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**Task Force on Topics and 2018 Call for Topics: Standards and
Implementation - Impacts and Benefits of The New Procedure for Call for
Topics**

Agenda item 9.1

**Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat, with inputs from Task Force on Topics
members**

I. Background

1. With the aim to strengthen the collaboration within the IPPC Secretariat and between the Standards Committee (SC) and the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC), the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures at its thirteenth session (CPM-13) in 2018 agreed the processes for the biennial Call for Topics: Standards and Implementation¹. The CPM-13 also agreed the Criteria for Justification and Prioritization and the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Task Force on Topics (TFT)².

2. The CPM-13 (2018) also agreed to give the IC the same authority as the SC to recommend topics in exceptional circumstances to the CPM. Furthermore, the CPM-13 requested that the TFT use the Framework for Standards and Implementation when reviewing submissions in response to the Call for Topics. Contracting parties encouraged the Secretariat to analyze the possible impact of the forthcoming call on the Secretariat's work and therefore the CPM-13 acknowledged the need to reflect

¹ It should be noted that Implementation topics also includes Capacity Development topics

² CPM-13 (2018) Report, appendices 7, 8 and 9; available at: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/85963/>

these decisions in the IPPC standard setting procedure or other CPM procedures, as appropriate, and requested the IPPC Secretariat to analyze possible impacts and benefits, and to report to CPM.

II. 2018 Call for Topics: Standards and Implementation

3. The 2018 Call for Topics: Standards and Implementation received a total of 36 submissions from 10 National Plant Protection Organisations (NPPOs) and four Regional Plant Protection Organisations (RPPOs) for standards (including for terms for the Glossary and Diagnostic Protocols) and implementation resources. All submissions are publically available on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP)³.

4. The TFT, consisting of representatives from the CPM Bureau, the SC and IC held their first face-to-face meeting in Rome 1-3 October 2018. They considered all 36 submissions and developed recommendations to the SC and IC for review during their respective November 2018 meetings. During the October 2018 meeting, the TFT noted that the process worked well but could be refined, and agreed to incorporate lessons learned and potential proposed revisions to the process of the Call for Topics in the TFT discussion paper for the CPM-14 (2019).

5. The SC in their November 2018 meeting reviewed the TFT recommendations and agreed with most of them. Topics addressing terms for the Glossary and Diagnostic Protocols recommended by the SC were included into the work programmes of the relevant technical panels, as they are “subjects” in the hierarchy of terms for standards and under the direct remit of the SC. The SC also briefly discussed potential impacts of the Call for Topics on the standard setting process, but considered it was premature to propose changes, as the TFT may wish to recommend changes to their terms of reference and the process for the call based on experience and after the results of this call are submitted to CPM.

6. At their November 2018 meeting, the IC also reviewed the TFT recommendations on the submissions. The IC agreed to most of the TFT recommendations and provided their comments on some topics.

7. The TFT considered the SC and IC discussions during a virtual meeting in January 2019, and prepared the final recommendations to CPM-14.

III. Analysis of Impact and Benefit of the Call for Topics on the Secretariat’s work

A. IPPC Secretariat collaboration and human resources

8. The Call for Topics: Standards and Implementation and Task Force on Topics (TFT) were jointly managed and supported by the Standard Setting Unit (SSU) and the Implementation Facilitation Unit (IFU) of the IPPC Secretariat. Coordination between the units in processing the submissions, in preparation and follow-up of meetings worked well and provided a good opportunity for increased internal collaboration.

9. The Secretariat work on the Call for Topics encompassed processing of submissions, development of evaluation templates and meeting documents, liaison with submitters and TFT members, preparation and management of TFT meetings (one face-to-face, one virtual), managing of TFT e-forums, report writing and developing of recommendation papers to SC, IC and CPM. Two consultants from the two Secretariat units (IFU and SSU) were mainly responsible for the call, with some coordination provided by the Unit leaders and assisted by administrative support.

³ Call for Topics website available at: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/standards-and-implementation/call-for-topics-standards-and-implementation/>

10. The Secretariat estimates that the 2018 Call for Topics utilized approximately 21 full working days each for two Consultants from SSU and IFU, plus 3 days each for the two Unit leads and 3 days for administrative support. While this work load may reduce for future calls, once templates and processes are settled, it is recommended that the resources associated with managing the process of the Call for Topics be reflected in the IPPC Secretariat work plan for the years when a call is organized.

B. Funding for Task Force on Topics meeting

11. Based on a Bureau decision in their June 2018 meeting, no travel funding was available for supporting participants of developing countries in the TFT face-to-face meeting in October. Fortunately all members were able to secure their own funding, which may not always be possible. In order to ensure representation from developing countries in the TFT face-to-face meeting, the IC and SC encourage inclusion of travel funding in future budget considerations for the next Call for Topics, which is planned to occur in 2020.

C. Timing and scheduling of the call

12. The 2018 Call for Topics: Standards and Implementation was open from 1 May to 31 August 2018. The Secretariat received feedback from participants of IPPC Regional Workshops who voiced their concern about the timing of the call for topics, as in some regions the workshop was held after the call had already closed. In order to allow contracting parties to discuss possible topics, to gather support and potentially develop joint submissions, it was suggested to include a standing agenda item on the Call for Topics in the regional workshops and to try to schedule the regional workshops earlier, before the deadline of the call.

13. The TFT face-to-face meeting was scheduled for three days in early October. The length of the meeting was sufficient to allow for in-depth discussion of the 36 topic submissions, based on preliminary evaluations conducted by individual members before the meeting. The TFT agreed that this was necessary and preferable to having in-depth discussions during the SC and IC meetings. The number of days for the face-to-face meeting could be adjusted, depending on the amount and quality of topic submissions in the future.

14. The new process for the call for topics includes several tight deadlines for the evaluation of submissions, especially between the TFT and SC and IC meetings in which the topic submissions are discussed. Considering that the TFT is doing the in-depth review of the topic submissions, the report of their face-to-face meeting is the main source of detailed information on the evaluation of the proposals, and should be finalized in time for the SC and IC meetings.

15. In the current timeline, the TFT meets again virtually in January to discuss the SC and IC recommendations. Because the SC and IC discussions are mainly captured in their reports, which are available shortly after their respective meetings, the Secretariat suggests that it may be better to schedule the final TFT meeting before the end of the year, to allow for sufficient time to finalize the recommendations for CPM.

D. Quality of topic submissions.

16. Evaluation of a several topic submissions was impacted by insufficient information from the nominating body including not sufficiently addressing the core and supporting criteria or the additional criteria required for submissions for Diagnostic Protocols, missing draft specifications or draft outlines, or missing literature reviews. The Secretariat notes that submitters were contacted when their submission was deemed incomplete and given the opportunity to provide additional information.

17. The Secretariat agreed to revise the format of the submission form with input from the TFT members in order to provide clear guidance for contracting parties on how to complete the form and to facilitate the evaluation process. It was suggested that diagnostic protocols could have a separate

submission form, to more clearly reflect the additional criteria that need to be addressed by the submitter. Moreover, the Secretariat also agreed to develop a structured template for a draft outline for implementation resources, similar to the draft specification template used for topics for standards. The revised forms will be available for the next call for topics.

18. The TFT during their meeting discussed introducing a standing item on the agenda of the IPPC Regional Workshops dedicated to the development and discussion of topic submissions. It was suggested that a training package be developed and training sessions be conducted, in order to build capacity of contracting parties to identify gaps and make relevant and complete submissions. The SC further suggested that a training session be held on the margins of CPM-14, however, the Bureau considered that it would be more effective to conduct such training during the regional workshops and defer training at CPM until CPM-15 (2020) when the next call for topics is planned to be launched. The Secretariat agreed to develop, with input from the TFT, training sessions for the regional workshops.

IV. Development of a transparent process for evaluation of topic submissions

19. In order to make the evaluation of topic submissions as transparent and efficient as possible, the Secretariat developed assessment forms and a topic evaluation checklist, with input from the TFT and based on the Criteria for Justification and Prioritization of Proposed Topics⁴ and the template used for the evaluation of submissions for phytosanitary treatments.

20. The TFT used the forms in preparation for their in depth review and agreed that in addition to the criteria agreed by CPM, the considerations and questions included were useful to guide the evaluation process in a consistent way. They agreed to further develop and revise the evaluation forms for use in future calls for topics.

V. Process for Implementation topics

21. The Secretariat is currently working on several implementation and capacity development activities, some of which are based on existing project proposals from contracting parties and partner organizations. The topics of activities for implementation have been included in the Framework for Standards and Implementation, which is regularly updated and endorsed by CPM. Activities formerly undertaken under the supervision of the Capacity Development Committee (CDC) are now coordinated by the IC. However, a list of topics for implementation had not been developed through a formal process like the *List of Topics for IPPC standards*, where topics are adopted by the CPM and added to the list.

22. At the May 2018 IC meeting, the Secretariat compiled and presented a list of implementation topics currently being worked on⁵. The IC agreed on the topics listed and assigned priorities. The Secretariat considers it would be prudent to complete the work that has been started and is seeking guidance on how to deal with these implementation topics and the additional implementation topics proposed by the TFT, noting that several of the topics submitted through the call could already be addressed through existing work. One option could be to formalize a List of Topics for Implementation and to integrate them into the Framework for Standards and Implementation.

23. In addition, the submissions included a proposal for an implementation symposium, which the TFT felt was beyond the scope of the TFT recommendation. The IC decided to seek guidance from the Bureau on whether or not symposia should be included into the Implementation topics. In general, the Secretariat has been working on several symposia on a project basis. It should be clear what kind of activities should be solicited in future calls.

⁴ Criteria for justification and prioritization of proposed topics: <http://www.ippc.int/en/publications/85790/>

⁵ Topics for Implementation and Capacity Development: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/86844/>

A. Resources to proceed with high priority implementation topics

24. In contrast to the development of standards funded by the regular programme budget, the delivery of implementation topics adopted by the CPM requires funding through voluntary contributions from contracting parties and resource partners. To ensure the IC and Secretariat address the implementation and capacity development issues based on their priority for the IPPC community, it would be desirable that contracting parties provide support and resources for the delivery of the high priority implementation topics.

B. The possibility of building a transparent joint List of Topics for standards and implementation.

25. The Secretariat discussed the implications of possibly joining the *List of Topics for IPPC Standards* with a list of topics for implementation into a joint list of topics. The Secretariat considered that the SC and IC needed to discuss whether and/or how the lists could be aligned and/or integrated in order to develop a joint work plan for the two committees as suggested in their cooperation strategies. It should be noted that the IC has developed a strategy and process for the development of IPPC guides and training materials⁶. The Secretariat also questioned how the Framework for Standards and Implementation could be connected with the lists of topics, as these documents provide similar information but at different levels of detail. It should be noted that the SC and IC Framework champions are currently restructuring the Framework for Standards and Implementation in order to make it more user friendly.

VI. Conclusions

26. The new process of a call for topics has worked well and will be refined in the future to reflect the experience gained. Adjustments to the process and the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Task Force on Topics will be proposed by the TFT accordingly. Documents developed by the Secretariat for the submission of topics (revised submission forms, draft outline template) as well as the TFT evaluation (assessment form, evaluation checklist), will facilitate an efficient and transparent process for inclusion of topics for standards and implementation of global relevance in the future IPPC work programme.

27. The TFT considered that the joint assessment of topic submissions by its members was beneficial as it provided different points of view on how to best approach certain topics. They recommended alternative approaches for some topics to address the problem, other than the way indicated in the submission and invited the SC and IC to work together and coordinate the development of materials.

28. The joint organization of the Call for Topics by the SSU and IFU of the IPPC Secretariat should be considered the first step in a more effective collaboration and interconnected work between the Secretariat units. This should extend to supporting the SC and IC in the work on topics that were identified to best be addressed jointly by the two committees. The Secretariat acknowledges that this is the initial stage of the development of linkages between the work of setting standards and their implementation. Enhanced collaboration within the Secretariat would benefit from the development of linked work plans.

29. The Secretariat notes the importance of building capacity of contracting parties not only in the implementation of ISPMs but also in the normative work during their development, including the

⁶ Strategy and Process for the Development of IPPC Guides and Training Materials; Appendix 15 and 16 of the IC November 2018 Meeting report, available at: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/86878/>

submission of topic proposals, and supports the TFT recommendation to include a standing agenda item on the call for topics during IPPC regional workshops.

30. The Secretariat highlights the need to ensure appropriate human resources are allocated in the annual budget to conduct and facilitate the process of future calls for topics and to provide associated capacity building for topic submission through training sessions. In terms of the delivery of the topics, the Secretariat also highlights support needed from contracting parties

VII. Decisions

31. The CPM is invited to:

- 1) *Note* that the joint Call for Topics process has operated effectively and will be refined and streamlined for the next Call in 2020
- 2) *Acknowledge* the impacts and benefits analyzed by the IPPC Secretariat of the Call for Topics: Standards and Implementation
- 3) *Request* the Secretariat, in consultation with the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) and the Standards Committee (SC), to review relevant standard setting and implementation and capacity development processes and procedures and prepare recommendations for proposed changes to CPM as needed.