



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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COMMUNICATION FROM IPPC¹

I. Introduction on the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is an international plant health agreement, established in 1952 and revised in 1997, that aims to protect cultivated and wild plants by preventing the introduction and spread of pests.

Since its establishment, the IPPC has helped ensure food security and contributed to protect biodiversity, as well as provided the framework for facilitating safe trade by strengthening capacity of its 180+ contracting parties.

The World Trade Organization Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO SPS Agreement) has recognized the international standards, guidelines and recommendations developed under the auspices of the IPPC Secretariat in cooperation with regional organizations within the IPPC framework as the ones to be followed for plant health, thus making the IPPC one of the “three sisters” under the SPS Agreement with Codex and OIE.

IPPC standards, called International Standards on Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) are adopted annually by the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures, IPPC’s governing body. There are currently 94 adopted ISPMs, including 22 Diagnostic Protocols and 31 Phytosanitary Treatments, which can be found [here](#). The Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) also adopts recommendations, whose full list can be found [here](#).

II. Innovation of tools

IPPC, Codex Alimentarius and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) are the three standard setting organizations (“three sisters”) recognized by WTO SPS agreement. In this framework, SPS meetings are usual fora for exchange of information, ideas and proposals. The IPPC Secretariat welcomes the practice of mutual invitations at the respective Commission meetings, and the innovative format of panel discussions with relevant stakeholders, in view of sharing and proposing best practices.

The IPPC and Codex Secretariats have worked together since 2015 on the implementation of a joint **Online Commenting System (OCS)**, a web tool providing a standardized platform for contact points to submit comments on draft standards, thus enhancing the transparency and inclusiveness of the respective standard setting processes. This tool has already been noted as a best practice by the SPS and might also fit the needs of other organizations. Both organizations have also expanded the use of the system to documents other than standards.

More broadly, IPPC and Codex are working together and sharing knowledge on a number of innovative IT solutions, which would improve the way to develop standards, making the entire process more efficient, transparent and inclusive. To name a few: respective websites, the online registration system to meetings, online forums and polls, social media and communication tools and procedures.

¹ Document prepared by and under the responsibility of the IPPC.

One way the three sisters can contribute to establishing partnerships is to **support and champion open standards**: indeed our digital tools and contents lean towards open standards. The principle of open data and creative commons licensing of our content is fundamental, as we are creating global public goods and making our knowledge accessible and usable to all. The **Open Government Initiative** for the application of the Akoma-Ntoso XML scheme on legal documents is a FAO-supported project that aims at improving the access and dissemination of documents, including international standards, at present “locked” in static documentation. The IPPC Secretariat will keep looking at the progress made by Codex in this regard.

III. Innovation of processes

The standard setting process itself would benefit from a mutual review: while the IPPC might be looking at a higher involvement of host countries and Codex experience with commodity standards, Codex could look at the practice of the IPPC Standards Committee, which analyses and reviews all standards before they are approved for consultation or sent back to the expert drafting groups. The establishment of a joint forum to discuss best practices in standard setting could be something valuable on all sides.

The IPPC Secretariat operations are based on two pillars – standard setting and implementation, and these are getting more and more integrated. In fact, the Secretariat not only facilitates the work of the Standards Committee and expert drafting groups, but it also supports the work of the Capacity Development and Implementation Committee and manages standards implementation projects in many countries.

This strong integration is attested by the establishment of a Framework for Standards and Implementation, used to record the standards and implementation tools to facilitate harmonization. The Framework will be updated yearly and maintained by the Secretariat, with responsibility for review and amendment resting jointly with the SC and CDC (or the CDC replacement) and reviewed by SPG.

In addition, the IPPC Secretariat has established a series of good practices, including holding meetings of the two major committees back to back, having one representative of each committee attending the other one, regular mutual briefings and shared action plans. When open for consultation, every standard also include a paragraph related to the consideration of possible implementation activities and implications.

IV. Hot topics

A dated, but very hot topic relates to the advancement **electronic certification**, which the CPM has encouraged since 2011. CPM-9 (2014) approved [Appendix 1 to ISPM 12](#). The appendix describes the format and contents of electronic phytosanitary certificates and their exchange between NPPOs and also references [harmonized codes and schema](#).

To continue the development of electronic phytosanitary certification (ePhyto), CPM-8 (2013) established an [ePhyto Steering Group](#) (SG). The SG supported the development of an independent study on the feasibility of an electronic hub that could facilitate the transfer of electronic certificates between national plant protection organizations. CPM-9 (2014) reviewed the [ePhyto Hub Feasibility Study](#) and encouraged the SG to urgently continue its work in preparing for the development of a global ePhyto hub. As of today, a pilot ePhyto hub is being developed.

The IPPC Secretariat welcomes the discussions held in the context of CCFICS on the use of electronic certificates by competent authorities and migration to paperless certification, and is willing to coordinate a discussions by the three sisters on this matter.

Electronic certification is to be considered one of the key elements to achieve target 17.10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the WTO.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is also a hot topic of shared concern. AMR has become a global issue that society as a whole needs to address. The IPPC Secretariat was represented by its Senior Standards Officer in the Physical Working Group on Codex Alimentarius Work on AMR, held in London from 29 November to 2 December 2016, to provide guidance for a Codex task force on AMR.

The IPPC Secretariat highlighted the possible contribution of national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) to this global effort. NPPOs should be involved in the development of national action plans on AMR with relevant national government organizations. In particular, consideration should be given to NPPOs role in ensuring that the selection and application of phytosanitary measures does not contribute to increased antimicrobial resistance. The new Codex task force may also need to consider if the use of some phytosanitary treatments may lead to increased antimicrobial agents in the environment.

It will become very important to raise awareness on this global threat within the IPPC community as well as to identify any potential risks prior to working on new phytosanitary treatments.

Another important topic which has been on the IPPC agenda for a long time, but has seen recent progress, is **sea containers**. While no consensus has been reached yet on the draft standard, CPM-12 (2017) has adopted a complementary action plan on sea containers. The plan includes a number of actions to reduce the pest risks associated with the international movement of sea containers. These actions include: measuring the impact of the IMO/ILO/UNECE Code of Practice for Packing of Cargo Transport Units (CTU Code) during the next five years; increasing awareness of pest risks of sea containers; generating information to assist NPPOs in better managing these risks; and establishing oversight and governance arrangements for their implementation. A task force on sea containers has recently been established to implement the action plan.

Finally, collaboration among customs agencies is crucial following the entry into force of the WTO **Trade Facilitation Agreement**. A Coordinated Border Management approach, including the development of a Single Window System, will request cooperation among international organizations to improve compliance of business and provide more facilitation measures.

V. Joint awareness raising programs

In today's world communication and advocacy are essential to raise awareness on our organizations' mandates and objectives. By working and communicating together, we can contribute to achieving SDGs and particularly the challenge of a hunger-free world.

The establishment of International Years and World Days may help operationalize the development of our partnerships. In particular, the **International Year of Plant Health** and the **World Food Safety Day**, which have recently been endorsed by the FAO Conference and will be considered by the United Nations General Assembly for adoption, would be capital opportunities, both in terms of awareness raising and financing of plant health and food safety services at all levels. Providing the people and all relevant stakeholders with an understanding of our mission will help building confidence among our partners to mobilize resources and achieve our objectives.

To conclude, a successful partnership between IPPC and Codex is crucial in fulfilling our mandates to protect the world's plant resources from pests and to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. This will also contribute to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for which strong, inclusive and integrated partnerships are needed at all levels, as described in "Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development" of the SDGs.