

A summary of

# Benefits provided by the International Plant Protection Convention



## IPPC Information Sheet 1

*This document summarizes the benefits for contracting parties of acceptance of (or adherence to) the International Plant Protection Convention.*

### About the International Plant Protection Convention

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is an international treaty relating to plant health. The purpose of the IPPC is 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.

The Convention was adopted by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) at its Sixth Session in 1951. In 2001 there were 117 contracting parties to the IPPC. The current version of the Convention dates back to 1979 but a more recent revision (1997) is in the process of acceptance by contracting parties. It will come into force 30 days after acceptance by two-thirds of the contracting parties to the IPPC. The revision aligns the Convention with the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS Agreement) of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

### Introduction

Contracting parties to the IPPC accept both rights and obligations. The 1997 revised text states these rights and obligations more clearly than the previous versions of the Convention.

Among the rights recognized by the Convention is that countries have sovereign authority to use phytosanitary measures to regulate the entry of plants and plant products and other objects or material capable of harbouring plant pests. Countries can refuse entry, require treatment or specify other requirements for regulated material. Similarly, countries have the right to take emergency action on the detection of a pest posing a potential threat to their territories.

In applying phytosanitary measures, contracting parties have obligations to comply with the Convention's principles of necessity, technical justification and transparency. For example, phytosanitary requirements must be scientifically justified, consistent with the pest risk and result in the minimum impediment to international trade and traffic. Other responsibilities under the IPPC include modification of measures if conditions change and provision of relevant information to affected parties.

What, then, are the benefits to contracting parties from acceptance of (or adherence to) the International Plant Protection Convention? Contracting parties derive benefits by a variety of

means: for example, through international trade agreements, standard setting, technical assistance, dispute resolution and information exchange. Some of these benefits are listed below.

### IPPC and international trade agreements

Benefits related to international trade include:

- Obligations under the IPPC are consistent with and complementary to the WTO-SPS Agreement.
- Most major trading partners and WTO Members are contracting parties to the IPPC.
- Adherence to the IPPC increases the credibility of national phytosanitary systems for trading partners.
- Participation allows for direct and active input into processes of global harmonization.
- Opportunities are provided to interact with the WTO-SPS Committee through the phytosanitary community.

### IPPC and standard setting

There are benefits derived from involvement in the process of setting International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures:

- The Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (ICPM) provides the opportunity to shape

International Plant Protection Convention ...  
preventing the spread and introduction of  
pests of plants and plant products ...  
and promoting measures for their control





A summary of

## Benefits provided by the International Plant Protection Convention



international phytosanitary policy and interact directly with the phytosanitary community .

- Members may submit draft international standards for consideration by the ICPM.

Adherence to the IPPC:

- conforms with obligations under Article 3.4 of the SPS Agreement concerning participation in international standard-setting organizations;
- allows for direct participation in the activities and processes associated with the elaboration of international standards that are observed under the SPS Agreement.

### Technical assistance

Contracting parties to the IPPC agree to promote provision of technical assistance to other parties to aid in implementation of the Convention. In particular, the Convention encourages support for developing countries . Technical assistance offers the benefits of:

- increased possibilities for capacity building and strengthening plant protection infrastructures through projects;
- assistance with dispute settlement from the IPPC Secretariat;
- assistance with reviewing and updating legislation;
- possibilities for emergency programmes through FAO or other organizations;

- availability of technical expertise through the IPPC Secretariat;
- possibilities for the coordination of technical assistance on a bilateral or multilateral basis .

### Dispute resolution

The IPPC includes dispute settlement provisions for instances where phytosanitary measures may be challenged as unjustified barriers to trade .

The dispute settlement process in the IPPC is non-binding. Benefits for contracting parties arising from the dispute resolution processes of the Convention include:

- assistance with dispute settlement procedures;
- access to a lower profile , non-binding alternative with emphasis on technical dialogue (as compared with disputes under the WTO processes);
- opportunities for the settlement of disputes in areas falling outside the scope of the SPS Agreement but within the scope of the IPPC;
- possibilities for the nomination of national experts for inclusion in the roster of experts used by the IPPC Secretariat for consultation in disputes .

### Information exchange

Publication and dissemination of relevant information is both an obligation and part

of the voluntary cooperative action of the Convention. Benefits arising from inclusion in this information exchange include:

- opportunities to request or to provide official information;
- participation in a neutral forum for the provision and exchange of technical information related to plant protection and trade;
- assistance to developing countries in information exchange capabilities;
- possibilities for training national personnel;
- direct access to standards and related information from the IPPC Secretariat;
- opportunities to submit discussion papers and other information to working groups;
- participation in and benefit from technical meetings on phytosanitary issues .

### Other benefits

Some other benefits derived from acceptance of (or adherence to) the IPPC:

- There are no additional financial obligations .
- There are no minimum criteria to which to adhere .
- Becoming a contracting party is a simple process of depositing an instrument of adherence with the Director-General of FAO.

To contact the Secretariat:

IPPC Secretariat, Plant Protection Service ,  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the  
United Nations , Viale delle Terme di  
Caracalla, 00100 Rome , ITALY

Tel.: (+39) 06 5705 4812

Fax: (+39) 06 5705 6347

E-mail: [ippc@fao.org](mailto:ippc@fao.org)

Web site: [www.ippc.int](http://www.ippc.int)

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

All rights reserved. Reproduction and dissemination of material in this information product for educational or other non-commercial purposes are authorized without any prior written permission from the copyright holders provided the source is fully acknowledged. Reproduction of material in this information product for resale or other commercial purposes is prohibited without written permission of the copyright holders. Applications for such permission should be addressed to the Chief, Publishing Management Service, Information Division, FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy or by e-mail to [copyright@fao.org](mailto:copyright@fao.org)



© FAO 2002