

Ethiopia to Digitise Certification Process for Trade in Agricultural commodities

- **Ethiopian Government and TradeMark Africa ink an ETB 9.1 million E-Phyto Project with EU and AFD support**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, April 29, 2024: Ethiopia has embarked on a transformation of its agricultural sector by launching the development of Integrated Export and Import Certification System (IEICS), also known as the e-Phyto system. This digital initiative, a collaboration between the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority (EAA), and TradeMark Africa (TMA), aims to streamline the trade process for agricultural exports and imports. The European Union, through the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), has funded the project with ETB 9.1 million (€149k). This digital shift will replace traditional paper-based certification processes, significantly reducing transaction costs and ultimately carbon emissions.

The e-Phyto system, poised to replace archaic manual and paper-based certification processes, represents a significant leap forward for Ethiopia's agricultural sector. By embracing digital solutions, Ethiopia seeks to streamline processes, enhance efficiency, and foster transparency across the entire agricultural value chain. Through seamless integration with international phytosanitary certificate systems, the e-Phyto system will provide end-to-end paperless services for both import and export certification, from application submission to certificate issuance.

Ethiopian Agricultural Authority (EAA) Deputy Director and Head of Ethiopian NPPO, Ato Wondale Habtamu, expressed that the Ethiopian agricultural sector's transition to an e-Phyto system aligns with global trends towards more sustainable and inclusive economic practices. *"By integrating digital solutions into agricultural trade, Ethiopia not only boosts its export competitiveness but also supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9) and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). This partnership marks a significant milestone in Ethiopia's agricultural development. By digitising the certification process, we are setting the stage for enhanced efficiency, transparency, and global competitiveness in our exports. We are committed to empowering Ethiopian farmers and exporters with the tools they need to thrive in the global market,"* said Mr. Habtamu.

The EU delegation represented through Mr. Abiy Tesfaye said: *"The introduction of the e-Phyto system, funded by the European Union, marks the readiness of Ethiopia to use state of the art systems to fully participate in global trade. This digital certification tool opens up a gateway for Ethiopia to compete on the global stage, driving economic growth and sustainability in*

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agriculture. We are proud to support this initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority that not only enhances Ethiopia's trade competitiveness but also establishes a foundation for enduring economic empowerment and environmental stewardship."

TMA Ethiopia Country Director Ewnetu Taye said: *"TMA is thrilled to support the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority through this innovative digital transition. Our collaboration is designed to build a sustainable and inclusive trade environment that will ultimately benefit the entire region. By adopting advanced technologies, we are setting a new standard for agricultural trade across Africa and to make the continent to gain a global competitive advantage."*

The e-Phyto system is also designed to connect with the e-Phyto hub, facilitating the sharing of issued certificates with international counterparts, thereby streamlining the export process. Three implementation options are currently under consideration: adopting the GENS platform, customizing solutions used in Kenya, or developing a bespoke system tailored to Ethiopia's specific needs. Consultations with agricultural ministries in Kenya and Uganda are ongoing to refine these options.

As Ethiopia embarks to transform its trade in agricultural products, the collaboration between government stakeholders, industry players, and international partners will be crucial in ensuring the success and sustainability of the e-Phyto system. It is essential that Ethiopian farmers and exporters are empowered to catalyse economic growth and pave the way for a more resilient and prosperous agricultural sector in Ethiopia and across the Eastern African region.

The e-Phyto project is a component of the EU's broader funded programme aimed at promoting regional economic integration in the Horn of Africa through the development of the Djibouti corridor.

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