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Main features, obligations and benefits under the *International Plant Protection Convention*

OVERVIEW

Plants provide over 80 percent of the food consumed by humans and are the primary source of nutrition for livestock. However, plant health is facing growing threats, with pests causing up to 40 percent of global food crop losses each year. The climate crisis and unsustainable human activities are causing imbalance in ecosystems, reducing biodiversity, and creating new areas for invasive pests to flourish. Additionally, the volume of international travel and trade has tripled over the past decade, becoming pathways for spreading pests and diseases worldwide. For instance, *B. dorsalis*, a fruit fly native to Southeast Asia, is currently found in at least 65 countries, including in the African region and represents a great phytosanitary challenge and a threat to the region's exports of avocado, banana, guava and mango. It is thought that import trade bans to the region alone in response to this threat are causing around USD 2 billion losses annually.

The [International Plant Protection Convention](#) (IPPC or the Convention) is a global agreement focused on safeguarding plant health by preventing the spread of pests. Initially approved by the FAO Conference on 6 December 1951, the Convention has undergone several revisions, with significant amendments adopted in November 1979 and November 1997. The latest revised text came into effect on 2 October 2005. Currently, the IPPC has 185 Contracting Parties.

OBJECTIVES

The IPPC's mission is to foster international cooperation to protect the health of plants from pests, ensuring food security, preserving biodiversity, protecting the environment and facilitating safe trade. Through mechanisms like standards development, information exchange, capacity building, legal and policy guidelines, international cooperation and awareness raising, the Convention has created a stable and reliable framework for safe international trade in plants and plant products.

MAIN ELEMENTS

The IPPC promotes compliance from Contracting Parties to:

- Secure **common and effective action to prevent the spread and introduction of pests of plants and plant products**, and to promote appropriate measures for their control by adopting the legislative, technical and administrative measures specified in the Convention;
- Make provision, to the best of their ability, inter alia, for an official national plant protection authority, for the distribution of information and for **phytosanitary export certification**;
- Cooperate with other third parties in the exchange of information on plant pests, in any special campaigns for combatting pests and in providing **science-based information** to determine whether an organism is a plant pest; and
- Cooperate in the development and implementation of **international standards for phytosanitary measures (ISPMs)**. For instance, ISPM 15 provides guidance for a harmonized approach, such as **treatments and marking**, to reduce the risk of pest introduction and spread created by the international movement of wood packaging material (WPM). It is estimated that 80 percent of shipments in global trade involve the use of WPM such as pallets and crates which may carry pests potentially causing negative impacts on forest ecosystems.



365 days of action



In addition, the IPPC supports contracting parties in adopting **justified and necessary measures to restrict the entry of plants and other objects carrying or spreading harmful organisms**, in accordance with applicable international agreements,

Ratifying the IPPC does not incur any additional financial obligations from contracting parties.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR PARTIES

Contracting parties stands to gain various benefits from their adherence to the IPPC:

- **International Trade Agreement:** Being part of the IPPC aligns with the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO), fostering consistency and interaction with trading partners, most of whom are also WTO members.
- **Standards Setting:** IPPC members can actively participate in the Standards Committee and other subsidiary bodies, influencing global phytosanitary policy and the adoption of ISPMs.
- **Credibility and Interaction:** Adherence to the IPPC enhances the credibility of national phytosanitary systems and facilitates interaction within the IPPC community and other international fora.
- **Technical assistance:** Contracting parties may request and receive technical assistance through capacity building and projects to strengthen plant protection, assistance with reviewing and updating legislation and the coordination of availability of expertise.
- **Dispute Settlement:** The IPPC provides mechanisms for resolving trade disputes.
- **Information Exchange:** Contracting Parties are provided with access to the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP), offering extensive information including profiles of Contracting Parties, official contact points, provisions of the Convention, relevant activities, technical meeting opportunities, direct access to international standards, guides and training materials to implement standards and campaign materials on plant health. Various tools, such the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) for the Contracting Parties' self-assessment of their national phytosanitary systems and the Online Commenting System (OCS) for submitting comments on draft standards are also available.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the IPPC, model instruments for adherence to the IPPC and treaty processes in FAO, please contact: treaties@fao.org

