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**Date** 26 March 2020

Dear IPPC contact points,

I am writing to make you aware of some temporary changes the UK is introducing to the requirements for original paper phytosanitary certificates to accompany consignments of regulated plant health commodities imported from third countries.

We understand that competent authorities in many countries are having difficulties, as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on staff resources, in providing their exporters with original paper copies of phytosanitary certificates. In recognition of this and in order to ensure trade can continue the following changes to the requirement for original paper phytosanitary certificates apply:

- Subject to bilateral agreement between our National Plant Protection Organisations, we will accept digital [PDF] copies in lieu of original phytosanitary certificates for consignments of regulated plants and plant products until 30 June 2020, subject to regular review.
- Copies of phytosanitary certificates should still conform to the requirements of ISPM 12, including being signed, stamped and dated.
- The quality of these copies should allow for a comprehensive documentary check to be carried out, so in particular the content of the certificate should be clearly legible, all attached sheets must be included and the corresponding serial numbers clearly visible.
- In the event that there is any suspicion of fraud or falsification, then regulators will reserve the right to follow this up, and in these cases may require the original certificate to be provided or for consignments to be re-exported or destroyed.
- The original paper phytosanitary certificates for consignments exported with only an electronic copy must be provided as soon as technically feasible once the requirements referred to above have been substantially reviewed or lifted.

If you would like to apply for approval to participate in this scheme please email [sam.bishop@defra.gov.uk](mailto:sam.bishop@defra.gov.uk) and [simon.anning@defra.gov.uk](mailto:simon.anning@defra.gov.uk) providing technical justification at the same time.

Yours faithfully

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UK Chief Plant Health Officer  
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