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## Regional Workshop for the Review of Draft International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures

7 August 2006 at the FAO Conference Room  
Main Office, Gamel Abdul Nasser Road, Accra, Ghana

Opening speech

By

Mr. Oloche Anebi Edache  
Assistant Director General/  
Regional Representative for Africa

The Chief Director, Ministry of Food & Agriculture, Mr. Kwaku Owusu-Baah

Colleagues from Headquarters and Regional Office for Africa

Distinguished Participants from the Francophone Countries of Africa

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Director-General of FAO, Dr. Jacques Diouf, I welcome you most warmly to this International Plant Protection Convention Regional Workshop on draft international standards on phytosanitary measures for French speaking African countries. Last week, a similar workshop was organized at this venue for the English speaking countries. These workshops have become an extremely important and, indeed, an almost essential aspect of the IPPC standard setting process.

They offer countries the opportunity to get together for a thorough review of the draft standards with a view to gaining full understanding of the implications and expectations that may be obtained.

This year, five draft ISPMs (International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures) and the amendments to the glossary of phytosanitary terms will be discussed. This will be a major task for you and our goal is that by the end of the week, you will all be able to return to your respective countries with a full understanding of the drafts and be able to supply pertinent comments to the Standards Committee before the standards are further developed and approved.

The draft standards to be considered include the revision of ISPM No. 2 (pest risk analysis), the recognition of pest free areas and areas of low pest prevalence, phytosanitary treatments for regulated pests, establishment of areas of low pest prevalence for fruit flies, debarked and bark-free wood, and the amendments to ISPM No. 5 (Glossary of phytosanitary terms). All of these are of major importance and will impact directly on international trade, so it is critical that they should be given your fullest attention.

The IPPC is a “living”, dynamic treaty, the objectives of which are implemented every time plants and plant products are moved across boundaries from exporting to importing countries. This is true regardless as to whether or not the countries concerned are contracting parties to the treaty, as the objective of the IPPC in preventing the transboundary movement of pests is still to be implemented. The product is prepared by the exporting country and certified that it meets the importing country’s requirements.

The IPPC was first adopted in 1951, with a first revision in 1979. It was reviewed for the second time in 1997, as it was necessary to keep up to date with contemporary thinking, and came into force in October 2005. The revision included the important clarification that the Convention also covered the protection of forests, wild flora, habitats and ecosystems.

Clarification was also given, in that any phytosanitary measures applied by importing contracting parties must be technically justified, non-discriminatory, commensurate with risk and only apply to regulated pests. International standards are an important means of ensuring this outcome.

Honourable Minister, Dear participants

There is a perception that International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures impose new obligations and generally make life more difficult for exporters and importers. Nothing could be further from the truth. The concept of harmonization was developed to ensure that national phytosanitary measures are based on science, while reducing the burden of scientific proof. International Standards on Phytosanitary Measures expedite trade by ensuring that products, when they leave the country of export, comply with the technically justified requirements of the importing trading partner. Such a system reduces the need for expensive treatments and costly delays on arrival and enables importers to plan more accurately distribution.

Honourable Minister, Dear participants

The seven workshops currently being organized have only been made possible, thanks to generous contributions from donors, with the USA funding the two African workshops. These workshops are quite expensive and not covered by FAO contribution to the IPPC budget. Unless the contracting parties agree to an extra FAO budgetary funding mechanism, the future of these workshops is very much in doubt. It would indeed be a pity if they were discontinued, as they have become the major avenue for developing countries to develop and supply their individual country comments.

On behalf of the Director-General, I wish to express our deep appreciation to the countries that have made contributions to the financing of the workshops.

In closing, I wish to reiterate the importance of this workshop and to wish you all a most productive and enjoyable workshop.