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Increased consumer protection and security provided by new international standards for eBusiness

The United Nations, through its Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), has released two new eBusiness standards. Together, these standards will help provide safer imported agricultural commodities and allow easier traceability of agricultural crop production.

eCert standard

The eCert standard allows Governments to exchange electronic export certificates for traded agricultural commodities. It replaces the paper certificates issued to facilitate clearance of the goods at national borders. It offers increased security, as well as guaranteeing the origin of the certificate. Such direct electronic exchange of information makes it difficult for fraudulent traders to use forged documents to clear goods but easier for Governments to detect fraudulent shipments.

Through UN/CEFACT, the eCert system was developed jointly by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service. Significant governmental contributions to its development were made by Canada, Taiwan Province of China, the Netherlands and the United States of America. The certificate is already being tested and used by many trading partners including Australia, Canada, the European Union, Hong Kong S.A.R., India, Indonesia, Jordan, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and the United States.

Electronic Data Plot Sheet standard (eDAPLOS)

This standard describes the electronic data plot sheet exchanged between farmers and suppliers. It increases traceability and food safety by allowing farmers to provide electronically a technical description and information on crop production to the farmer's partners (cooperatives, manufacturers, suppliers etc.). eDAPLOS does this in a consistent manner independent of the software used for management purposes or the way in which products are sold. As the majority of the farms are Small and Medium Enterprises, this use of Internet based ebXML format is an ideal way to increase the electronic data interchange.

These standards are contained in the new release of the UN/CEFACT's XML schema directory, D.08A. This builds on the earlier publication of the supporting D.08A Core Component Library (CCL), adding new message types to UN/CEFACT's growing suite of XML tools and publications. All of these are designed to enhance and streamline data-exchange processes by offering globally agreed standards. They are available to download free of charge at <http://www.unece.org/cefact/>

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For further information on these standards and UN/CEFACT work, see www.unece.org/cefact or contact:

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