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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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REPORT OF INTERNATIONAL PLANT PROTECTION CONVENTION (IPPC)

COMMUNICATION FROM THE IPPC SECRETARIAT

The following communication, received on 11 June 2020, is being circulated at the request of the International Plant Protection Convention secretariat (IPPC).¹

1 INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PLANT HEALTH 2020

1.1. The United Nations has declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). Despite the COVID-19 pandemic affecting some activities, contracting parties to the IPPC, regional plant protection organizations, partner organizations and the IPPC secretariat are continuing the IYPH implementation to raise awareness of the importance of plant health to ensure food security, to protect the environment and to facilitate safe trade. WTO Members are encouraged to join the IPPC Community to help raise the global awareness of the importance of plant health. Please visit the IYPH webpage² to find out more on the many activities and how you can participate.

1.2. New dates for the IYPH flagship event, the International Plant Health Conference to be held in Helsinki, Finland have been set for 28 June to 1 July 2021.

1.3. As a key legacy for the IYPH, the **Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Zambia** has put forward a proposal for the establishment of an **International Day of Plant Health**. The proposal will be discussed at the upcoming session of the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG).³ The CPM Bureau, following the recommendation of the IYPH ISC, has approved May 12 as the Day for global commemoration of plant health.

2 THE COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES, SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND GROUPS

2.1. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the fifteenth meeting of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) and its Ministerial segment have been postponed until further notice. Most CPM-15 (2020) papers have been posted on the IPP⁴ and new dates will be communicated soon.

¹ The original document was prepared for the March 2020 SPS Committee meeting, but as this SPS meeting was cancelled, this report was not released. This report has been updated to include all activities from November 2019 to June 2020.

² IYPH website: <http://www.fao.org/plant-health-2020>.

³ COAG website: <http://www.fao.org/coag/en/>.

⁴ CPM-15 (2020) papers: <http://www.ippc.int/en/cpm-sessions/cpm-15-2020/>.

2.2. The Standards Committee (SC), met in November 2019 and reviewed the following four draft International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs):

- 1) 2018 draft amendments to ISPM 5 (*Glossary of phytosanitary terms*)
- 2) Revision of ISPM 8 (*Determination of pest status in an area*)
- 3) *Requirements for the use of modified atmosphere treatments as a phytosanitary measure*
- 4) *Requirements for NPPOs if authorizing entities to perform phytosanitary actions*

2.3. The SC recommended the first three ISPMs for adoption, however, they noted concerns from some regions regarding the draft ISPM dealing with the concept of authorizing entities to perform phytosanitary actions. The SC could not reach consensus to recommend the draft ISPM for adoption at this stage, however, they revised the draft ISPM based on consultation, comments and requested guidance from the CPM-15 (2020) on how to proceed. They also proposed a CPM-15 (2020) side session to be organized to facilitate further discussion on this subject.

2.4. After looking at the recommendations and proposed governance process concerning commodity standards, the SC agreed that a Technical Panel should be established to coordinate the development of individual standards for commodities (annexes to the concept standard). The draft ISPM on the concept of commodity-based standards for phytosanitary measures was revised and will be presented to CPM-15 (2020) for consideration.

2.5. With CPM-15 in 2020 being cancelled due to COVID-19, these draft ISPMs have not been adopted and will be forwarded to the next meeting of the CPM. Also, guidance from the CPM on the other issues is still pending.

2.6. The SC could not meet in May 2020 but continued working electronically (e-decisions and OCS). Thus, the following three draft standards were approved for first consultation starting from 1 July to 30 September 2020:

- 1) 2020 draft amendments to ISPM 5 (*Glossary of phytosanitary terms*)
- 2) Draft ISPM on the Focused revision of ISPM 12 (*Phytosanitary certificates*) in relation to re-export
- 3) Draft ISPM on Audit in the phytosanitary context

2.1 Calls for experts in the establishment of pest free areas

2.7. Two calls were issued to solicit nominees to participate in the Expert Working Group to revise ISPM 4 on Requirements for the establishment of pest free areas (2009-002) and to participate in the Expert working group (EWG) on the use of specific import authorizations (2008-006). The SC will review nominations and form EWGs, respectively.

2.8. Reports of the SC meetings are posted on the IPP.⁵

2.9. The Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) met in November 2019 and reviewed the work of its two Sub-groups: The Sea Containers Task Force (SCTF) and Implementation, Review and Support System (IRSS). Details on the activities of the SCTF are presented below.

⁵ SC meeting reports: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/standards-setting/standards-committee/>.

2.10. Under the IRSS,⁶ three new topics for studies were added and the secretariat has conducted a survey of the use of pest free areas, drafted a study on the use of accreditation of entities to perform phytosanitary action, as well as a comparative analysis of the data gathered in the first and second IPPC General Surveys.

2.11. The list of Implementation and Capacity Development (ICD) topics for new guides and training materials was reviewed by the IC. The IC agreed that the development of the following three IPPC guides from the List of ICD Topics⁷ should be initiated as a top priority and this was supported by the CPM Bureau:

- 1) Plant Pest Surveillance Guide, revision (2017-049)
- 2) e-Commerce Guide (2017-039)
- 3) ISPM 15 Guide (2012-015, 2017-043, 2018-12)

2.12. The IPPC Guide on Pest Status has progressed and was to be published after the revision of ISPM 8 (Determination of pest status in an area) was adopted by CPM, however with the cancellation of CPM-15 it is uncertain when this guide will be published.

2.13. All IPPC Guides are posted on the IPP⁸ and the IPPC secretariat is currently constructing web pages related to the various components of a phytosanitary system. These "component" pages will bring together relevant standards, guides and contributed resources on a given subject and are intended to assist NPPOs in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, relevant ISPMs and CPM recommendations.

2.14. The IC reviewed various phytosanitary Implementation and Capacity Development projects, those managed by the secretariat and those delivered by partner organizations. Summaries of the outcomes of these projects with highlights of their outcomes are posted on the IPP.⁹

2.15. The May 2020 IC meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19. The IC has now set up a series of nine virtual meetings. The IC members and observers were trained on how to use the various virtual tools, newly appointed members were provided with an orientation. So far the IC has met virtually twice, the first the IC received general updates on ICD activities and work of other bodies and the second discussed how to develop implementation and communication plans for guides. The IC intends to meet every two weeks to progress the work in this area, information on these meetings is posted on the IPP calendar.¹⁰

2.2 Implementation and Capacity development (ICD) Calls

2.16. Since November 2019, the IPPC secretariat has issued (9) nine calls related to Implementation and Capacity development (ICD) issues. Some calls were related to submission of case studies for pest status determination, plant pest surveillance and Systems Approach and market negotiation on plant pest risk. To renew the IC Membership, a call was issued for nominations of Regional representatives and Experts to be member of this Committee. The other calls posted were requesting stakeholders to share technical resources and expertise.

2.17. The majority of these calls are closed however, the following three remain open:

- 4) Call for experts to develop e-learning materials on "Pest Risk Analysis"
- 5) Call for experts to develop e-learning materials on "Phytosanitary export certification system"
- 6) Call for phytosanitary technical resources related to e-Commerce, PRA and Pest Outbreak Alert and Response Systems that may be shared with the IPPC community.

⁶ IRSS webpage: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/implementation-review-and-support-system/>.

⁷ List of ICD Topics: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/86844/>.

⁸ IPPC Guides and training material: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/capacity-development/guides-and-training-materials/>.

⁹ ICD projects: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/capacity-development/projects-on-implementation-and-capacity-development/>.

¹⁰ IPP calendar: <https://www.ippc.int/en/year/calendar/>.

2.18. The list of all calls issued by the IPPC secretariat is available on the IPP.¹¹

2.19. Reports of the IC meetings are posted on the IPP.¹²

3 REALIGNMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT (ICD) ACTIVITIES

3.1. The Implementation and Facilitation Unit (IFU) of the IPPC secretariat has been considering how to realign the work of the unit to deliver implementation and capacity development (ICD) activities in the new reality of COVID-19. With all staff teleworking, the IFU has been meeting daily via zoom and using other tools. With all the travel restrictions, new and innovative ways to deliver ICD activities other than through physical meetings are being explored.

3.2. One of the main approaches being taken is to do a deep dive and analyze stakeholder's needs (mainly the needs of developing country NPPOs) and then consider how to redesign activities to better address their needs in a more efficient and sustainable way. As in-house design expertise is currently not available, ways are being explored with donors on how to get some assistance, including hiring an outside company and partnering with others who also deliver capacity development training, namely COLEACP and the FAO eLearning Academy. This initiative is hoped to have a long-term impact and the results will be shared with the SPS community.

4 PHYTOSANITARY CAPACITY EVALUATIONS

4.1. The IPPC secretariat has continued to facilitate the application of Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) in Nicaragua and Sri Lanka. Implementing a PCE aims at revising the phytosanitary legislation or regulation if the country wishes and helps them develop a national phytosanitary capacity development strategy. Such a national phytosanitary capacity development strategy addresses gaps in the phytosanitary system of the country and positions them well for taking advantage of funding opportunities at the national and/or international level as it helps international organizations and donors understand countries needs and focus resources on the identified priorities. The PCE in Nicaragua has been completed and the phytosanitary law had been revised a few weeks only after this completion, more information is available in the dedicated news¹³. With travel restrictions, work on this area has been put on hold.

5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.1. The IPPC secretariat has started investigating how best to monitor and evaluate some of the activities of the IPPC Community. A Theory of Change (TOC) was developed to understand how the IPPC Community contributes towards the objectives and the development agendas laid out in the IPPC Strategic Framework (SF) 2020-2030 (pending adoption by the CPM), objectives of FAO and the UN SDGs. With limited resources, the IPPC secretariat will first focus on monitoring the implementation of the eight development agendas in the SF.

5.2. The IPPC secretariat commissioned Wageningen University and Research to conduct a literature review and interviews with SPS organizations, this report entitled: *Evidence on effects of plant pests on IPPC strategic objectives and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms by the SPS community* will be posted on the IPP¹⁴ and may be of interest to WTO Members.

¹¹ Calls issued by the IPPC Secretariat: <http://www.ippc.int/en/calls/>.

¹² IC meeting reports: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/capacity-development/capacity-development-committee/>.

¹³ Implementing the IPPC Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation helped Nicaragua approve their revised phytosanitary law in record time.

<https://www.ippc.int/en/news/implementing-the-ippc-phytosanitary-capacity-evaluation-helps-nicaragua-approve-their-revised-phytosanitary-law-in-record-time/>.

¹⁴ Evidence on effects of plant pests on IPPC strategic objectives and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms by the SPS community: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/governance/ippc-secretariat-evaluations/>.

6 PROMOTING TRADE FACILITATION

6.1 ePhyto

6.1. The IPPC secretariat's ePhyto Hub is fully operational. Eighty-eight (88) countries are currently registered to the IPPC ePhyto Solution, and twenty-six (26) are registered with the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) with more NPPOs joining every month. To date, forty-two (42) countries are actively exchanging phytosanitary certificates through the IPPC secretariat's ePhyto Hub using both national systems and the GeNS. Of key significance, Argentina and Chile are now completely paperless in their exchange of phytosanitary certificates; all exchanges are done through the IPPC ePhyto Solution. In addition, online video training on the GeNS system is now available at www.ephytoexchange.org, and a number of video training sessions have been conducted on the GeNS system. At present, the system is handling approximately 12,000 certificates per month effortlessly, with the capacity to handle (in the current configuration) up to 100,000 certificates per day.

6.2. The system was built with initial resources provided by the Standards and Trade Development Facility specifically to facilitate the digital exchange of certificates, initially phytosanitary certificates, but any certificate once coded in XML can be exchanged. The IPPC secretariat has discussed the potential use of the HUB for the exchange of CITES and wine industry certificates, and is ready and willing to work with any organization, including our SPS "Sisters" (Codex and the OIE) interested in making use of the ePhyto Solution to facilitate the exchange of any other certificates.

6.2 e-Commerce

6.3. The IPPC secretariat has initiated work on the e-Commerce programme. An informal network of experts has been launched to support this work and enhance information exchange on the phytosanitary risks posed by e-Commerce. The IPPC secretariat continues to collaborate with the World Custom Organization (WCO) and is working to liaise more with other relevant organizations such as the United Postal Union, e-Commerce vendors and the WTO. More recently representatives from OIE and Codex have joined this network. Consultation on the Draft outline of e-Commerce Guide for plants, plant products and other regulated articles opened on 5 May 2020 and will close on 5 July 2020.

6.3 Sea Containers Task Force

6.4. An IPPC best practice guide on measures to minimize pest contamination and associated leaflet that identifies the key parties involved in the international container supply chains, and describes their roles and responsibilities for minimizing visible pest contamination of sea containers and their cargos has been developed under the auspices of the IPPC secretariat and is now available on the page of the International Phytosanitary Portal dedicated to the IPPC Guides and Training materials.

6.5. The Sea Container Task Force (SCTF) has been initially established for a period of five years and was supposed to provide the IPPC Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) and the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) with the recommendations on ways forward to minimize pest risks associated with the movement of sea containers in 2021. However due to the COVID-19 developments and suspension of a series of activities in the IPPC community and in concerned collaborative international organizations, it is expected the mandate of the SCTF might be extended for an additional year (to 2022).

7 STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

7.1 Scaling up IPPC Secretariat communications

7.1. In 2020, the IPPC secretariat worked closely with FAO's Office for Corporate Communication to increase the quality and outreach of its communications. These efforts resulted in an increased media outreach, increased user's interactions on social media and a number of new publications meeting FAO standards which are posted on the IPP.¹⁵

¹⁵ IPPC publications page: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/>.

7.2. The IPPC secretariat concluded events related to the 2019 IPPC annual theme on "Plant Health and Capacity Development" by organizing a thematic seminar during its Strategic Planning Group meeting in October 2019. All presentations are available on the IPP.¹⁶

8 THE YEAR AHEAD

8.1. The year 2020 will be an extremely important year for the IPPC Community as the whole world marks the International Year of Plant Health. Although off to a bit of a shaky start with the postponement of CPM-15 (2020) due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Italy, it is hoped to gain momentum with the various activities planned to promote plant health including a flagship conference that is being planned to take place in Finland in October 2020 entitled the First International Plant Health Conference: "Protecting Plant Health in a changing world". A webpage for this conference¹⁷ is hosted under the IYPH webpage.¹⁸

8.2. The IPPC secretariat would like to take this opportunity to express its sincere gratitude to the WTO-SPS Secretariat for the strong support and close cooperation.

¹⁶ The IPPC Seminar on Plant Health and Capacity Development: an excellent opportunity to strengthen collaboration with the STDF: <https://www.ippc.int/en/news/the-ippc-seminar-on-plant-health-and-capacity-development-an-excellent-opportunity-to-strengthen-collaboration-with-the-stdf/>.

¹⁷ Webpage for the First International Plant Health Conference: Protecting Plant Health in a changing world": <http://www.fao.org/plant-health-2020/events/events-detail/en/c/1250609/>.

¹⁸ IYPH webpage: <http://www.fao.org/plant-health-2020>.