

TRANSFORMING EXPORT PROCESSES  
IN THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR



# MOROCCO

# M



Timeframe: **October 2018 – October 2021**

Donor funding: **US\$ 250,000**

In-kind business contribution: **US\$ 158,000**

Projected annual savings: **US\$ 43 million**

## THE ePHYTO SOLUTION

Recognising the constraints of physical documentation and in line with Morocco's strategic digital strategy, the Moroccan National Plant Protection Organisation (Office National de Sécurité Sanitaire des Produits Alimentaires - ONSSA) decided to adopt the International Plant Protection Convention ePhyto Solution through the IPPC ePhyto Hub, which allows countries to electronically exchange ePhytos with one another quickly, accurately and at low cost.

### ADDRESSING THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION'S TRADE FACILITATION AGREEMENT

**Article 7.9**  
Perishable Goods

**Article 10.1**  
Formalities and Documentation  
Requirements



## THE CHALLENGE

Phytosanitary certificates are official documents issued by governments to confirm that shipments of plants and plant products are free of pests and diseases. These certificates are typically physical paper documents transferred between different parties by post, courier or other means. These certificates can take days to obtain and are prone to errors, loss and counterfeiting. This slows down trade and at worst results in spoiled goods, additional storage charges and frustrated customers and governments.

Prior to April 2020, despite the best efforts of the Moroccan government, which provided staff and resources to speed up the process, Moroccan agri-food exporters were still facing an average four-hour round trip to designated offices to obtain the

necessary documentation.

And if the paperwork accompanying a consignment from Agadir to Marseille failed to match the specified weight or there was some other discrepancy, a replacement certificate would have to be generated and couriered from Morocco to France – a process that could take up to a week. Perishable goods comprising the bulk of the country's exports risked partial or even total spoilage.

Such difficulties affect small agri-food exporters disproportionately as they can ill-afford to incur such losses. And such losses can also have a significant impact on the large number of women who rely on the sector for their livelihood. According to OECD figures, while overall female labour force participation in

Morocco stood at 21.3% in 2020, women accounted for 52.2% of the agriculture workforce.



## WHAT WE DID

In collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture, the Alliance worked with ONSSA and business to digitalise the country's phytosanitary certificate process by:

**1. Setting up the technical environment to integrate Morocco into the IPPC ePhyto Solution**, enabling the exchange of ePhytos by connecting ONSSA's SIPS (Système d'Information Phytosanitaire) to the IPPC ePhyto Hub. The Alliance supported ONSSA, to develop IT capacity with the assistance of a team of IPPC implementation experts.

**2. Initiating a change management programme to persuade stakeholders to embrace the new system.** This involved meetings, events, engagements with trade bodies and email campaigns targeting the private sector, which was quick to realise the benefits ePhyto adoption would bring. Meanwhile, officials welcomed the prospect of less paperwork without the need to sacrifice inspection standards.



# THE IMPACTS

Morocco exchanged its first ePhyto in April 2020, becoming the first country in Africa to fully implement the IPPC ePhyto Solution. Within 18 months, only the United States of America was using more ePhytos than Morocco, which continues to be among the biggest users in the world.

Around 80% of its total agricultural exports are now covered by ePhytos and, crucially, the documentation covering every shipment requiring phytosanitary certificates with its main markets, the European Union, and the United States of America is now digitalised.



## 80%

of Moroccan agricultural exports are covered by ePhyto

## 100%

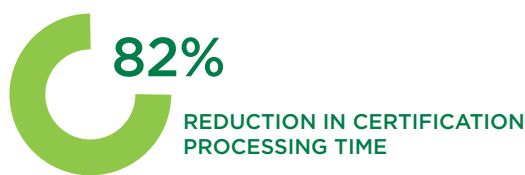
of agricultural trade requiring a phytosanitary certificate with US and EU is digital

In the case of the European Union, the implementation has granted Morocco seamless access to TRACES, the regional online platform for sanitary and phytosanitary certification, allowing single certification for a marketplace of almost 450 million people and replacing previous bi-lateral agreements with various member states.

Every ePhyto certificate represents time and cost savings. Extrapolating from figures since launch, it is expected that digital certification will eliminate 82% of the needless food waste that routinely includes cargoes of fruit and vegetables rotting away on sweltering quaysides as exporters wait for paperwork to clear.

This would translate to average savings of US\$ 283 per container and annual savings of US\$ 43 million.

### ACTUAL SAVINGS (2021)



-  Improved food security
-  Alleviated administrative burden
-  Helped level the playing field for MSMEs
-  Built momentum for increased digitalization at the regional level

\* Based on phytosanitary certificates issued in 2021

The adoption of ePhyto has changed the dynamics of Morocco's crucial agri-food trade, which accounts for 19% of gross domestic product, 16% of total exports, employs 80% of the rural labour force, and 21% of the industrial workforce.

In future, this may encourage other producers, particularly micro, small and medium sized enterprises

(MSMEs), to become exporters because electronic transmission has helped to eliminate costly delays.

The successful implementation of the IPPC ePhyto Solution has encouraged other developing countries to follow suit. The Alliance is currently in the process of implementing similar projects in other developing countries across the world.



**“This project implemented in partnership with the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation is helping to increase Morocco’s food exports, benefiting both food producers and the economy. It is important to capitalise on this relationship, building other similarly ambitious projects that impact directly on MSMEs and further enhance Morocco’s competitiveness.”**

**Said Maghraoui Hassani,  
Director of Defence and Trade Regulation, Ministry of Industry and Trade**

**“The Alliance’s partnership with the IPPC Secretariat has resulted in a unique-to-the-world combination of international organisations, individual governments, and the private sector working together seamlessly to provide an enhanced and improved trade environment for both producers and consumers of plants and plant products.”**

**Craig Fedchock, Senior Adviser,  
ePhyto Group Lead, IPPC**

**“The ePhyto project has made it possible to establish instant, secure exchanges with key points in our supply chain. We have been able to optimise the use of resources associated with export procedures, while ensuring a better quality of service to our customers.”**

**Laurent Thénégal, Director of  
Customs, Azura**



## REFORM THROUGH PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The success of this project is testimony to public-private partnership. Both sectors recognised the strategic opportunity the introduction of ePhytos offered, and worked together to make it happen. Throughout implementation, additional public-private dialogues were held at key moments, keeping business informed, engaged and ready to use the new system. The private sector also participated in training sessions promoting the use of the new system at various locations throughout the country. As a result, business embraced ePhyto with enthusiasm. Through the project, both sectors built trust, laying the groundwork for future reforms.

Various private sector organisations contributed significantly to the successful development and implementation of the project, including the General Confederation of Enterprises of Morocco (CGEM), the Moroccan Association of Exporters (ASMEX), the Professional Association of Ship Agents & Shipbrokers of Morocco (APRAM) and the Moroccan Confederation of Agriculture and Rural Development (COMADER).

### HOST ORGANISATIONS



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