

DIGITALISING PHYTOSANITARY CERTIFICATION



# NIGERIA



## THE IMPACTS

Like a growing number of countries across the world, Nigeria is reaping the rewards after introducing the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) ePhyto Solution, enabling the exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificates, or ePhytos, with major trading partners through a central hub, quickly, accurately and at low cost.

After the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) became operational and trained officials provided the necessary skills, on September 18, 2023, a cocoa bean exporter sent an ePhyto to Malaysia, becoming the first exporter to do so via the hub.

The subsequent addition of eSignature capability has enabled ePhyto exchange with European Union countries and linking the NAQS payment platform with the GeNS eBilling module has created a one-stop-shop for electronic issuance.

Adopting electronic phytosanitary certification allows agricultural exporters to benefit from time and cost savings. Digitalisation eliminates the requirement to spend hours travelling in person to regional offices of the National Agricultural Quarantine Services (NAQS), the country's National Plant Protection Office (NPPO), and long waits to complete phytosanitary formalities.

Electronic exchange saves time and cost on every transaction, but its potential is magnified when a destination port rejects a phytosanitary certificate, and a physical

document must be returned to its country of origin for correction. In cases of maritime transport, which represents more than 80% of global merchandise trade by volume, this typically takes days, or even weeks.

Meanwhile, an exporter incurs additional storage and demurrage charges, and faces the prospect of spoilage or even total consignment loss. In contrast, an ePhyto can be returned for immediate correction and because certificates typically arrive before a shipment arrives, this can reduce delays even further.

The ePhyto Solution also provides NAQS officials access to structured pre-arrival data, allowing them to concentrate their efforts on higher-risk import consignments. And, in the case of exports, electronic authentication replaces a system that relied upon the availability of officials to answer email or phone requests.

Beyond time and cost savings, using the IPPC ePhyto Hub also:

- strengthens consumer safety
- enhances procedural transparency
- mitigates opportunities for documentary falsification
- increases food security through quicker border clearance
- reduces barriers to trade, particularly for resource-poor, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)

## THE CHALLENGE

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country with around 223 million people, relies heavily on agriculture to guarantee food security and support economic development. The sector accounts for 23% of GDP and 35% of total employment.

However, while exports have risen significantly in recent years, unlocking the vast untapped potential in crops such as cassava, cocoa and palm oil will become even more urgent as pressure mounts on weaning the world off oil and gas production, the country's main export earners.

Phytosanitary certificates are official documents issued by NPPOs to confirm that shipments of plants and plant products traded internationally are free of pests and diseases and therefore safe to import.

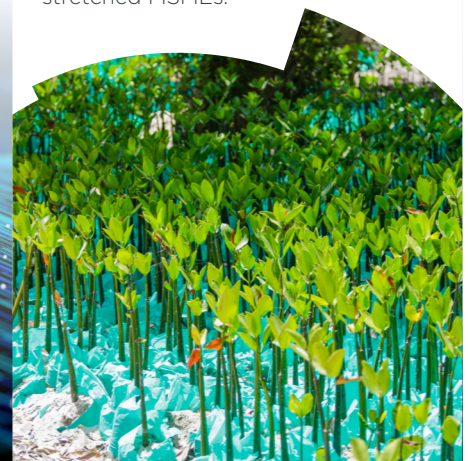
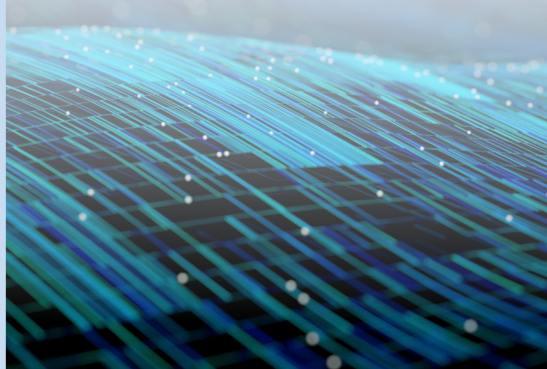
Also, rejections due to factors such as inadvertent errors, illegible handwriting, and illegality, are not only costly, but they may also discourage trade and damage a country's competitiveness. The additional time and cost incurred by manual procedures also form a significant barrier for all would-be exporters, particularly for resource-stretched MSMEs.

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

**Article 7.1** Pre-arrival processing

**Article 7.9** Perishable goods

**Article 10.1** Formalities and Documentation Requirements



# WHAT WE DID

In partnership with the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), the Alliance through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has supported NAQS in digitalising phytosanitary certification exchange.

The Alliance catalysed public private partnership – collaborating with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, through NAQS, global and local businesses and their representative organisations.

Successful implementation also involved forging an excellent working relationship with the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, the government body with overall responsibility for trade facilitation. The ministry and the National Trade Facilitation Committee supported the Alliance in fostering private sector engagement, provided strategic guidance, logistical support, and networking opportunities.

Key IT professionals in IPPC, the United Nations International Computing Centre

(UNICC), and NAQS collaborated in configuring the system, alongside facilitating the subsequent installation of eSignature and eBilling. The Alliance then provided the necessary IT equipment to officials to optimise its use.

NAQS worked pro-actively with the Alliance to devise and schedule an ambitious training programme in various centres across the country.

The first two phases concentrated on providing expert training at national and regional levels to a select group of NAQS officials who, in turn, coached their peers to become trainers too. The training was then extended to relevant private sector stakeholders, mainly freight forwarders and exporters, who received in-person tuition followed by intensive hands-on practice online.

Recognising the importance of sustainable change management in optimising transition, NAQS is also embarking on a comprehensive multimedia informational campaign

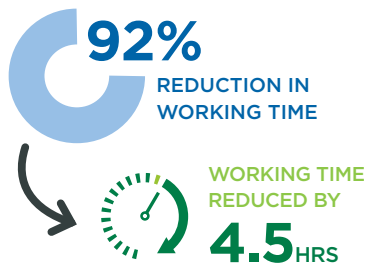
to get the message out to traders, focusing on time and cost savings.

Promoting the benefits for traders will encourage and accelerate conversion from current, manual procedures. NAQS intends to couple this with necessary support to transition to full electronic certification, including a dedicated budget to maximise system durability, including timely upgrades to IT equipment and online connectivity.



## ESTIMATED ANNUAL BENEFITS FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

FOR MARITIME SHIPMENTS



\*Extrapolation made on approx. 20,000 certificates per year and an approximate share of 80% of goods exported via maritime shipments.

FOR AIR SHIPMENTS



Extrapolation made on approx. 20,000 certificates annually and an approximate share of 20% of goods exported via maritime shipments.

### HOST ORGANISATIONS



### IN COOPERATION WITH



### SUPPORTED BY



To get involved or for more information, please contact us at

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