

Electronic phytosanitary certification is still at the beginning stages amid a growing need for swift progress towards a more efficient system, according to representatives of The Southern Hemisphere Association of Fresh Fruit Exporters (SHAFFE).

SHAFFE, together with Freshfel Europe and the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, has held two webinars on the state of play of electronic phytosanitary certificates.

At the center of the meetings was the evolution of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) ePhyto Hub, a global transmission system for phytosanitary certificates to which nearly 50 countries have been connected already.



The webinar addressed key challenges such as different safety requirements, competition of the ePhyto hub with bilateral channels and different speeds of onboarding - while the fruit sector underlined the urgency to go completely paperless.

The meeting, which was attended by fruit and vegetable business together with NPPO representatives from all over the world, covered three major elements: creating more global awareness on the IPPC ePhyto solution; motivating NPPO's all over the world to streamline endeavors and implement this global solution; and revealing and discussing the practical challenges in the implementation process together with the fruit sector.

With bridging the gap between policy and business, the program included short introductions of key objectives and elements of concern of the global fruit industry with regard to the ePhyto solution.

SHAFFE Secretary General Nelli Hajdu highlighted in her intervention the strong

fragmentation of the global fruit trade and the need for swift progress towards electronic phytosanitary certificates.

While the global fruit industry has been managing well through the pandemic and even increased its global value (+3%, US\$100 billion), the global pandemic with the omission of airfreight and courier services has been challenging the in-time delivery of original phytosanitary certificates and revealed the vulnerability of global trading operations.

The fruit sector welcomed the swift emergency measures implemented by NPPO's all over the world.

Nonetheless, the practical implementation is challenged by the evolution of different transmission systems, a lack of communication and understanding of the different national regulatory requirements for e-certification which in particular backfires at custom operations level, and the different security requirements diverging from electronic seals to QR codes.

Craig Fedchock, Senior Advisor at the IPPC, highlighted that the onboarding is still at the very beginning, and all countries will have to continue to strengthen efforts to onboard to the IPPC ePhyto system as fast as possible, which can be done with support of the Alliance.