

**UPDATE OF ACTIVITIES OF THE
INTERNATIONAL PLANT PROTECTION CONVENTION (IPPC)
JUNE 2006**

PEST- AND DISEASE-FREE AREAS – ARTICLE 6

Statement by the IPPC at the Meeting of 27-28 June 2006

The following communication, received on 22 June 2006, is being circulated at the request of the IPPC.

A. ISPM: RECOGNITION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PEST-FREE AREAS AND AREAS OF LOW PEST PREVALENCE

1. At the 33rd meeting of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures in June 2005, the IPPC Secretariat reported that regionalization had been discussed at the 7th Meeting of the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (ICPM) held in Rome (April 2005) where it was decided that a concept standard "Guidelines for the recognition of the establishment of pest-free areas and area of low pest prevalence" be urgently developed. The ISPM would provide general guidance on the recognition process but would not provide timelines in addressing issues of regionalization.

2. A draft ISPM *Recognition of pest-free areas and areas of low pest prevalence* was developed, and at the IPPC Standards Committee meeting in May 2006 it was agreed that it could be sent forward for country consultation.

3. The standard provides guidance for the recognition process for pest-free areas and areas of low pest prevalence. It describes a procedure for the bilateral recognition of such areas. The standard does not include specified timelines for the recognition procedure.

4. The draft standard is now available on the IPPC website <https://www.ippc.int> for country consultation in English, French and Spanish. The templates for comments and guidelines for the submission of country comments are also posted. All material is being circulated by surface mail and the files will be sent by e-mail to contact points, Regional Plant Protection Organisations and FAO offices.

5. The IPPC Secretariat is also organizing a series of regional workshops (7) on the draft ISPMs, which will be held in July-August and which representatives from those developing countries that are Members of the CPM will be invited to attend.

6. The deadline for comments is 30 September, but as in past years, given the short time available between the deadline and the SC meeting, the Secretariat is encouraging countries to send comments before 15 September. Comments will be considered by the Standards Committee at their November 2006 meeting with the possibility of the draft ISPM going forward for approval at the Second Session of the CPM in March 2007.

B. COMPOSITION OF, AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR, A WORKING GROUP ON THE FEASIBILITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF PEST-FREE AREAS

7. It was also decided at ICPM-7 that a feasibility study be undertaken on the international recognition of pest-free areas, which would take into account legal, technical and economical factors and assess feasibility and sustainability of such system. A proposal for the composition of a working group and its terms of reference was prepared by a Focus Group (July 2005) for submission, through the IPPC Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance (SPTA) group to the first session of the CPM in 2006.

8. The SPTA reviewed and modified the terms of reference developed by the Focus Group (Annex 1). It had been suggested to the SPTA by the Expert Working Group convened to develop the draft ISPM that there was very little information available as to what PFAs had been established around the world and for which pests. The SPTA considered the situation and accordingly suggested to the First Session of the CPM (2006) that such information should be compiled prior to convening a working group on the feasibility of recognition.

9. The Commission recognized the importance of the issue of international recognition of PFAs for many countries, and that a preliminary study regarding existing PFAs should be conducted. However, it also noted the financial situation of the IPPC, and there was some disagreement among some Members as to when the work could start. Following discussion, the CPM decided to adopt the terms of reference for the working group (see Annex 1), to be reviewed at CPM-2, and agreed that the IPPC Secretariat collect data on existing PFAs for presentation at the meeting. The Second Session would then decide as to how to proceed.

C. SURVEY ON PEST-FREE AREAS

10. The IPPC Secretariat is currently in the final stages of preparing a questionnaire on the establishment and use of pest-free areas (see Annex 2 – Note this is still in the draft form). It is anticipated that this will be finalized and sent to IPPC contact points in early July.

ANNEX 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE WORKING GROUP ON THE FEASIBILITY OF INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF PEST-FREE AREAS

The working group is to carry out a **feasibility study** on the international recognition of pest-free areas, taking into account legal, technical and economic factors and assess the feasibility and sustainability of such a system.

The study will consider the following elements. The results of the study should be presented in the form of a report. The report should contain clear conclusions and make recommendations.

Legal issues:

- What international recognition of a PFA means.
- Whether liability insurance should be necessary.
- Which international organization(s) or individuals could take part in the international recognition process or could provide international recognition of a PFA. If other than the IPPC how would they relate to the IPPC or which role they would play (e.g. IPPC recognized experts, IPPC recognized organizations, other organizations).
- Whether the international recognition body carries any legal responsibility in relation to its international recognition process, what its obligations are in relation to reporting recognition or denial of recognition of a PFA.
- Whether a disclaimer of responsibility can be part of the international recognition process.
- What the obligations of contracting parties to the IPPC will be in regard to an internationally recognized PFA.
- Whether international recognition of PFAs will increase the likelihood of acceptance by contracting parties of the concept of PFAs.
- Whether international recognition of a PFA will reduce undue delays in the recognition of that PFA by trading partners.
- Which organizations or entities can request the international recognition of a PFA, e.g. the NPPO of the exporting contracting party in which the PFA is located (to facilitate exports), the NPPO of the importing contracting party (to recognize a PFA in an exporting country), industry representatives (to facilitate exports and/or imports), the NPPO of the importing contracting party in which the PFA is located (to recognize the PFA in its territory, to justify import requirements), a RPPO on behalf of one or more of its NPPOs.

Technical issues:

- Whether the international recognition of a PFA should result in a statement from the international body that the area is free of the specific pest, or whether it should result in an assurance that the criteria for the establishment and maintenance of a PFA have been applied.
- Whether international recognition of a PFA can only take place if there is a specific ISPM for the establishment and maintenance of a PFA for that specific pest or group of pests.
- Whether, once a PFA has received international recognition, such recognition needs to be renewed on a regular basis, or whether the recognition is valid until the PFA status changes.
- Whether the process of international recognition of PFAs, if such a process is developed, could be applied to areas of low pest prevalence, pest-free production sites and pest-free places of production.

- Whether a process for the international recognition of PFAs could be put in place for many pests, or only for a limited number of globally relevant pests. If it is determined that such a process could only apply to a limited number of globally relevant pests, what criteria should be used to identify these pests.
- The elements of the international recognition process, including, but not limited to, the assurance and verification procedures and the requirements (including evidence required) to be fulfilled by the country where the PFA is located.
- Whether pest specific ISPMs should recognize that different ecological conditions and associated risk levels may exist in different areas, and therefore the requirements for the establishment and maintenance of the specific PFA may differ. As a result of this, whether the international recognition body should apply judgment in the recognition process.
- Whether there should be specific requirements covering the reinstatement of an area that had lost its are freedom status.

Economic issues:

- The benefits and disadvantages of international recognition of a PFA, including, but not limited to:
 - importing countries;
 - exporting countries;
 - developing and least developed countries (either importing or exporting);
 - market access issues (imports and exports);
 - implementation of the IPPC;
 - technical assistance.
- The financial costs of an international recognition system c.f. the current approach of bilateral recognition.
- The source(s) and methods of funding for an international recognition system.

Other issues:

- Whether a pilot project, to test the international recognition process for a PFA, would be beneficial. If so, what would the parameters be for such a pilot project, e.g. for a pest for which a pest specific ISPM is available, for a pest for which there are bilaterally recognized PFAs, or for a pest-commodity combination that has international trade significance and for which there is already considerable experience available, etc.

The following areas of expertise should be available in the working group which will carry out the feasibility study:

- general phytosanitary administrative expertise;
- knowledge of ISPMs, especially those on PFAs, ALPPs, etc;
- knowledge of operation and maintenance of PFAs in their country;
- knowledge of accreditation and audit systems;
- legal expertise in phytosanitary issues;
- OIE experience in international recognition of PFAs.

Data on existing PFAs (e.g. recognized areas, size of area recognized, recognized by whom, commodity involved, pest involved) should be considered

The expert working group should have seven members, preferably one from each region, plus three Bureau members.

ANNEX 2 (DRAFT)

DRAFT Questionnaire

**Use of pest-free areas
Data collection**

General data

Country	
Contact person (<i>general contact in relation with all data provided below</i>)	
E-mail:	

Use of PFAs

Is your country using PFAs ?	Yes		No	
	<i>If you answer yes, you may fill one form (next page) per PFA, giving as much details as possible</i>			
If your country does not establish PFAs, please identify reasons in the second column, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no identified need (i.e. no pest, trade for which could be applied) • could be used but not capacities to put them in place • could be used but using other possible measures • not required by trading partner • capacities to maintain not available • difficulty with recognition • other (specify) 				

Country

PFA No. [if several PFAs described]

Pest(s) (scientific name)	<i>list:</i>
Commodity/ies	<i>list:</i>
Location of the area	<i>detail of location</i>
Reason to put in place/wanting to put in place PFA	<i>reason:</i>
Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established and running <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • date established • any temporary suspension (y/n) • Suspended <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • date established • date suspended • reason • Terminated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • date established • date terminated • reason • Under definition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stage of the process (definition, recognition) • date of contact of importing country 	<i>use one of the four status categories given, with details as needed</i>
Cost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishment • maintenance 	
Benefits	
Challenges encountered in establishment, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delay by circumstances (failure to control etc.) • Other (specify) 	
Challenges encountered in recognition, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • administrative delays • lack of contact point • Other (specify) 	
Challenges encountered in maintenance, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical difficulties • controls on the movement of material • Other (specify) 	