

FAO CAPACITY EVALUATION TOOLS FOR FOOD SAFETY, BIOSECURITY AND PLANT PROTECTION

Submission by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The following communication, received on 19 March 2008, is being circulated at the request of the FAO.

Overview

1. In the context of its mandate to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy, FAO has developed a number of manuals, guidelines and training materials to facilitate capacity building and needs assessment.
2. This paper provides an introduction to the following capacity evaluation tools developed by FAO:
 - (i) Strengthening National Food Control Systems: Guidelines to assess capacity building needs¹;
 - (ii) Strengthening National Food Control Systems: A Quick Guide to assess capacity building need²;
 - (iii) Guide to Assess Biosecurity Capacity (Part 2 of the FAO Biosecurity Toolkit)³; and
 - (iv) Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE)⁴.

Introduction to FAO's Capacity Evaluation Tools for Food Safety and Biosecurity

3. FAO has been working for more than forty years to improve the safety and quality of food in collaboration with national governments, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organizations, bilateral donor agencies, food enterprises, academic and scientific institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders. More recently, FAO has been involved in the development of a strategic and integrated approach to analyzing and managing relevant risks to human, animal and plant life and health, and associated risks to the environment, which is now known as biosecurity. The overarching goal of biosecurity is to prevent, control and/or manage risks to life and health as appropriate to the particular biosecurity sector.

¹ Available in English, French and Spanish at: http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/capacity_en.asp

² Available in English, French and Spanish at: http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/capacity_en.asp

³ Available in English, French and Spanish at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a1140e/a1140e00.htm>

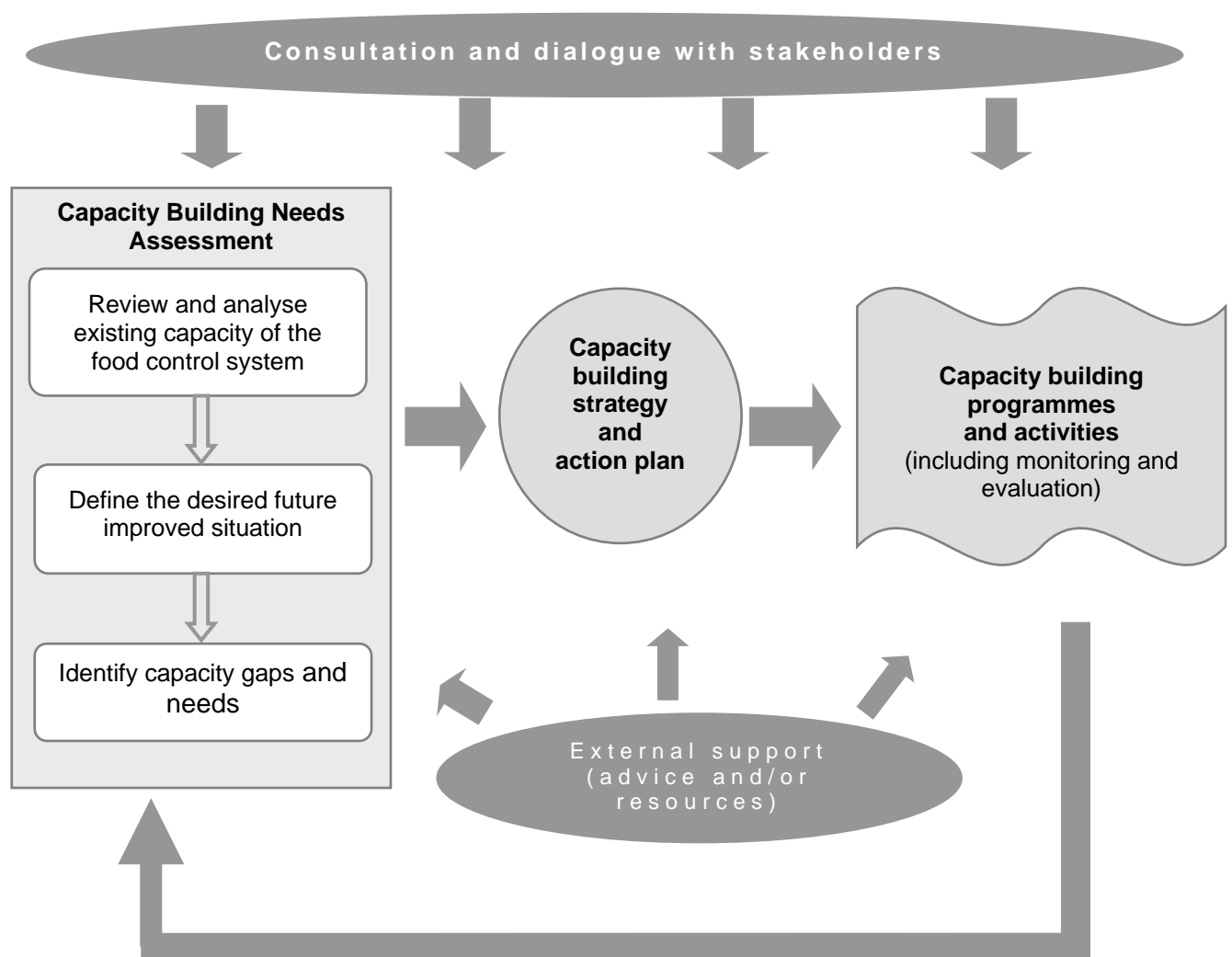
⁴ Available at:

<https://www.ippc.int/servlet/CDSServlet?status=ND0xMzQwNCY2PWVuJmZPSomMzc9a29z>

4. FAO's tools to assess capacity needs in food safety and biosecurity were developed through a collaborative process that included peer review meetings with experts in different aspects of food safety and biosecurity, and pilot testing at the country level. The Guidelines and Quick Guide to assess food safety capacity building needs were developed in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO).

5. FAO approaches the identification of capacity needs in food safety and biosecurity as an essential step in the process of strengthening capacity (Figure 1). Assessing capacity building needs provides a means to identify country level requirements and priorities for food safety and/or biosecurity. As such, carrying out a capacity needs assessment can help to ensure that activities to enhance capacity are demand-driven and tailored to specific circumstances within countries. By assessing needs, governments will be better able to set priorities and organize their work, improve the use of available resources and raise additional resources for unmet demands.

Figure 1: Capacity Building Needs Assessment as an Initial Step in the Process of Capacity Building



Strengthening National Food Control Systems: Guidelines to Assess Capacity Building Needs

6. The Guidelines have been developed to assist governments to assess their capacity in the core elements of a national food control system and identify their related capacity building needs. They are targeted at officials in national authorities who are responsible for various aspects of food control systems at the policy and/or operational level, as well as external organizations and consultants involved in activities to strengthen the capacity of food control systems.

7. The Guidelines build on and complement the FAO/WHO Guidelines for strengthening national food control systems (Food and Nutrition Paper No. 76)⁵, which provide advice to develop an integrated regulatory system for food control anchored in a transparent, risk-based approach and the involvement of all the concerned stakeholders from farm to table. Unlike other assessment and audit methodologies to verify that particular regulations or standards are met by the food industry, these Guidelines focus on government agencies and food control authorities responsible for food safety and quality. They are unique in presenting both a methodology for self-assessment of capacity building needs and internationally accepted benchmarks and principles for each of the core components of a national food control system.

8. The Guidelines include an introduction to the overall process of capacity building and needs assessment in national food control systems, as well as modules to guide officials through the assessment process for: (i) food control management; (ii) food legislation; (iii) food inspection; (iv) official food control laboratories; and (v) food safety and quality information, education and communication (IEC). The modules offer step-by-step guidance and a participatory methodology for self assessment. Each module is designed to stand on its own and countries may use different modules depending on their particular needs. Given the multidimensional nature of a food control system and the linkages between its components, efforts are made to draw attention to possible interdependencies between the modules as far as possible.

Strengthening National Food Control Systems: A Quick Guide to Assess Capacity Building Needs

9. The Quick Guide provides a fast approach to systematically assess the capacity building needs of the entire food control system all at once. Accordingly, it focuses on:

- food safety outcomes and performance from the perspective of different stakeholders;
- the country context for food safety; and
- overall capacity of the national food control system.

10. The Quick Guide complements the FAO Guidelines to Assess Capacity Building Needs (see above) which include in-depth modules tailored to each of the core components of a national food control system. To illustrate, countries that want to get an overall picture of what is needed to strengthen their food control system should use the Quick Guide. Countries that want to focus on a particular component (e.g. food inspection, food legislation) of their food control system should apply the relevant module(s) of the FAO Guidelines.

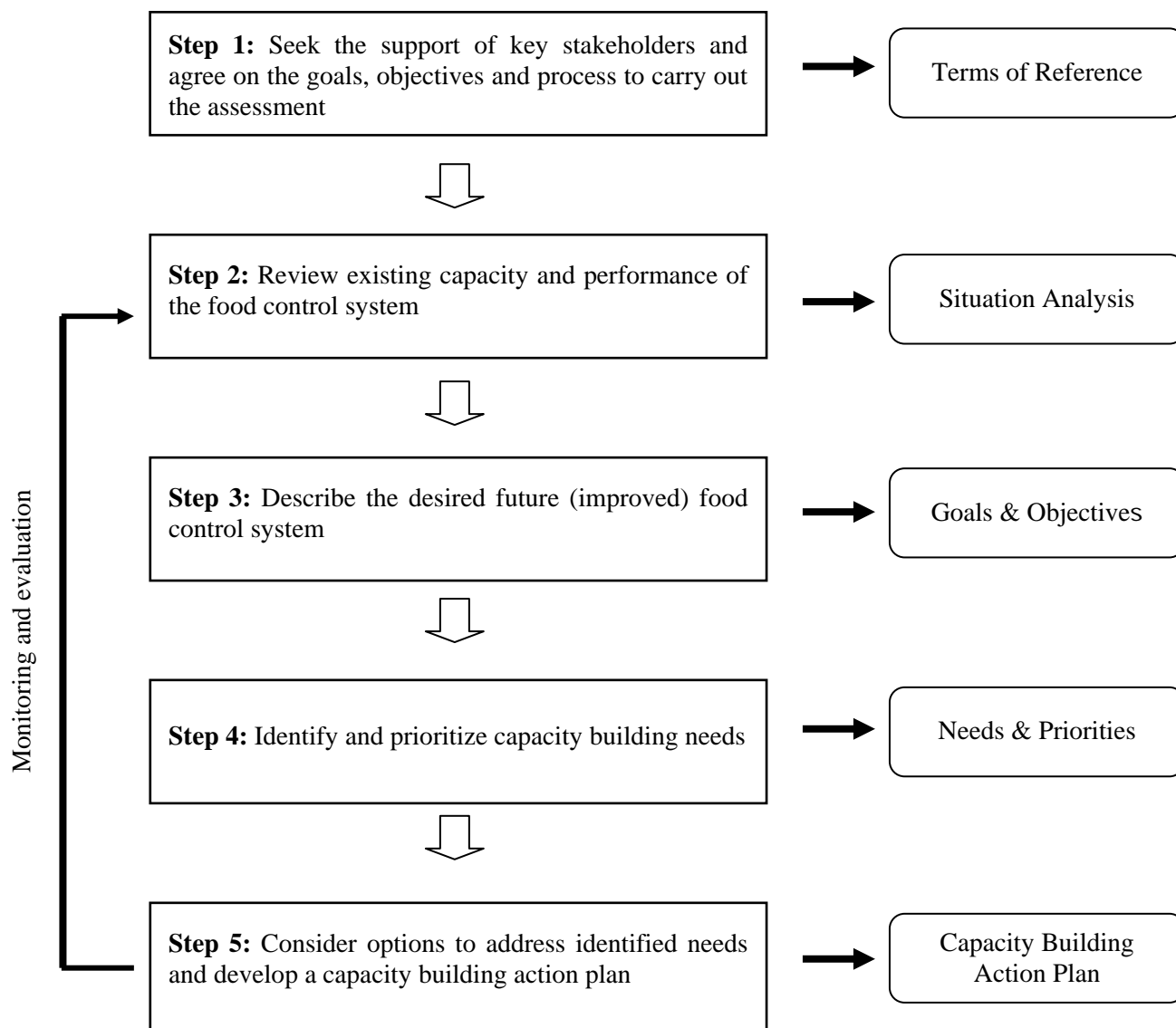
⁵ Available in English, French and Spanish at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/y8705e/y8705e00.htm>

11. The Quick Guide approaches capacity building needs as gaps between "what is" (the present) and "what should be" (the desired future). The methodology is based on a systematic process to examine critically the capacity and performance of the existing food control system, envisage the improved future system, pinpoint areas for improvement and identify options to address the identified needs.

12. The five steps in this process, and their expected outputs process, are illustrated in Figure 2. Each step incorporates a number of key questions to guide the assessment, as well as practical tips and suggestions to support those using the guide. More detailed guidance including survey questionnaires, key questions for discussions, checklists of capacity and capacity building needs, are annexed to the Guide as resource materials.

13. Use of the Quick Guide will enable countries to evaluate the performance of the existing food control system from the perspective of different stakeholders, generate a medium-term vision of an improved food control system, and identify capacity building needs and options to address them. This will enhance decision and policy-making, contributing to improved results, more efficient resource allocation and greater satisfaction from stakeholders. It will also enable countries to demonstrate their commitment to safe food to trading partners and potential donors, helping to attract new sources of funding.

Figure 2: Process Used in the Quick Guide to Identify Capacity Building Needs



Use of the Guidelines and Quick Guide to assess food safety capacity building needs

14. The Guidelines and Quick Guide were pilot tested under FAO and STDF projects in Benin, Cambodia, Cameroon, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Kenya, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Panama, Tanzania, Uganda and Viet Nam.

15. FAO is using the Guidelines and Quick Guide as part of its work to develop and implement technical cooperation activities to strengthen food safety and quality in developing and transition countries. The tools are also being applied by other organizations and donors involved in food safety capacity building activities including the STDF.

16. FAO is also using the Guidelines and Quick Guide to train food safety regulators on needs assessment. These workshops have addressed new approaches and methodologies to assess capacity building needs, the development of capacity building strategies and action plans, tools and techniques

to support needs assessment, benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating impact; and methods and techniques to train others in capacity building needs assessment.

17. An international training workshop on assessing capacity building needs in national food control systems was held in Rome from 28 November to 1 December 2006. Twelve food safety regulators from Africa, Asia, the Near East, Latin America and the Caribbean participated actively in this event. The workshop report is available on the FAO website (http://ftp.fao.org/ag/agn/food/meetings/2006/fao_tot_workshop.pdf).

18. An FAO Sub-regional training workshop for East Africa on strengthening national food control systems and assessing capacity building needs was organized in collaboration with the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) from 4 to 8 December 2006 in Bagamoyo, Tanzania. The workshop report is available on the FAO website (http://ftp.fao.org/ag/agn/food/meetings/2006/tanzania_ws_report.pdf).

19. A regional workshop on assessing food safety capacity building needs was organized in November 2007 in Beijing, China by FAO and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) as part of an STDF project (STDF 173). Twenty experts from developing APEC Member Economies participated in this training. The workshop report is available on the STDF website (http://www.standardsfacility.org/files/Project_documents/Project_Grants/STDF_173_Post_workshop_report.pdf).

FAO Guide to Assess Biosecurity Capacity

20. Biosecurity is a strategic and integrated approach to analyzing and managing relevant risks to human, animal and plant life and health, and associated risks to the environment. It is based on recognition of the critical linkages between sectors and the potential for hazards to move across sectors with far-reaching cross-sectoral consequences.

21. FAO has developed a Biosecurity Toolkit to provide practical guidance and support to develop and implement national biosecurity frameworks at the country level. The purpose is to support governments to better manage biosecurity as a means to protect public health, agricultural production and the environment. At the same time, this will enhance the ability of countries to comply with international agreements, regulations and requirements focused on sanitary and phytosanitary measures, contributing to economic development and trade.

22. The Biosecurity Toolkit comprises the following three separate but linked documents:

- Part 1: Biosecurity Principles and Components provides a contemporary context for the development and implementation of a harmonized biosecurity approach across all sectors.
- Part 2: Guide to Assess Biosecurity Capacity provides guidance on how to assess dimensions of biosecurity capacity across all sectors and sector organizations based on an integrated biosecurity approach.
- Part 3: An Overview and Framework Manual for Biosecurity Risk Analysis presents a generic framework to structure and guide the application of risk analysis principles in biosecurity.

23. The Guide to Assess Biosecurity Capacity offers a systematic, seven-step process to examine critically the nature and performance of an existing biosecurity system, pinpoint areas for improvement and identify the means to achieve a future vision of biosecurity. It is developed on the premise that biosecurity concerns different parts of government, that biosecurity goals are interrelated, and that the best way to manage the risks faced is through coordinated action across the relevant

sectors, thereby contributing to improved outcomes and efficiencies. By providing a process to identify cross-cutting biosecurity capacity needs, the Guide addresses the gaps inherent in a purely sectoral approach.

24. Use of the Guide to Assess Biosecurity Capacity enables governments to increase awareness of the synergies and interdependencies that exist across biosecurity sectors. It further helps to generate an understanding of existing biosecurity capacity and performance, a medium-term vision for national biosecurity, and a strategy and action plan to enhance biosecurity capacity based on an identification of capacity needs.

25. Government officials involved in biosecurity or a particular biosecurity sector are the main target audience for this Guide. This includes officials involved in food safety and public health, animal and plant life and health, and protection of the environment, at both the policy and/or operational level. Development agencies, consultants and trainers supporting biosecurity activities and programmes will find the Toolkit and Guide to Assess Biosecurity Capacity useful.

Use of the Guide to Assess Biosecurity Capacity

26. The Guide to Assess Biosecurity Capacity is being used at the national, regional and global level to develop project activities and to increase awareness and knowledge about biosecurity among sector officials. A series of regional and international training workshops on an integrated approach to food safety, animal health and plant health (biosecurity) and the assessment of capacity needs have taken place in Santiago, Chile (9-11 May 2007), Bangkok, Thailand (28-30 May 2007), Accra, Ghana (30 May - 1 June 2007) and Rome, Italy (22-25 January 2008).

27. The objectives of these workshop were to: (i) increase the understanding and knowledge about an integrated approach to food safety, animal and plant health and life and biosafety among sector experts; (ii) equip participants with the knowledge and skills to apply the FAO Guide to assess biosecurity capacity at the national level; and (iii) develop a network of experts with specialized knowledge and skills on an integrated biosecurity approach to facilitate the development and delivery of biosecurity capacity building activities and training at the country and regional level. The reports of these meetings are available on the FAO website (http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/capacity_events_2007_en.asp).

28. Other activities using the Guide to Assess Biosecurity Capacity and strengthen an integrated biosecurity approach have been carried out or are ongoing in Bhutan, El Salvador, Haiti, Nepal, Panama and pilot African countries.

Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation Tool

29. One of the first SPS evaluation tools developed, the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE), originated from a pilot project funded by New Zealand in 1999. The project developed a questionnaire for the assessment of phytosanitary capabilities, to identify needs and priorities of the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO). The original questionnaire was piloted in six countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Viet Nam). After field evaluation in about 30 countries, a Technical Assistance Expert Group convened by the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) recommended the inclusion of new components to PCE on Institutional Aspects, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis, Priority and LogFrame Matrices. At the 4th ICPM Meeting, PCE was adopted as the preferred tool to perform phytosanitary needs assessment and a CD-ROM version was commissioned for distribution to member countries. By the time of the last meeting of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) in April 2007, the PCE had been applied in more than 60 countries world-wide.

Countries where the PCE has been applied (November 2006)

Antigua and Barbuda	Estonia	Mexico	St. Vincent and the
Bahrain	Gabon	Myanmar	Grenadines
Barbados	Grenada	Nepal	Sudan
Belize	Guatemala	Nicaragua	Suriname
Benin	Guinea Bissau	Niger	Swaziland
Bhutan	Guyana	Nigeria	Tanzania
Bolivia	Haiti	Oman	Bahamas
Burkina Faso	Honduras	Panama	The Gambia
Cambodia	India	Peru	Togo
Colombia	Iran	Qatar	Trinidad and Tobago
Costa Rica	Jamaica	Saint Lucia	Uganda
Cote d'Ivoire	Kenya	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates
Dominica	Kuwait	Senegal	Venezuela
Dominican Republic	Lao People's	St Lucia	Viet Nam
Ecuador	Democratic Rep.	St. Kitts and Nevis	Zambia
El Salvador	Mali		

30. The PCE comprises 11 modules, some standard-specific, e.g., pest free areas and export certification, others are cross cutting, e.g. inspection, each with a questionnaire and empty matrices for SWOT analysis. This facilitates the prioritizing of actions and the construction of a logical framework. The primary focus is to examine the capacity of the NPPOs in relation to implementation of International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) and the rights and responsibilities described in the IPPC. The PCE is multilingual with English, French, Arabic and Spanish versions.

31. The questionnaire in PCE assumes a basic level of understanding of some of the supporting documents such as the IPPC, the ISPMs, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the CBD. These documents are contained in the PCE CD-ROM under the section called "Background Documents". It has been agreed that PCE results should be kept confidential, unless a country wishes to use or present their PCE results externally.

32. The structure of the existing PCE is being rearranged into a stratified framework so that the user may follow the tool on a modular basis, going deeper into details when more assistance is needed, with provision of links to additional information and guidance. In that regard, the main thematic areas of national capacity will be grouped into conceptual categories, avoiding the need to create different modules for each ISPM. The PCE will show cascading levels in Word or Power Point to allow for preclusion of further questions based on the answer to the lead question. Useful references, guidance documents, etc. will be added for support to the NPPO in areas where weaknesses are identified. New thematic areas, for example, for capturing stakeholders' concerns and agreeing on national priorities, will be added.

33. At the CPM in 2007, [a review of the PCE was presented by CABI Africa](#). The report noted the positive impacts of the PCE with respect to its intended use, in particular on national strategic planning, justification for budgetary allocation, legal frameworks, training and awareness raising. Recommendations made by CABI will be discussed at the forthcoming [CPM on 7–11 April 2008](#). For the forthcoming discussion on the PCE at the CPM meeting, see document CPM 2008/4 at the IPPC website: <https://www.ippc.int/IPPC>.