



VIRTUAL MEETING ON MITIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN PLANT HEALTH AT REGIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVEL

15 May 2020 (14:00-16:10 CEST)

1. Opening of the Meeting

- [1] The IPPC Secretary, Mr Jingyuan XIA opened the meeting and welcomed all participants to the meeting. The meeting was attended by 28 participants and observers from all ten RPPOs, as well as all core team members of the IPPC Secretariat.
- [2] In his opening remarks, Mr Xia expressed the high appreciation for the presence of all RPPO representatives and observers and welcomed new RPPO representatives from APPPC and COSAVE. He informed the RPPOs about the new IPP webpage¹ which presents collated information regarding plant health and the COVID-19 pandemic. He highlighted the importance of continuing to implement the IPPC Secretariat work plan and encouraged RPPOs to take this opportunity to work together.
- [3] He invited all participants to focus on the three major items of the meeting, namely updates from participants in this new situation, the progress of the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) and ePhyto and the way forward for the 'new normal' to foster collaboration, cooperation and coordination.

2. Update from RPPOs on the Impact of COVID-19 in their Regions

2.1. Asia and Pacific Plant Protection Commission (APPPC)

- [4] Mr Yubak Dehoj G.C (APPPC representative) introduced the regional update stressing that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on their activities. He underlined that several initiatives were currently in place including promoting ePhyto. Modifications to the APPPC work plan were proposed to move all face-to-face meetings to 2021. He informed about the decision to promote ePhyto through the establishment of a working group. He concluded by mentioning that promote planned IYPH events and activities are on hold, but their members were trying to promote IYPH for example, via sharing social media.

2.2. Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA)

- [5] Ms Juliet GOLDSMITH (CAHFSA representative) informed that the COVID-19 had a big impact on the economy and agriculture in the region because the economies are heavily reliant on tourism. In particular, she noted the huge efforts that were needed to deal with food wastes with an oversupply due to the abrupt halt in tourists. She reported that NPPOs reacted by seeking solutions to manage the excess supply and the resulting waste, noting an increasing pressure on field sanitation and pest risk. She informed about regional responses to the situation such as establishing a task force to monitor and assess the situation and developing a risk management framework and action plan to provide members with a tool to effectively manage food supply and availability and added they are exploring options to make interventions virtually, for example, webinars to share experiences. She concluded that the members have considered critical the exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificates and requested training on ePhyto.

¹ Plant Health and COVID-19: <https://www.ippc.int/en/covid-19/>

2.3. Comunidad Andina (CAN)

- [6] Mr Camilo BELTRAN (CAN representative) introduced the members continue to work providing the regular phytosanitary services for import and export despite the difficulties. He laid out the main concerns and challenges, including protecting the people performing agricultural activities, ensuring the food security during and post COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining the capacity of the developing countries to meet the phytosanitary requirements and preparing to respond to potential local and regional pest outbreaks. He also shared some initial effort to mitigate the impact by taking an integral approach to the management related to plant health issues and prevention of COVID-19, ensuring capacity for the developing countries to implement the standards efficiently while improving the processes for essential phytosanitary activities and analysing possibilities and ways to bring flexibility some requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic stage.

2.4. Comité de Sanidad Vegetal del Cono Sur (COSAVE)

- [7] Mr James PAZO on behalf of Mr. César De La Cruz (COSAVE representative) provided an update that food supply and its related activities were deemed essential in COSAVE countries and the Ministers of Agriculture of COSAVE countries have held virtual meetings in which they committed to guaranteeing food supplies for the region and the world. He described how NPPOs in the region have prioritized activities related to plant product supply, ensuring phytosanitary inspection, certification, as well as surveillance and control of prioritized pests. He elaborated on import and export activities in the region, which did not show significant difference compared to 2019 during the months of March and April 2020.

2.5. European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO)

- [8] Mr Nico HORN (EPPO representative) shared an update that NPPOs in the region established measures to protect their staff, allowing the work and inspections to continue. He shared that no country in the region was affected in terms of food security. NPPOs and EPPO Secretariat replaced their face-to-face meetings by virtual equivalents immediately. He updated on IYPH activities, which continued alongside others such as EUPHESCO and a video contest and on social media, amongst others. He noted the drawing contest for children by the NPPO of Belgium but most of IYPH events and activities have been postponed. Some of them are planned in the second semester of 2020 while others in 2021 already, aligning with other IYPH major events.

2.6. Inter-African Phytosanitary Council (IAPSC)

- [9] Mr Jean Gerard MEZUI-M'ELLA (IAPSC representative) updated on the impacts of COVID-19 on local communities in Africa region. He highlighted that desert locusts and fall armyworm are still threats to the region and restrictive measures on movement has been limiting pest management, surveillance and monitoring of plant pests. He stressed that border measures like closing of airports had an impact on the movement of plant products affecting international trade. He added that staple food crop production across Africa might be drastically affected if the outbreak continues into critical planting periods, leading to food shortages. He noted that their members should review their phytosanitary certification systems and consider implementing the e-Phyto solution (Generic System (GeNS)) to help facilitate trade. He concluded by mentioned that a major challenge would be that technical activities have not been implemented during the lockdown period.

2.7. North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO)

- [10] Ms Stephanie BLOAM (NAPPO representative) informed participants that external borders of member countries remain closed but internal borders allow some level of trade. She highlighted that NPPOs continued providing essential phytosanitary services and NAPPO Secretariat also continued working

remotely with adjustment. She reported that many NAPPO and their member NPPO events and meetings have been postponed until 2021, including IYPH-related events. She invited the IPPC Secretariat to consult RPPOs when rescheduling IPPC events to avoid overlap. She added that some phytosanitary services had to be adjusted to the current situation but essential activities have remained unchanged. She noted that there is a concern regarding a potential second COVID-19 pandemic wave. In the region, trade has slowed down and supply chains have been impacted. Another concern was the upcoming hurricane season, which may be complicated by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

2.8. Near East Plant Protection Organization (NEPPO)

- [11] Mr Mekki CHOUIBANI (NEPPO representative) reported that the current pandemic has had negative impacts on their members, not just in the agricultural sectors or phytosanitary activities. He shared that the primary focus was on the safety of NPPO staff, continuing only essential activities to secure food supplies. He reported that NPPOs are managing to provide border inspections but operations are slower than usual. He noted that many countries are accepting phytosanitary certificates electronically and the challenge would be how to ensure it. He concluded that there is no foreseeable date to return to normal operations and that most face-to-face meeting and activities have been postponed, including IYPH initiatives.

2.9. Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA)

- [12] Mr Efraín MEDINA GUERRA (OIRSA representative) informed participant that all borders are closed and mobility restrictions are in place. He reported that OIRSA is accomplishing its work and mission, especially in assisting members to provide quarantine services such as in airports, seaports, laboratories and offices, where the risk of infections is higher. He reported that teleworking has been implemented where possible throughout the region while the elaboration of guidelines were communicated to all members as well as a public awareness campaign on COVID-19 spread prevention in agricultural activities. He also reported on several virtual sessions with their members, including ones with national directors with the objective to share updates and identify phytosanitary priority activities in the region such as certification, surveillance, fruit flies and TR4 during the current crisis. He added that FAO and the Mesoamerican region signed a Memorandum of Understanding and biosecurity directives.

2.10. Pacific Plant Protection Organization (PPPO)

- [13] Mr Visoni TIMOTE (PPPO representative) informed participants that PPPO countries have been facing challenging times due to the border closure, causing a great impact on tourism, which is the primary industry in this region. He reported that export costs increased due to the decrease of the volume of exports and food security is a major concern for the small island countries. A significant challenge was the very limited internet bandwidth, which made it difficult to conduct virtual activities. The priority was shifting to other SPS issues to concentrate on the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. He shared that PPPO is currently working to help implement the ePhyto solution with some PPPO members. He noted that the Fall Armyworm is now present in Australia and Papua New Guinea and working on they are preparing for responses to possible further outbreaks in the region. Most face-to face meetings and IYPH events in the region have been postponed.

3. Update from IPPC Secretariat on the Impact of COVID-19 in Plant Health at Global Level

3.1. Governance and strategy

- [14] The IPPC Secretariat presented a brief update on the IPPC Governance and Strategy response to COVID-19 pandemic, informing participants that the CPM Bureau has decided to hold virtual meetings on a monthly basis and financial committee would meet at least once in the first semester of 2020. He noted some crucial

decisions: postponement of CPM-15, SPG and TC-RPPO. He added that the Secretariat was studying the possible scope of decision-making by CPM Bureau.

3.2. Standard Setting

- [15] The IPPC Secretariat updated participants on the current Standard Setting work. The Standards Committee (SC) is functioning successfully through the adoption of online tools: Online Commenting System (OCS), e-decision. He informed that it was agreed not to stop the draft ISPM review by the SC for *focused revision of ISPM 12 (Phytosanitary certificates) in relation to re-export (2015-011)*, *Audit in the phytosanitary context (2015-014)* and *draft 2020 amendments to ISPM 5 (Glossary of phytosanitary terms) (1994-001)* toward to the first consultation. Some discussions could be postponed to November meeting and work plan will be reviewed. SC-7 was cancelled as there was no draft ISPMs under review for the SC-7. He noted that there is a need to prepare in case SC November is cancelled.

3.3. Implementation and Facilitation

- [16] The IPPC Secretariat informed that the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) May meeting has been cancelled and there would be virtual sessions to discuss specific issues, noting that RPPOs could also be updated by their representative to the IC. The Secretariat is taking this time to rethink what they can do and how to build better capacity without holding face-to-face meetings and workshops. For the IPPC Regional Workshops, they are considering the possibility to hold them virtually but there are several issues to be addressed. A Phytosanitary Systems page on the IPP is under development and it is hoped that this will provide NPPOs more user friendly access to the standards and other relevant documents organized by subject matter.

3.4. International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) delivery

- [17] The IPPC Secretariat introduced the good start of the IYPH on 2 December 2019 by the official launch event but COVID-19 has affected the 2020 plans heavily. The Secretariat is rescheduling the major events planned for the year. The CPM-15, High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), World Food Day 2020, COP-15 and International Plant Health Conference (IPHC) in Helsinki were postponed. He added other events were also postponed or cancelled and the IYPH closing ceremony was proposed on the last day of the International Plant Health Conference. IYPH Communication are moving towards digital forms.

3.5. Progress in ePhyto extension

- [18] The IPPC Secretariat updated participants on ePhyto work. Key updates included that Argentina and Chile no longer exchange paper certificates, so they have fully implemented electronic exchange between the two countries. EU except for Netherlands will be receiving and producing ePhytos going through their TRACES systems. The team has been doing some tele-training with Guatemala and Uganda. Tunisia has registered for the system and will be launching training for them, inviting other relevant countries in the region through the RPPO. Dominica and Costa Rica have been engaging in testing. He noted that it would be good that a country active on IYPH was also active on other IPPC initiatives. He added that the team was working to try to get the video training available.

4. Discussion on Mitigation of COVID-19 Impacts

4.1. Regional and global mitigation measures needed to respond to the impact of COVID-19 in plant health

4.2. Inputs from RPPOs on potential arrangements for 2020 IPPC Regional Workshops

[19] Participants discussed potential mitigation measures to respond to the impact of COVID-19. Some RPPO representatives noted it is still uncertain whether physical meetings would be possible and it is difficult to plan for the IPPC Regional Workshops at this stage due to travel restrictions in many countries. They highlighted that interactions among countries, even virtual, would be useful and important in order to discuss draft ISPMs or share ideas.

[20] One RPPO representative noted that activities need to occur at the international level to proceed such as consultation of draft standards, and suggested the group meet to identify critical issues to cover the IPPC Regional Workshops (RWs) with the assistance from the IPPC Secretariat and find ways to reach all those countries that benefit from RWs. IPPC Secretary agreed to explore how RWs could be managed during this crisis. It was agreed that RPPOs would collect some ideas and conduct some analysis of their regions situations and come with suggestions to discuss it the next meeting.

4.3. The way forward for a better coordination and communication in between the IPPC Secretariat, RPPOs and NPPOs

[21] IPPC Secretary stressed the importance of discussing cooperation among the IPPC Secretariat and RPPOs. An RPPO representative highlighted that it would be very beneficial if dates for IPPC meetings were communicated by the IPPC Secretariat to RPPOs timely so that regional activities would be set accordingly. He added that it is important that RPPOs receive emails from the Secretariat including all kind of calls to work effectively. IPPC Secretary proposed this type of meeting is held virtually once a month during this crisis in order to share some ideas.

5. Any Other Business

[22] No other items were added.

6. Close of the Meeting

[23] IPPC Secretary closed the meeting.

APPENDIX 1: AGENDA

Agenda Item	Document No.	Presenter
1.	Opening of the Meeting	Chaired and opened by Mr Jingyuan Xia
2.	Update from RPPOs on the Impact of COVID-19 in their Regions (maximum 5 minutes each)	
2.1	APPPC	Mr Yubak Dhoj GC
2.2	CAHFSA	Ms Juliet Goldsmith
2.3	CAN	Mr Camilo Beltran Montoya
2.4	COSAVE	Mr. César De La Cruz/ Mr James Pazo
2.5	EPPO	Mr Nico Horn
2.6	IAPSC	Mr Jean-Gérard Mézui M'ella
2.7	NAPPO	Ms Stephanie Bloem
2.8	NEPPO	Mr Mekki Chouibani
2.9	OIRSA	Mr Efraín Medina Guerra
2.10	PPPO	Mr Visoni Timote
3.	Update from IPPC Secretariat on the Impact of COVID-19 in IPPC work programme	
3.1	Governance and strategy	Mr Arop Deng
3.2	Standards setting	Mr Avetik Nersisyan
3.3	Implementation and Facilitation	Mr Brent Larson
3.4	IYPH delivery	Mr Mirko Montuori
3.5	ePhyto extension	Mr Craig Fedchock
4.	Discussion on Mitigation of COVID-19 Impacts	
4.1	Regional and global mitigation measures needed to respond to the impact of COVID-19 in plant health	All
4.2	Inputs from RPPOs on potential arrangements for 2020 IPPC Regional Workshops	All
4.3	The way forward for a better coordination and communication in between the IPPC Secretariat, RPPOs and NPPOs	All
5.	Any Other Business	IPPC Secretariat
6.	Close of the Meeting	IPPC Secretariat

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANTS LIST

Region/ Role	Name, mailing, address, telephone	Email address
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Observer (CAN)	Mr Jaime Cardenas, Member of the Andean plant health committee	
Observer (CAN)	Mr Ramón Canizares General Secretariat of CAN	
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