed before the pilot testing phase in further steps.

A user policy (data rights, responsibility and liabilities of users) will be proposed based on the revision of the IPPC ePhyto Solution towards other user policies or legal requirements of existing electronic veterinary systems/schemes of the region. Other existing good practices and policy frameworks (e.g. UN/CEFACT) could be considered as well.

2.3) Establishment of a generic electronic veterinary beta system by redesigning an existing operating system.

Based on the analytical report resulted from the previous phase, the project M-TIP will work with the IPPC Secretariat to determine the technical feasibility of redesigning the ePhyto GeNS system for the purpose of generating and exchanging electronic veterinary certificates, taking into consideration the characteristics and needs previously identified in the region.

In case the ePhyto GeNS system presents itself as a sub-optimal base for redesigning, other existing software would be considered. Preferably among the existing electronic veterinary systems/schemes in use at the region. Criteria such as the alignment with international standards; usability, costs and security features will be considered in the evaluation. Once the proper system/software is selected for redesigning, the project M-TIP will work in alignment with the project Technical Committee to implement the necessary adjusts on it.

The interconnection between animal health and food safety is thoroughly considered on the beta version of the e-vet certification scheme as an indivisible part of public veterinary certificates used for the international trade of products of animal origin. In this regard, full consideration will be given to related animal health (WOAH) and food safety (Codex Alimentarius) internation standards.

Outcomes of the Inception phase

- Technical specifications of the elements of the generic e-vet certification scheme (central server + generic e-vet certification system).

- Beta version of the generic e-vet certification scheme.

- Evaluation of Output 2 to determine the feasibility of success for the next phase.

3) Pilot implementation of the generic e-vet certification scheme

Aiming at testing the efficiency of the system in terms of data transferring by the central server and usability of the generic e-vet certification system in exchanging certificates with other users. The pilot test will also provide useful data for determining a cost recovery proposal for the maintenance of the scheme.

Initially, 3-5 pilot countries will be selected, according to criteria to be defined by the Project's Implementing Team (IICA + technical and advisories committees + M-TIPs), based, primarily, on parameters indicated in item 3.1.

The testing findings will guide adjustments/reconfiguration of the scheme, as needed.

Steps for the completion of the pilot implementation of the generic e-vet certification scheme:

3.1) Selection of pilot countries

In this step, 3-5 pilot countries will be selected by the Project's Implementing Team (IICA + technical and advisories committees + M-TIPs), based, primarily, on the following criteria:

- Countries that have some previous work on electronic veterinary certification.
- Political-institutional commitment – Technical and Political Directorate buy-in.
- Capable of ensuring continuity/sustainability during the pilot.

- Countries willingness to provide resources to participate – financial and human (technical capacity), this includes IT capacity and having good internet flow.
- Have a legal framework that allows for the exchange of electronic data.
- Require no/or minimum assistance to adapt their existing national systems to connect to the central server and to the proposed multilateral e-vet system at a pilot scale.
- Have sufficient trade to demonstrate that the Pilot Scheme is operating effectively.
- The final selection of countries to participate in the Pilot is based upon in-country assessments of the candidate country's readiness to participate relatively quickly in implementing a system.

3.2) Direct work with the 3-5 pilot countries for the installation of the beta version of the generic e-vet certification scheme.

The project M-TIP will work with the national authorities of selected pilot countries to provide their connection and access to the central server and start the operation of the generic e-vet certification system. Close cooperation and technical assistance with on-site visits will be provided on this step.

3.3) Testing/Validating the operation of the beta version of the generic e-vet certification scheme

Once both elements of the scheme are working on an integrated manner, the technical parameters of the scheme will be evaluated (efficacy, usability, robustness) and the need for adjustments will be detected.

A cost-recovery analysis will be conducted during this phase with external technical support aiming at proposing a cost-recovery model for the generic multilateral e-vet certification scheme.

Outcomes of the pilot implementation of the generic e-vet certification scheme

- The pilot tested and approved generic e-vet certification scheme.

- A proposal of cost-recovery model for the generic multilateral e-vet certification scheme.

- Evaluation of Output 3 to determine the feasibility of success for the next phase.

4) Development of guidance on e-veterinary certification

This guidance will be jointly developed by the project implementation team in close coordination with the M-TIP, and the Technical Committee. Based on the experiences acquired with the development and implementation of outputs #1, #2 and especially #3, the guidance will be developed with the objective of promoting the implementation of the generic e-veterinary certification scheme by other LAC Countries.

In addition, in line with the new STDF Gender Action Plan, a gender analysis to further assess the gender dimensions of the project and to identify challenges, needs and priorities that might affect men and women differently will be conducted with the support of experts on the field.

Outcomes of the development of guidance on e-veterinary certification

- Gender analysis.

- Promotional materials – to inform national authorities and policy makers about the benefits of the scheme.

- Operation manuals and technical guidance – a detailed manual informing about the operation characteristics of the scheme with data on how to connect and operate the scheme.

- Decision making tools – based on self-assessment questionnaires to be developed, the tool will allow countries to take informed decisions on the convenience of implementing the scheme, based on the country level of readiness and a basic cost-benefit assessment.

- Evaluation of Output 4 to determine the feasibility of success for the next phase.

5) Regional capacity building and sensitization workshops

To be implemented by the Project Implementation Team, in partnership with IICA Delegations in Member States. Participation of M-TIP experts will be considered. Once outputs #1, #2, #3 and #4 are ready, the workshops will spread the information about the project outputs and promote their adoption by LAC countries.

The program of the regional capacity building and sensibilization workshops will be developed to maximize the efficiency in spreading the information compiled in the guidance materials elaborated under the previous step.

Considering the regional/geographic distribution of IICA Member countries, two regional physical workshops are considered. The following steps for the implementation of the workshops are considered:

5.1) Coordination with IICA Delegations in LAC for the organization of capacity building (on-line and physical) and sensibilization workshops

5.2) Definition of logistic matters (invitations and hiring of venue and services hiring)

5.3) Work with consultants and steering committee on the contents/program definition

5.4) Conducting / Implementing the workshops

5.5) Elaboration of technical reports

Outcomes of regional capacity building and sensibilization workshops

- Two regional capacity building and sensibilization workshops.

- Technical reports on the major finding of the technical exchange with national authorities participating in the workshops. Identification of: i) the appeal/acceptance of the proposed Scheme; ii) the further technical cooperation needs.

10. Environmental-related issues

The e-veterinary certification contributions to the strengthening of veterinary public health contributes to an "One Health" approach on public health at the human, animals and environment interface for the benefit of all species. Moreover, paperless SPS systems are, *per se,* able to contribute for the reduction of the carbon footprint on export processes while improving traceability, lowering food waste, and cutting trade times and costs.

11. Risks

Main possible risks foreseen are administration changes in IICA Member States that could lead to unstable engagement of countries in the process. Those risks may be significantly offset by IICA's political and institutional linkages in its Member States, in addition to institutional relationships and cooperation with the private sector, international organizations and civil society representations in all Member States. A risk matrix is presented below:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation strategy
Political and administrative changes in IICA Member States.	Medium	Medium	Established links at the technical and political levels of animal health and food safety authorities may secure the continuity of the work. Establishing foundational work at the technical level, especially with mid-ranking authorities, so the continuity of the work is not significantly impacted by changes at the higher hierarchy level, which are more common. Working on multiple countries at the same time, with different teams, may provide conditions to continue the work in the countries not facing political/administrative changes while the situation is not re-established in countries where political changes recently occurred.
Unstable engagement in the process by some countries' Competent Authorities.	Medium	Medium	Established links at the technical and political levels of animal health and food safety authorities may secure the continuity of the work. Working on multiple countries at the same time, with different teams, may provide conditions to continue the work in the countries not facing political/administrative changes while the situation is not re-established in countries where political changes recently occurred. Institutional relationships and cooperation with private sector, international organizations and civil society representations in IICA Member States may serve as additional element to secure proper engagement.
Technical difficulties in addressing information technology resources of different IICA Member Countries.	Low/Medium	Medium	Selection of experienced consultants with checked background. Secured support of IICA established IT specialists in IICA HQ and IICA Delegations Continued oversight of the Technical Committee to detect the need for engaging additional technical support.

12. Sustainability

The project outputs and improved awareness and capacities generated by this project will promote synergies among countries for the implementation of e-veterinary certification systems that may also be supported in the long term by continued IICA technical cooperation activities.

The project outputs will be made available as public goods to the region in IICA's web-based platforms for further consultation and continued capacity building of interested parties. Revision of the contents will be performed by IICA on a regular basis. IICA Specialists involved in the elaboration/revision of project outputs will remain available to address capacity building demands.

The cost recovery model of other existing electronic certification schemes will be examined by the Project's Technical and Advisories Committees, with the cooperation of the Project M-TIP. Additional

assistance of external experts (consultancy firms) could be used considering the specificities of the subject. As previously mentioned in Section 9 (Project objective, outputs and activities), the cost-recovery examination will be conducted in the pilot testing phase. The result of the cost-recovery examination is a proposal on cost-recovery model for the generic multilateral e-vet certification scheme.

III.   BUDGET

13.   Estimated budget

Appendix 3 contains a detailed budget proposal and breakdown, including in-kind contributions.

14.   Cost-effectiveness

Cost effectiveness is assured by the reduction of costs associated with the implementation of e-veterinary certification as promoted by the project outputs and guidance. Harmonization of practices among IICA Member States may also foster cost effectiveness. Implementing e-veterinary certification on a bilateral basis with multiple trading partners can be costly and inefficient as adaptation to different systems requirements may require endless resources.

Moreover, cost effectiveness may be granted by the expected benefits of the implementation of e-veterinary certification systems in improving traceability throughout SPS supply chains, lowering food waste, cutting trade times and costs, reducing fraudulent certificates, and building trust among trading partners.

The comparison of the number of rejected shipments due certification issues before and after the implementation of e-vet systems can also be considered among different and complementary parameters for the estimation of cost-effectiveness.

As discussed in the previous session, the result of the cost-recovery examination conducted during the pilot testing phase is a proposal on cost-recovery model for the generic multilateral e-vet certification scheme which also contributes for the cost-effectiveness of the scheme.

IV.   PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION & MANAGEMENT

15.   Implementing organization

As requested by its Member States, IICA presents itself as an implementing organization with technical, administrative and financial management capacities.

16.   Project management

As explained in the Appendixes 2 and 4, IICA will be in charge of project implementation (general administrative and financial management and project monitoring following IICA and STDF established procedures).

A project Technical Committee will support IICA's management from a technical standpoint, including ensuring that the project's outputs and direction are consistent with other on-going efforts related to electronic certification and trade facilitation. The Technical committee consists of one IICA Officers, plus five national officers/experts on e-certification in SPS areas and/or trade facilitation, preferably in charge of e-certification in their respective national veterinary services (one form each IICA Region – Northern, Central, Caribbean, Andean and Southern) plus one invited representative of Private Sector Consultative Committee.

An Advisory Committee will support IICA's management from a strategical and political standpoint making sure the project is in line with the priorities of the LAC countries (public and private sector), relevant intergovernmental organizations and international standard setting bodies. The Advisory Committee will be comprised by five experts from intergovernmental organizations and/or international standards setting bodies with relevant work on the field: WOAH, Codex Alimentarius and IPPC), plus one plus one invited representative of Private Sector Consultative Committee.

A Private Sector Consultative Group will be formed by 5-10 representatives of relevant industry and trade associations. Terms of reference for the Private Sector Consultative Group are detailed in Appendix 4).

Technical Implementing partners (M-TIPs) will be tasked by IICA for the implementation of technical activities. IICA will interface/report directly to the STDF and coordinate with the project's Steering Committee and hired consultants.

V.   REPORTING, MONITORING & EVALUATION

17.   Project reporting

IICA will submit bi-annual technical reports (from January to June and from July to December) and annual financial reports to the STDF. A final technical and financial project report, as well as an independent end-of-project assessment, will also be presented by IICA to the STDF.

18.   Monitoring and evaluation, including performance indicators

In coordination with the project's Steering Committee, IICA will monitor and evaluate the delivery of the project outputs in accordance with the expected quality standards and timeline stipulated in the Work Plan (Appendix 2). Also, in accordance with the logical framework and the impact indicators. The baseline data for the indicators would be determined during the project inception phase.

19.   Dissemination of the projects results

Project outputs and reports will be published and made extensively available at IICA and STDF webpages as international public goods.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1:   Logical framework

Appendix 2:   Work Plan

Appendix 3:   Project Budget

Appendix 4:   Terms of Reference for key staff involved in project implementation.

Appendix 5:   Report of the IICA-STDF Workshop on Electronic MSF Certification in the Americas.

Appendix 6:   Letters of support from organizations that support the project request (current support demonstrated by the IICA-STDF Survey results and IICA-STDF Workshop conclusions. Additional support letters will be sought from particular/pilot countries and other organizations)

Appendix 7:   Written consent from an STDF partner that agrees to implement the project *OR* evidence of the technical and professional capacity of another organization proposed to implement the project (to be presented).

APPENDIX 1: Logical Framework[46]

	Project description	Measurable indicators / targets	Sources of verification	Assumptions and risks
Goal	Increased adoption of e-veterinary certification in LAC	25% increase in the number of countries adopting e-veterinary certification systems in LAC. 5% Increase in the number of e-veterinary certificates exchanged in LAC.	Countries answers to the project revised/updated survey and further follow up. Publicly available means (institutional publications and/or webpages/systems).	Political and administrative changes in IICA Member States. Unstable engagement on the process by some countries.
Immediate objective (purpose)	Developing a generic e-veterinary certification system for international trade on the basis of a single window system for the Latin America and Caribbean Region	The pilot implementation of the generic e-veterinary certification system in 3-5 LAC countries.	Project reports/official sources of information. Countries answers to the project revised/updated survey, plus further follow up.	Administration changes. Unstable engagement on the process by some countries.
Expected results (outputs)	Output 1: Current e-vet certification schemes in the LAC region analyzed. Output 2: A Generic e-veterinary certification system designed and developed. Output 3: Implementation of the generic e-vet certification system piloted. Output 4: Guidance on the implementation of the e-veterinary certification system applied. Output 5: Regional capacity building awareness raising strengthened.	Project outputs completed according to timeline Regular, on time, reports to the STDF Secretariat	Public access to the published project reports	Administration changes. Unstable engagement on the process by some countries.
Activities	ICPa) Establishing the Technical and Advisory	Timeline and budget for each activity is	Published project reports.	Administration changes.

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[46] See the CIDT Handbook on Project Identification, Formulation and Design, available on the STDF website, for guidance on the preparation of logical frameworks.

	Committees and the Private Sector Consultative Committee.

ICPb) Establish Cooperation Agreement with Technical Implementing Partners (TIPs).

ICPc) Developing the terms of reference and agreements with TIPs.

1.1 Data gathering and country specifics analysis.

1.2 Multi-country analysis and analytical report.

1.3 Cost-benefit analysis

1.4 Validation of analytical report & output 1.

2.1 Revision of the technical specifications for the central server and generic e-vet certification system.

2.2 Establishment of a central server test version and related user policy.

2.3 Establishment of a generic electronic veterinary certification beta system by redesigning an existing operating system & validation of output 2.

3.1 Selection of pilot countries.

3.2 Direct work with the 3-5 pilot countries for the installation of the beta version of the generic e-veterinary certification scheme.

3.3 Testing/ Validating the operation of the beta version of the | summarized in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively

The project is proposed for a 3-year period, starting with the revised survey elaboration, followed by its application and elaboration of results reports. Elaboration of technical guidance and workshops will consider results of the survey | Published final report. | Unstable engagement on the process by some countries. |

	generic e-veterinary certification scheme & validation of output 3. 4.1 Gender analysis. 4.2 Elaboration of the promotional materials on the generic e-veterinary certification scheme. 4.3 Elaboration of the operational manuals and technical guidance on the generic e-veterinary certification scheme. 4.4 Elaboration of the decision-making tools on the generic e-veterinary certification scheme, based on outputs #1, #2 and #3 & validation of output 4. 5.1 Coordination with IICA Delegations in LAC for the organization of capacity building (on-line and physical) and sensibilization workshops. 5.2 Definition of logistic matters (invitations and hiring of venue and services hiring). 5.3 Work with consultants and steering committee on the contents/program definition. 5.4 Conducting / Implementing the workshops. 5.5 Elaboration of technical reports.			

APPENDIX 2: Work Plan

Activity	Responsibility	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Output 1: Analysis of current e-vet certification schemes in the Western Hemisphere		▓	▓	▓	▓								
Activity ICPa) Establishing the Technical and Advisory Committees and the Private Sector Consultative Committee.	IICA	▓											
Activity ICPb) Establish Cooperation Agreement with Technical Implementing Partners (TIPs).	IICA	▓											
Activity ICPc) Developing the terms of reference and agreements with TIPs.	IICA	▓											
Activity 1.1 Data gathering and country specifics analysis.	IICA and M-TIP		▓	▓									
1.2 Multi-country analysis and analytical report.	IICA and M-TIP			▓	▓								
1.3 Cost-benefit analysis	IICA, M-TIP and Consultants			▓	▓								
1.4 Validation of analytical report & output 1	IICA and M-TIP				▓								
Output 2 - Generic e-veterinary certification system					▓	▓							
Activity 2.1 - Revision of the technical specifications for the central server and generic e-vet certification system.	Consultants				▓	▓							

Activity	Responsible													
Activity 2.2 - Establishment of a central server test version and related user policy.														
Activity 2.3 - Establishment of a generic electronic veterinary certification beta system by redesigning an existing operating system & validation of output 2.														
Output 3 - Pilot projects on the implementation of the generic e-vet certification systems:														
Activity 3.1 - Selection of pilot countries.	Consultants													
Activity 3.2 - Direct with the 3-5 pilot countries for the installation of the beta version of the generic e-veterinary certification scheme.	IICA and Steering Committee													
Activity 3.3 - Testing/Validating the operation of the beta version of the generic e-veterinary certification system in Pilot Countries (consultants and steering committee) & validation of output 3.	IICA and Steering Committee													
Output 4 - Guidance on e-veterinary certification:														
Activity 4.1 - gender analysis	IICA and experts/consultants.													
Activity 4.2 - elaboration of the promotional materials on the generic e-veterinary certification scheme.	Consultants													

Activity	Responsible															
Activity 4.3 - elaboration of the operational manuals and technical guidance on the generic e-veterinary certification scheme.	IICA and Steering Committee							▓	▓							
Activity 4.4 - elaboration of the decision-making tools on the generic e-veterinary certification scheme, based on outputs #1, #2 and #3 & validation of output 4.	IICA and Steering Committee							▓	▓							
Output 5 - Regional capacity building and sensibilization workshops				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
Activity 5.1 - Coordination with IICA Delegations in LAC for the organization of workshops.	IICA			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		
Activity 5.2 - Definition of logistic matters (invitations and hiring of venue and services hiring).	IICA and Consultants			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		
Activity 5.3 - Work with and the Technical Committee and the M-TIPs on the contents/program.	IICA, Consultants and Steering Committee			▓	▓			▓	▓			▓	▓			
Activity 5.4 – Conducting / implementing the workshops.	Consultants and IICA.				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓			
Activity 5.5 – elaborating technical reports.	Consultants and IICA.				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓

APPENDIX 3: Budget (US$)

The detailed budget table is included as an appendix in Excel.

APPENDIX 4: Terms of Reference for key staff involved in project implementation
Implementation Organization: IICA

IICA will provide technical, financial and administrative oversight to the project. One staff member will be designated as the project manager who will work in coordination and with support of IICA's Agriculture Health, Safety and Agrifood Quality Program, its Financial Department and IICA Delegations in the 34 IICA Member countries.

Project manager responsibilities:

- Provide oversight to project implementation, technical, financial and administrative management
- Serve as primary contact point for interaction with STDF
- Serve as primary contact point for interaction with the Steering Committee of the Project
- Provide periodic progress reports to the STDF and the Steering Committee
- Ensure compliance with STDF and IICA regulations

Technical Committee

Will support IICA's project management from a technical standpoint, including ensuring that the project's outputs and direction are consistent with other on-going efforts related to electronic certification and trade facilitation. The Technical committee consists of one IICA Officers, plus five national officers/experts on e-certification in SPS areas and/or trade facilitation, preferably in charge of e-certification in their respective national veterinary services (one form each IICA Region – Northern, Central, Caribbean, Andean and Southern) plus one invited representative of Private Sector Consultative Committee

Main duties:

- oversee implementation and management of the project and provide guidance as needed
- ensure the project's outputs and direction is consistent with other on-going efforts related to electronic certification and trade facilitation
- in coordination with the IICA, supporting the implementation of activities 1.2, 1.3, 1.8, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3 and 5.3.

Advisory Committee

Will support IICA's project management from a strategical and political standpoint making sure the project is in line with the priorities of the LAC countries (public and private sector), relevant intergovernmental organizations and international standard setting bodies. The Advisory Committee will be comprised by five experts from intergovernmental organizations and/or international standards setting bodies with relevant work on the field: WOAH, Codex Alimentarius and IPPC), plus one plus one invited representative of Private Sector Consultative Committee.

Main duties:

• oversee implementation and management of the project and provide strategic and political guidance as needed

• ensure the project's outputs and direction is consistent with other strategic and political efforts related to electronic certification and trade facilitation in the region

- in coordination with the IICA, supporting the implementation of activities 1.2, 1.3, 1.8, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3 and 5.3.

Private Sector Consultative Group

Will support IICA's project management from a technical a strategical and political standpoint and provide additional support to the Technical and to the Advisory Committee (one representative of the Private Sector Consultative Group in each). Will be formed by 5-10 representatives of relevant industry and trade associations.

- provide advice on the implementation and management of the project and provide strategic and political guidance as needed

- provide advice on the project's outputs and direction is consistent with other strategic and political efforts related to electronic certification and trade facilitation in the region

Technical Implementing Partners (M-TIPs)

Should have a track record, undisputable reputation, know-how, complementary resources and a robust technological support for the elaboration and the implementation of the technical solutions proposed in the project. Consultants' responsibilities:

- Deliver the expected products on time and with the expected quality.
- Respect STDF and IICA rules applied to consultants.
- Respond, in a timely manner, requests from the IICA to be included in the report.
- In coordination with the IICA, implementing activities 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 4.4 and 5.2.

APPENDIX 5:

Report

Electronic SPS Certification in the Americas

"Learning from past experiences and exploring new approaches"

(25 -27 July, 2023)

San José, Costa Rica

Background

Electronic SPS certification for international trade has received greater attention during and since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the extent to which countries have adopted this type of exchange varies significantly. The Americas have been a leader in adopting electronic SPS certification. Over 15 countries in the region[1] are currently exchanging electronic phytosanitary certificates through the ePhyto Hub while several others are in the testing phase to begin exchanging. The ePhyto Hub is a centralized exchange system for ePhytos that can be used by all national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) once they are connected. Implementation of the use of ePhyto Hub provides useful lessons for countries in the region and abroad.

Although the use of ePhytos has grown exponentially over the last few years, the uptake of electronic veterinary certification (eVet) remains less widespread, and its adoption continues to pose challenges for many countries. IICA is currently exploring the development of a project to pilot test a regional approach for the exchange of electronic veterinary certificates. This effort may require reforming legislation, modernizing infrastructure, and shifting mind-sets to implement change (OECD PAPER N°190).

There are some noteworthy cases of IICA Member States working towards eVet exchange and being early adopters in this area. For example, in recent years, Chile has been working towards a standard XML for the exchange of e-sanitary certificates with the European Union and with other Pacific Alliance member countries (i.e., Colombia, Mexico, and Peru). And since August 2022, Chile and Korea have been exchanging electronic certificates for all animal and aquaculture products." (OECD PAPER N°190).

The ePhyto solution, which has two structural components, the hub and the generic ePhyto national system (GeNS), has been operational since July 2019. Article 5.2.4. of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code notes that "Certification may be provided by electronic exchange of data sent directly from the Veterinary Authority of the exporting country to the Veterinary Authority of the importing country." However, the diversity of formats and contents of data elements for the electronic exchange of certificates continues to create challenges for international uptake. (OECD PAPER N°190). A practical workshop to discuss the challenges and opportunities of eVet with experts in the region and beyond is timely and represents an important opportunity to discuss regional harmonization.

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[1] ARG, BHS, CHL, COL, CRI, DOM, DMA, GTM, GUY, JAM, LCA, MEX, PAN, PER, PRY, TTO, and USA.

Objective of the event

This two and a half-day event brought together experts from 29 IICA Member States to provide a platform to exchange lessons learned on electronic SPS certificates and discussed ways to pilot test a regional approach for the exchange of electronic veterinary certificates.

Structure of the event

The event was structured around plenary sessions and breakout groups to maximize the benefits of in-person interactions. As a result of the forum, an outcome document was produced with conclusions on the different points discussed during the plenary sessions. Event sessions had simultaneous interpretation in English and Spanish.

Program and presentations (links for downloading in each title)

Day 1

8:30 – 9:00	**Registration – morning coffee**
9:00 – 9:30	**Opening ceremony**

- Dr José Urdaz, Manager – IICA's Agricultural Health, Safety and Agrifood Quality Program.
- Simon Padilla & Pablo Jenkins (STDF/OMC)

9:30 – 11:00 **Plenary session I: Intro to eCert**
Facilitated by IICA followed by Q&A
- Presentation IPPC - Rodrigo Robles (SAG - Chile)
- Presentation Codex Alimentarius - Erik Bosker (MINLNV – Países Bajos)
- Presentation WOAH - Catya Martinez
- Presentation WCO - Juan Diego Chavarria

11:00 – 11:30 **Coffee break**

11:30 – 13:00 **Plenary session II: Country experiences on ePhyto**
Moderated by STDF followed by Q&A
Panelists
- Presentation Chile - Rodrigo Robles (SAG)
- Presentation USA - Michael J. Perry (USDA APHIS)
- Presentation Jamaica - Damian Rowe (MOA)
- Presentation Mexico – Delfino Hernández Garrido (SENASICA)

13:00 – 14:30 **Lunch break**

14:30 – 16:00 **Plenary session III: Country experiences on eVet**
Moderated by IICA followed by Q&A
Panelists
- Presentation Chile - Claudia Mancilio Ascencio (SAG)
- Presentation USA – Ciarra Toomey (FSIS/USDA)
- Presentation Brazil - Fernanda Michalski & Claudia Dantas (MAPA)

16:00 – 16:30 **Coffee break**

16:30 – 17:30 **Plenary session IV: Discussion and summary**
Wrap-up session facilitated by STDF

Day 2

9:00 – 9:30   *Intro to Day 2*

9:30 – 11:00   *Plenary session V: Roundtable discussion: Prerequisites and possible ways of establishing electronic exchange of veterinary certificates in the region*
Moderated by IICA followed by Q&A
Speakers
- Presentation [Prof. Vidal Zapparoli Melo (USP - Brazil)](#)
- Erik Bosker (MINLNV – Países Bajos)
- Presentación [Juan Diego Chavarria (WCO)](#)

11:00 – 11:30   *Coffee break*

11:30 – 13:00   *Breakout session – Prerequisites of establishing electronic exchange of veterinary certificates in the region*

- Group 1: Andean + Central + Southern Regions
- Group 2: Caribbean + Northern Regions

13:00 – 14:30   *Lunch break*

14:30 – 16:00   *Breakout session - Possible ways of establishing electronic exchange of veterinary certificates in the region*

- Group 1: Andean + Central + Southern Regions
- Group 2: Caribbean + Northern Regions

16:00 – 16:30   *Coffee break*

16:30 – 17:30   *Report of breakout sessions and discussion*
Facilitated by STDF followed by discussion

- Group 1: Andean + Central + Southern Regions
- Group 2: Caribbean + Northern Regions

Day 3

9:00 – 10:30   **Presentation of forum findings & agreement on workshop conclusions**
Facilitated by IICA

- [Conclusions](#)

10:30 – 11:00   **Coffee break**

11:00 – 12:00   **Closing ceremony**
- IICA Representative
- STDF

12:00 – 13:00   **Lunch break**

13:00 – 16:00   **IICA Lab visit**

Breakout sessions report and discussions

Breakout session – Prerequisites of establishing electronic exchange of veterinary certificates in the region

Group 1: Andean, Central and Southern Regions

Question 1 – What would be possible Pre-Requirements to establish and Implement eVet Certification?

- That importers and exporters have capacities (Paraguay)

- Homologation / Standardization of the fields that contain a sanitary certificate (Nicaragua)

- Starting from a data mapping (Mexico)

    o A previous work of each country in the identification of the data that must be included in an eCert. (Uruguay)

- That pre-existing experiences/systems be considered (Honduras)

- Have a legal framework that facilitates the exchange of information (Nicaragua).

- Regional articulation to reach a common solution (Chile).

- Consider the IT infrastructure of those involved (Mexico).

- Take advantage of the experiences of the Pacific Alliance and SIECA, as well as OMSA, Codex, etc. (Uruguay and Mexico).

- Sensitization and technical training for implementation (Nicaragua and Mexico).

- That there is a certain level of flexibility for adjustments in the platform/system.

Question 2 - What should be the sequence / importance ranking (human resources, financial, technological, political and negotiation aspects)?

- Political - Sensitization of decision-making levels (establish statement for future work and indication of focal points)

- Regulatory

- Financial / human / technological resources / continuity in the work

- Technological

- Negotiation with partners

Question 3 - Given that most work is done at the bi-lateral level, why isn't there more exchange at the multi-lateral level? What is needed to advance the multilateral solution?

- No progress has been made because, in the past, the discussion has been based a lot on approval. But, if there is data to transmit, it must begin (Chile).

- The absence of a GeNS (Mexico).

- Formation of a working group (Paraguay)

- That a platform be established (Uruguay)

- Take advantage of / explore the possibility of using the example of the Pacific Alliance.

- Seek to approve a joint solution of the IABA regarding the issue.

<u>Group 2: Caribbean and Northern Regions</u>

Question 1 – What would be possible Pre-Requirements to establish and Implement eVet Certification?

- Resources needs: This was broken down into three main areas;
    - Financial
    - Human (Technical Skillset) –Competent Authority establishing the level of skillset required for the undertaking.
    - Infrastructure – Computer (with compatibility), Internet and Servers.

- Commodities Review and Mapping of requirements – This involve looking at all commodities that would be featured in the system for both the aquatic and terrestrial environment and document the requirements.

- Review of the Legal Framework – A crucial step in the procedure would be to examine the legal structure to see if the mechanism for exchanging electronic certificates is currently in place. The requirement to exchange eVet could be included in the animal health law, made into a separate law, or both.

- Political Support – At the beginning of the process, getting support from the political directorate is essential. When interacting with politicians, it would be wise to present the data in a way that encourages trade facilitation and national modernization. Important catalyst for the discussion includes:
    - Trade Facilitation – It would be helpful to the discussion to provide justification for how the deployment of eVet could assist the private sector. For example, the cost of doing business would decrease, port wait times would shorten, fraud would decline, and most importantly, this would be a method to modernize the capability and position of the nation.

    - Politicians would be highly reluctant to hire staff members due to the expense involved; however, if it could be shown how much money would be saved, it would encourage support for funding and other resources. This is where the Cost Factor plays a significant part in propelling the case ahead.

- Private Sector Support – Getting the backing of the commercial sector right away should be a priority. The support for the eVet system should be unrestricted once the commercial sector is able to recognize its advantages. Some participants in the meeting mentioned that their nation used public-private partnerships to activate eVet activities. The Netherlands stated that its

endeavor received a 50/50 mix of private and public funding. One participant indicated the conventional system of verification was challenging, but then the modernize system provide real benefits and companies would indicates their level of cost savings.

- This workshop's major goal is to work with participants to determine how to get started while ensuring that no nation is left behind. The best course of action should be to digitize the national system; however, some nations have already begun the mapping process, while others have not.

Question 2 - What should be the sequence / importance ranking (human resources, financial, technological, political and negotiation aspects)?

The Group engaged in a process to map the sequence of activities that must be conducted to create and execute eVet Cert across the region, and the outcome of this deliberative exercise can be found below:

- Assessing the country's current status – It may be important to conduct an evaluation of the existing national situation in order to determine what steps must be taken to go forward. This task would consist of the following components:

- Reviewing of the legislative process,

- Identifying the platform for trade that the country chooses to employ, such as the WCO Single Window option or a Web-based service comparable to GeNS.

- Consultation with the political directorates to ensure top management support. One method of conveying the word to the political directorate is through a Change Champion, with each member relaying the message to their top management in order to initiate the change.

- Sensitizing and Collaborating with Private Sector – In most circumstances, the private sector's assistance will help to efficiently drive the process, especially given that the private sector benefits the most.

Question 3 - Given that most work is done at the bi-lateral level, why isn't there more exchange at the multi-lateral level? What is needed to advance the multilateral solution?

- Absence of a Harmonize Standard – The Group stated that there is no defined, standardize model for data exchange at the WOAH level. As a result, eVet exchange has to be negotiated bi-laterally, making it considerably more complex when compared to ePhyto. It was further stated that for the IPPC there are two standardized ePhyto model certificates that different nations can choose to utilize at the IPPC level. At the moment, there is no formal disclosure of a multilateral lead on developing harmonized reference data model for eVet.

- Multiple Requirements – Brazil shared how it had over 600 different veterinary certificates for various products/trading partners, making worldwide harmonization in eVet challenging to achieve.

- A long discussion ensued as to whether or not it is possible to reduce these hundreds of certificates to a smaller unit.

- A member indicated that Professor Vidal worked with the competent authority to obtain the specifications for all nations in their national system to develop eVet-Certs in the language of several nations.

- The Group emphasized the need for the creation of simple models that take into account the needs of every nation. Reducing the number of fields on an eVet template to only those relevant fields that are required for trade. Attachments, with additional information, can be sent with the certificates.

- These hundreds of different certificates needs could be readily scoped into the national system capability. The template will have particular areas for gathering criteria for each country, making the task easier and more structured.

- According to one Member, the anticipated new work of WOAH to establish a Reference Data model will incorporate the Codex template, which will be used by WCO in the Single Window.

Breakout session - Possible ways of establishing electronic exchange of veterinary certificates in the region

Group 1: Andean, Central and Southern

Question 1 - Would there be value in constructing a GeNS system to promote the work in the Region?

- Yes, there is value because if we have limited resources, we save resources in the development of a system (Mexico).

- Mainly to those who do not have systems.

- To those who do have a system, it could also be used as a complement.

- Yes. If there were a generic system, covering multiple products, many problems would be solved. (Chile – "if available, we would implement it immediately").

- How is the experience of the Pacific Alliance used? Taking advantage of the model and content homologation work achieved in the AP and reviewing it based on the OMSA and Codex standards. Also, having multiple systems is not a limitation. The systems complement each other.

Question 2 – How do you see the Single Window helping to implement eVet?

- In the case of Uruguay, joint work between the health authorities and the customs authorities is essential.

- Nicaragua – determining role because it generates everything that has to do with documentation.

- Honduras – the idea is that all countries have a single window.

- Paraguay – everything through the single window.

- Chile – does not depend on the single window.

Question 3 - Would your country be willing to participate in pilot project and what would be the requirement for the pilot? What requirements should a country meet to be a pilot country (political commitment, level of development on the issue, exporter/importer profile, etc.)?

- Have some previous experience (countries that already start with some previous work on the subject)

- Countries that have some kind of exchange of veterinary certificates.

- Political-institutional commitment – designation of responsibilities.

- Ensure continuity/sustainability during the pilot.

- Potential candidates to take part in a pilot experience: Mexico – Chile – Paraguay – Uruguay – Peru – Dominican Republic (Honduras and Bolivia – pending consultation).

Grupo 2: Región Caribe y Norte

Question 1 - Would there be value in constructing a GeNS system to promote the work in the Region?

Group Response: Yes

The Group also added the following comments:

- It could be a low hanging fruit that countries could use to get started.

- This is an acceptable move to harmonize the process; unfortunately, the ePhyto GeNS does not allow for online payment, which would be a helpful function incorporated in the structure. It was stated that ePhyto GeNS now incorporates an upgrade component and that a new release structure with a role for NPPO Cashier that allows for fee collection will be accessible.

- One participant stated that the GeNS is not a system that transmits information from nation to another, and that this requires the presence of a hub. The participant further stated that the use of a hub for eVet may not be a good fit for many countries. It was also suggested that a possibility existed for GeNS and the HUB be expanded to promote the exchange of eVet, and that an agreement between WOAH and IPPC may be required.

- Divergent views of the Group

  o If countries move toward a Single Window, having a GeNS may become obsolete in the long term.

o What may be required is not GeNS, but rather the construction of a new harmonized mechanism for exchanging certificates, i.e. a new Web-Based Mechanism for moving eCerts from one IICA Member State to the next. WCO might be able to provide capacity building on single window connectivity through a regional program.

o Another viewpoint would be to concentrate on the identification of an existing bilateral/multilateral mechanism (e.g. The Pacific Alliance) that might be enlarged to create that web-based prototype, but this would have to be further analyzed.

Question 2 – How do you see the Single Window helping to implement eVet?

- Single window will help to implement eVet by establishing the national system for countries. This national system can be link via XML or JSON to push and receive data with other country.

- There was discussion around whether a protocol is required for the exchange of XML data, however, Professor Vidal stated that the standard for exchanging eCerts is essential, but there is no need to design an exchange protocol because the protocol for exchanging xml is no different than what is used on the internet to exchange emails. In other words, the system for exchanging data is already in place and ready for use.
- It was emphasized that the WCO worldwide data model for exchanging certificates exists and that it could become the standard for sharing eVet data. -exchange information package (IP) for each country.

Question 3 - Would your country be willing to participate in pilot project and what would be the requirement for the pilot? What requirements should a country meet to be a pilot country (political commitment, level of development on the issue, exporter/importer profile, etc.)?

'All group member stated yes'

However, before a pilot project can begin, a system must be established to choose which countries will open the trial. As a result, the Group embarked on a process to create certain criteria for selecting pilot countries. Please see below:

I. Having a country that is a net importer/exporter

II. Countries willingness to provide resources to participate – financial and human (technical capacity), this includes IT capacity and having good internet flow.

III. Country must be established on the Single Window platform at the 3rd or 4th level (if the Single Window solution is chosen)

IV. Select countries from develop and developing region.

V. Spanish/ English balance

VI. Have a legal framework that allows for exchange electronic data (do a check list to determine where you are)

VII. Technical and Political Directorate buy-in

Presentation of forum findings & agreement on workshop conclusions

Conclusions

- IICA Member States represented at this session recognized the progress made by the international standard setting organizations (Codex and WOAH) in the preparation of guidelines on electronic certification for animals and products of animal origin.

- The representatives reviewed existing initiatives in the region for generating and exchanging electronic veterinary certificates. Several national initiatives at the bilateral level as well as the regional level (Pacific Alliance, SIECA, etc.) were identified.

- However, the representatives recognize that there is no mechanism for the multilateral exchange of electronic veterinary certificates that is accessible to all stakeholders.

- In this sense, the representatives consider that the development of a standardized protocol for the issuance and multilateral exchange of electronic veterinary certificates would facilitate the import and export processes of animals and products of animal origin. This is especially true for those countries that do not have national systems in place for this purpose.

- Therefore, participants expressed their interest in being part of future initiatives aimed at developing a mechanism for the generation and multilateral exchange of electronic veterinary certificates accessible to all potential stakeholders.

- Representatives noted their interest in receiving the support of IICA and the STDF for the development of a mechanism for the issuance and exchange of electronic veterinary certificates and that this be reflected in the Interamerican Board of Agriculture.

* Antigua y Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, United States, Grenada, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Rep. Dominicana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, San Vicent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay.