



# agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8<sup>th</sup> October 2019

## **Re: IMPLEMENTATION OF ECERTIFICATION PLATFORM FOR PHYTOSANITARY CERTIFICATION**

Dear Table Grape Producers and Exporters

You will be aware that the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) is in the process of implementing an eCertification system for phytosanitary certification. This system will be used for the upcoming Table Grape season.

The purpose of this email is to provide a high-level indication of how the system will be rolled out for table grapes exporters. Much consultation has taken place already but more details are provided here, following stakeholder engagement in September 2019.

South African Table Grapes Industry (SATI) made a clear request to move to a completely paperless environment for this year, but for operational and capacity reasons (across all stakeholders and IT Vendors) it was agreed to phase in the paperless process, starting with the eCertification module (1<sup>st</sup> November 2019) and then later with the remaining modules (1<sup>st</sup> February 2020). These two phases are discussed below, which is then followed by a section on where to get assistance.

### **Phase 1: Due 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019**

Focus on eCertification module:

- 1) The e-Certification platform allows exporters to apply for phytosanitary certificates online and will deliver these certificates to the importing country electronically where possible.
- 2) Only electronic (online) applications for phytosanitary certificates will be permitted. This applies for all markets that require phytosanitary certificates.

- 3) If the importing country still requires a paper certificate DAFF will be printing and signing the certificates on behalf of clients for collection (no longer the exporter or freight forward doing the printing). For now, this means all countries.
- 4) Where phytosanitary certificates application are successful (i.e. the product is certified) a PDF copy of the certificate will be sent to the exporter. Thus, duplicate copies of phytosanitary certificates will be discontinued.
- 5) The eCert system is designed to receive phytosanitary applications either directly from the client's IT systems (via a Web API) or through the eCert website. Although a website has been created to allow users to capture an phytosanitary certificate application it is strongly recommended that clients submit applications via the API. This will avoid human error and improve efficiency for all involved.
- 6) DAFF/FSA have been working with IT vendors on how to submit an application via the eCert Web API. Table Grape exporters should check with their IT vendors or in-house IT departments to confirm they are making progress in this regard.
- 7) Central Business Register (CBR): All exporters businesses (i.e. the actual exporter) need to register on the CBR. The CBR is different from the Food Business Operator (FBO) database. A User guide is available on how to register (see Guides section at [www.ecert.co.za](http://www.ecert.co.za)).
- 8) Export Certificates: To ensure exporters have the option of a "single point of entry" both the DAFF eCertification platform and the PPECB Titan systems will be able to make requests for the corresponding Export Certificate and/or Phytosanitary Certificate. This functionality is expected to be in place on both systems from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.
- 9) **NB:** Until the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020, all documentation that would typically accompany a phytosanitary application will need to be uploaded onto the eCertification system as part of the evidence to support an application. After the 1<sup>st</sup> February this will not be required given other modules will be implemented to replace the paper.
- 10) Training: DAFF is already being trained on the new system. The first exporter training day is the 22<sup>nd</sup> October at ARC-Infruitec, Stellenbosch.

## Phase 2: Due 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020

Introduction of the remaining modules up the supply chain:

### 11) eLOT Notice:

- a. To prevent defective product entering the supply chain, one new step in the certification process is that packhouses are required to notify DAFF of product to be exported – this is called an eLOT Notice. The eCert system will use this information to pre-verify the product for the intended market and provide an immediate and automatic response on the status of those pallets. This check is designed to take less than 30 seconds to avoid any disruption to packing operations.
- b. An eLOT Notice must take place before PPECB quality inspections.
- c. eLOT Notices will **only** be received via Web services (API) – the User Guideline is available to all interested parties. Please ensure IT Vendors have the *eLOT Notice and Trade Unit Register Web API Guide* available at [www.ecert.co.za](http://www.ecert.co.za).
- d. The following checks will be run at the time of the eLOT Notice (The range and complexity of rules that will be applied is likely to expand over time but initially they will be kept simple):
  - i. The packhouses is complying with the identification rules for pallets (i.e. pallets must be identified using the GS1 Standards (SSCC) and that SSCC numbers must be unique and not reused for 5 years).
  - ii. The FBO and orchards are registered for the intended market.
  - iii. The product is permitted for that market (e.g. only Barlinka grapes to Japan).
  - iv. The application is being made by a recognized business registered in the CBR.

12) **PPECB inspection results:** The eCertification platform includes what is known as the Trade Unit Register (TUR) The TUR stores the results/status of each Trade Unit – which in the fruit industry context is the pallet. In essence the TUR replaces the need for a consignment note for phytosanitary purposes. For each Table Grape pallet the TUR will be updated with the results for PPECB inspections.

13) **eINSPECT:** For DAFF Phytosanitary inspections (most often port inspections), the eINSPECT tool is being developed. Here phytosanitary inspection points will be able to apply for inspections and DAFF process the outcomes of those inspections online. Clients will be immediately notified of that results of the inspection and the TUR updated accordingly. The eINSPECT tool removes the need for accompanying sampling documentation at phytosanitary inspections.

**eCert Support:**

Users of the system will be able to get support by contacting the following parties:

- IT Technical Support: Please use the ticketing system on [www.ecert.co.za](http://www.ecert.co.za) to log a technical support question.
- User guides: User guides are available under [www.ecert.co.za](http://www.ecert.co.za) – and are being revised and updated periodically.
- Phytosanitary Queries: The normal channels used for such queries still apply.
- Project queries: These can be directed to DAFF on [PhilileL@daff.gov.za](mailto:PhilileL@daff.gov.za), Tel 012 309 8764/060 973 4233 and [PhindileN@daff.gov.za](mailto:PhindileN@daff.gov.za), Tel 012 319 6043/076 223 9055.

Kind regards

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**Director: Inspection Services**