IPPC SECRETARIAT UPDATE ON E-COMMERCE ACTIVITIES

1. In order for the global plant protection framework to keep pace with the anticipated growth in e-Commerce, NPPOs and regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs) should collaborate with other stakeholders to monitor internet trade and to ensure that e-Commerce goods comply with relevant import requirements. This requires improvements in collaboration, monitoring and enforcement across the pathways known for transporting those goods, particularly postal and express delivery services. Phytosanitary organisations around the world need efficient tools and procedures to screen courier mail and packages. International harmonization of measures and procedures for e-Commerce and courier mail operators may be the most efficient way to address this problem.
2. CPM-9 (2014) adopted R-05: Recommendation on: Internet trade (e-Commerce) in plants and other regulated articles[[1]](#footnote-1). The Commission *encourages* NPPOs and RPPOs to:
3. *develop* mechanisms for identifying e-Commerce traders based within their countries and regions.
4. *establish* mechanisms to identify products of concern that may be purchased via e-Commerce, with a focus on potential high-risk pathways such as plants for planting, soils and growing media and living organisms, and to explore options ensuring they comply with appropriate phytosanitary regulations based on risk assessment.
5. *promote* compliance by customers and traders operating through e-Commerce with the phytosanitary import requirements of importing countries and provide adequate information on the risks posed by by-passing such requirements.
6. *strengthen* coordination with postal and express courier services to ensure that relevant information of the phytosanitary risks and phytosanitary measures are conveyed to e-Commerce traders.
7. *investigate* the phytosanitary risks posed by all forms of distance selling and if necessary to include these purchasing methods in their risk management activities.
8. *raise* awareness of the risks of bypassing phytosanitary regulations.
9. An e-Commerce action plan was also noted by CPM-14 within the Five year investment plan of the IPPC Secretariat – in relation to the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030[[2]](#footnote-2). Activities to be carried out during 2020 - 2030 would include:
* An international communications effort targeting companies selling through e-Commerce channels and consumers, to ensure they understand the need and how to comply with importing country phytosanitary requirements.
* Establishment of an inter-agency network (CITES/WCO/IPPC) to create synergy in developing a joint policy and requirement catalogue with regard to e-Commerce and courier/postal pathways.
* Establishment of a joint inter-agency toolkit for the regulation and screening of E-commerce and courier/postal pathways.
1. A Guide on e-Commerce (2017-039) is already included on the *List of Implementation and Capacity Development Topics*. CPM-14 (2019) noted that the two ISPMs related to e-Commerce, which were submitted in the 2018 Call for Topics, will go through the normal Standard Setting process.
2. CPM-14 (2019) also endorsed the draft project work plan and budget that were presented in the paper[[3]](#footnote-3) on e-Commerce and considered the extra-budgetary resources required to implement the draft e-Commerce project work plan. Canada committed to an in-kind contribution of a staff member, for two years, to work as a member of the IPPC Secretariat, Implementation and Facilitation Unit to advance the e-Commerce project and other CPM priorities that facilitate trade. Additional co-funding arrangements are needed to fully fund the draft e-Commerce project work plan. No additional resources were allocated and CPM-14 (2019) noted that the IPPC Secretariat will not continue work on e-Commerce until it was fully resourced, with the exception of liaison with the World Customs Organization.
3. At CPM-14 (2019) the WCO welcomed the IPPC community’s support for continued cooperation with the IPPC Secretariat on e-Commerce, and indicated that the WCO Framework of Standards on Cross-Border e-Commerce provided for close collaboration between Customs and relevant government agencies. They encouraged greater involvement of, and collaboration with, the IPPC community and NPPOs in the implementation of the Framework at national, regional and international levels, and that this would also include collaboration related to capacity building activities.
4. In August 2019, the WCO published an e-Commerce Package[[4]](#footnote-4), which provides guidance to national Customs administrations on establishing or enhancing their legislative, policy and operational framework for managing cross-border e-Commerce. The Package includes:
* Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce;
* Technical Specifications to the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border e-Commerce;
* and various implementation tools.
1. The WCO Technical Specifications document states that national Customs administrations, in cooperation with other relevant government agencies, should prepare and regularly update a list of prohibited and restricted goods in their respective countries and make it easily available to all relevant stakeholders. The WCO also identified key areas concerning safety and security issues. These areas include, but are not limited to: agricultural risks (e.g. phytosanitary), pests, invasive alien species, and plants and fungi that may carry the risk of biological invasions in importing countries.
2. During the May 2019 Implementation Committee (IC) meeting, the IPPC Secretariat suggested that since e-Commerce is a cross-cutting issue, e-Commerce experts and stakeholders could be called upon to support the IPPC Secretariat’s work. In June 2019, the Bureau agreed that an informal network of e-Commerce experts would provide a useful resource for the IPPC Secretariat. This informal network would have broad participation and could include experts from various NPPOs, RPPOs, international organizations, as well as, industry stakeholders. This informal network would work virtually and may be asked to help identify gaps in technical resources and to help plan/coordinate development of new technical resources aimed at reducing the risk of spreading pests with materials sold through e-commerce.
3. The IPPC Secretariat proposes to create a new e-Commerce landing page on the IPP. A call for existing technical resources related to e-Commerce will be issued; materials will be reviewed as per the contributed resources process and posted.
4. TC-RPPO is requested to:
5. *identify* regional experts on the subject of e-Commerce that might take part in an informal network of e-Commerce experts, and
6. *facilitate* the collection of information about e-commerce initiatives that are already underway in their regions.
1. CPM R-05: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/84232/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CPM 2019/30 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. CPM 2019/16 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2019/august/wco-publishes-an-e-commerce-package.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)