

**SPS ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ECAC)
SUMMARY REPORT OF THE FIFTH VIRTUAL MEETING
23 NOVEMBER 2021**

1 INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretariat (Mr Simon Padilla) welcomed participants and provided a brief introduction to the meeting. A list of participants is available in Annex 1.

2 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

2. Mr Erik Bosker¹ presented the new Codex Guidelines on paperless use of electronic certificates. The key points presented included:

- a. The revised document provides timely, solid and consistent Codex guidance for international paperless exchange of official food safety certificates between national competent authorities.
- b. The Codex reference data model included in the Guidance enables national authorities to apply the UN/CEFACT eCert SPS data standard and message structure, and the WCO Data Model Information Package for Licenses, Permits and Certificates.
- c. Now that the Guidelines have been adopted, national authorities, in particular from developing countries, will need support and assistance to implement paperless certification.

3. A question/answer session focused on the possible exchange mechanism of electronic food safety certificates, which is not defined in the Guidelines. It is however indicated that the exporting and importing countries should ensure that appropriate controls, infrastructure and capability are in place when considering paperless exchange of certificates.

3 POSSIBLE WAYS FORWARD TO INCREASE COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION AMONG SPS AND OTHER ECERT INITIATIVES

4. The Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF), IICA, IPPC and the World Bank provided information about recent capacity building efforts to support developing countries to implement the ePhyto Solution. Other members also referred to their recent activities and work in the field of electronic certification, such as: (i) a new OECD scoping paper on "Electronic sanitary certificates for trade in animal products", which was presented to its members on the same day; and (ii) the work conducted by members of the ePhyto Industry Advisory Group (IAG) to bring together private sector and NPPOs to strengthening the implementation of the ePhyto Solution worldwide.

5. The OIE indicated that it will start the developing guidance for national veterinary authorities to implement paperless veterinary certification in 2022.

6. UNCTAD reported on its current work on electronic certification, including its collaboration with UNECE on the functional specification for an electronic conformity certificate management system, and emphasized the importance of increasing synergies between the different paperless systems available, including Customs systems.

7. Several participants highlighted the need to raise awareness among food safety, animal and plant health authorities on the relevance and importance of electronic certification.

¹ Senior Policy Advisor, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of The Netherlands, and former chair of the Electronic Working Group of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) that worked on the revision of the Guidelines for design, production, issuance and use of Generic Official Certificates.



8. Participants widely supported development of a e-readiness assessment instrument/tool for developing countries to determine their current status and needs to implement electronic certification.

9. The STDF/ECAC could facilitate development of such an instrument, that could be in the form of an interactive tool to be used autonomously or with external assistance.

10. Several members expressed their interest in supporting developing countries with the implementation of such a tool and the operationalization of electronic certification.

4 NEXT STEPS

11. The Secretariat will follow-up individually with members interested in development of an e-readiness assessment instrument/tool and report back on these discussions at the next meeting of the ECAC in early 2022.

12. The Secretariat thanked participants for their input and encouraged them to make use of the [ECAC website](#) to track various eCert related efforts.

ANNEX 1
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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