**Concept note for the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030 development agenda:**

**Management of e-Commerce and postal and courier pathways**

*(Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat)*

**1. Introduction**

1. The IPPC Strategic Framework (SF) 2020–2030[[1]](#footnote-1) identifies new priority work areas that are aligned to the IPPC’s vision, mission and strategic objectives. The management of e-Commerce and the postal and courier pathways has been identified as one of eight development agenda items in the SF.
2. The pace of digital transformation of economies and businesses has accelerated and become a key driver of global trade. Furthermore, mobile technology, social media and electronic payment systems have revolutionized the way businesses and consumers are buying, selling and trading goods. Growth in use of mobile apps and digital payments has made e-Commerce transactions easy and has resulted in a huge increase in business-to-consumer (B2C) and consumer-to-consumer (C2C) transactions. The increased role of consumers in individual transactions has resulted in a phenomenal growth in the number of smaller consignments crossing borders. Due to the sheer quantity of these smaller shipments, many parcels may bypass normal phytosanitary controls border inspections, thereby dramatically increasing the risk of introducing and spreading pests into new areas.
3. National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) and Regional Plant Protection Organizations (RPPOs) are encouraged to identify e-Commerce stakeholders based within their countries and regions, as well as, products of concern that might be purchased via e-Commerce and to explore options for ensuring these goods comply with national phytosanitary regulations. This requires increased awareness about phytosanitary requirements among e-Commerce stakeholders and improved collaboration, monitoring and enforcement across the pathways known for transporting those goods, particularly postal and express delivery services. Phytosanitary organizations around the world also need efficient tools and procedures to screen courier mail and packages to deal with the increased volume. Cooperation with other organizations such as the World Customs Organization (WCO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Trade Organization (WTO), Codex and OIE may help to develop internationally agreed procedures for e-Commerce which should help NPPOs manage the associated phytosanitary risks.

**2. Background**

1. An Implementation Review and Support System (IRSS) study was carried out in 2012 to evaluate potential phytosanitary risks associated with e-Commerce (e.g. types of products consignment quantities, shipping coverage, warnings on shipping requirements). This desk study explored the range of products offered for sale over the internet and highlighted some potential phytosanitary risks.
2. CPM-9 (2014) adopted R-05: Recommendation on: Internet trade (e-Commerce) in plants and other regulated articles[[2]](#footnote-2).
3. CPM-12 (2017) held a special topics[[3]](#footnote-3) session on the subject of e-Commerce.
4. CPM-14 (2019) noted the e-Commerce action plan within the *Five year investment plan of the IPPC Secretariat – in relation to the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030[[4]](#footnote-4)*, endorsed the e-Commerce proposed project work plan and budget[[5]](#footnote-5) that were presented, and considered the extra-budgetary resources required to implement the project work plan.
5. CPM-14 (2019) also agreed that the two topics related to e-Commerce (2018-014 and 2018-021) that were submitted during the 2018 Call for Topics be added to the *List of Topics for Standards[[6]](#footnote-6)*.
6. CPM Bureau in October 2019 determined that the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) would provide oversight of e-Commerce activities, with input from the Standards Committee (SC).

**3. Desired 2030 Outcome** *(as identified in the SF)*

1. *A coordinated international effort has substantially reduced the spread of pests and pest host material sold through e-commence and distributed through mail and courier pathways. Volumes of high risk plant material purchased online in small quantities and shipped via courier pathways is sourced from plant health export programs, and compliance is tracked and enforced in collaboration with other border agencies, the international postal services and courier services.*

**4. e-Commerce programme**

1. The IPPC Secretariat’s 3-year e-Commerce work plan was approved by the IC during their November 2019 meeting[[7]](#footnote-7). The key outputs/results of the IPPC Secretariat e-Commerce work plan, include:

* Establishing an informal network of e-Commerce experts
* Strengthening collaboration between the IPPC Secretariat and the World Customs Organization (WCO) and other key international organizations.
* Gathering existing information and technical resources relevant to the IPPC community on the subject of e-Commerce and making these resources available on the IPPC website.
* Developing a new IPPC Guide on e-Commerce (2017-039).

**5. Ongoing activities**

1. **An informal network of e-Commerce experts:** A virtual network of e-Commerce experts was formed and an e-Forum for discussion was launched in February 2020. The Secretariats of the WCO, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Universal Postal Union (UPU), Standards Trade and Development Facility (STDF), Codex and OIE have all nominated representatives to participate in the IPPC e-Commerce network, as well, experts from a number of NPPOs and RPPOs and some industry stakeholders have also joined this network. The network is intended to enhance collaboration among the participants, facilitate the exchange of information about e-Commerce initiatives and issues, and identify opportunities for addressing the phytosanitary risks associated with cross-border e-Commerce.
2. **Strengthened collaboration with other key international organizations:** In 2018, the IPPC Secretariat participated actively in the WCO e-Commerce working group that developed the WCO’s *Framework of Standards on cross-border e-Commerce* and Technical Specifications, which recognizes the phytosanitary risks associated with e-Commerce and provides for close collaboration between Customs and other relevant government agencies. In March 2019, the IPPC and World Customs Organization (WCO) Secretariats signed a joint workplan[[8]](#footnote-8), which includes improved cooperation on e-Commerce. In September 2019, the IPPC Secretariat met with a WCO Technical Officer responsible for e-Commerce to exchange information and enhance collaboration between the IPPC Secretariat and the WCO. In February 2020 the IPPC Secretariat participated in the WCO Working group on e-Commerce. The WCO submitted a written report for CPM-15 (2020)[[9]](#footnote-9) describing the collaboration between the WCO and IPPC Secretariats and suggesting additional areas for collaboration.
3. **Existing phytosanitary technical resources are shared with the IPPC community:** A dedicated webpage on e-Commerce[[10]](#footnote-10) was launched on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) in February 2020 to present relevant information and resources.. A call for the submission of phytosanitary technical resources relevant to e-Commerce was issued in 2020. Submitted resources will be reviewed by the IC and posted to the IPP, as per the established process for contributed resources.
4. **IPPC e-Commerce Guide for plants, plant products and other regulated articles (2017-039):** The purpose of this Guide is to provide guidance to reduce the pest risks associated with cross-border e-Commerce and to increase awareness among IPPC contracting parties, e-Commerce stakeholders (particularly postal operators, express carriers, customs administrations, freight forwarders, etc.) and different international organizations about the potential pest risks associated with e-Commerce of plants, plant products and other regulated articles. The Outline of the Guide was distributed for NPPO and RPPO consultation in 2020. A working group (WG) will be established and tasked with developing the guide.

**6. Possible future activities**

1. **Increased collaboration with WCO:** In addition to participating in the WCO permanent technical committee (PTC) meetings, the IPPC Secretariat could explore the options for a joint IPPC-WCO guidance or policy paper on e-Commerce or collaboration related to awareness raising and capacity building about the phytosanitary risks associated with e-Commerce.
2. **Increased collaboration with WTO:** e-Commerce discussions at the WTO are primarily being carried out under a multilateral Work Programme on e-commerce. A group of WTO members has also been discussing potential rules on e-commerce under a Joint Statement Initiative since 2017. The IPPC Secretariat could investigate the possibility of delivering a side session to WTO countries who are part of this Initiative, and could explore doing this in collaboration with Codex and OIE, in order to raise awareness about plant, animal and human health in the context of e-Commerce trade.
3. **Increased collaboration with Universal Postal Union (UPU) and other key international organizations:** The IPPC Secretariat could explore opportunities for increased collaboration with UPU and other international organizations. This might include the development of a joint inter-agency toolkit that supports a multidisciplinary and integrated approach across NPPOs, Customs and other relevant government agencies to facilitate safe trade via e-Commerce transactions.
4. **Communication and Advocacy:** Development of other information material, e.g. videos, info-graphics, e-learnings, news items and brochures or factsheets could be used to raise awareness about the phytosanitary risk associated with e-Commerce and inform contracting parties of relevant IPPC activities, and provide easy-to-understand resources in multiple languages.
5. **Monitoring and evaluation (short and medium-term studies):** A proposal for a short-term desk study to evaluate whether the potential phytosanitary risks associated with e-Commerce have changed since the 2012 IRSS study could be submitted to the IC Sub-group on IRSS. Such a study would provide baseline data that can be used to evaluate the e-Commerce programme at later stages. A medium-term evaluation could also be proposed, in order to assess the availability, accessibility and use of the Guide and other e-Commerce resources once they are available on the IPP and to identify gaps and any additional supplemental materials needed. It could also assess the extent that each component / output of the e-Commerce programme contributes to promote information and knowledge sharing, support capacity development and raise awareness among NPPO, other border agencies and e-Commerce vendors, consumers and other stakeholders.
6. **Monitoring and evaluation (long-term study):** A long-term desk study would evaluate whether the Desired 2030 Outcome as identified in the SF has been achieved by 2030.

**7. Budget considerations**

1. IPPC Secretariat’s budget for the e-Commerce programme (Table A) : CPM-14 (2019) endorsed the following e-Commerce budget.[[11]](#footnote-11) The budget discusses only the first 5 years of the 10 year lifespan of the Strategic Framework and should be re-visited once a detailed set of e-Commerce activities are agreed.

| 1. Table A: Expenditures for the e-Commerce programme over the next five years (endorsed by CPM-14 (2019)) | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Item | 1. Proposed Expenditure (USD) | | | | |
| 1. Year 1 | 1. Year 2 | 1. Year 3 | 1. Year 4 | 1. Year 5 |
| 1. e-Commerce Coordinator | 1. 70,000 | 1. 70,000 | 1. 50,000 | 1. 50,000 | 1. 30,000 |
| 1. Member participation | 1. Own cost | 1. Own cost | 1. Own cost | 1. Own cost | 1. Own cost |
| 1. Meeting – venue, catering, logistics support\* | 1. 20,000 | 1. 25,000 | 1. 12,000 | 1. 12,000 | 1. 12,000 |
| 1. Travel assistance\*\* | 1. 5,000 | 1. 5,000 | 1. 5,000 | 1. 5,000 | 1. 5,000 |
| 1. Publications – design, editing and publishing resource materials | 1. 25,000 | 1. 20,000 | 1. 3,000 | 1. 3,000 | 1. 3,000 |
| 1. Secretariat resources: convene governance meetings; WCO etc. liaison; website; training and awareness | 1. 30,000 | 1. 30,000 | 1. 10,000 | 1. 10,000 | 1. 20,000\*\*\* |
| 1. Total | 1. 150 K | 1. 150 K | 1. 80 K | 1. 80 K | 1. 70 K |
| 1. Personnel (estimated FTE) | 1. 1.3 | 1. 1.3 | 1. 0.7 | 1. 0.7 | 1. 0.5 |
| 1. Cumulative total | 1. 150,000 | 1. 300,000 | 1. 380,000 | 1. 460,000 | 1. 530,000 |

\* Subject to IPPC Criteria and to be used only to support eligible Task Force members

\*\* Governance meetings may be convened virtually in lieu of face to face

\*\*\* IPPC staff and costs to assess impact and identify post-implementation issues

1. In 2019 Canada committed to an in-kind contribution of a staff member with a travel budget to work with the IPPC Secretariat for two years (2019-05 to 2021-04) as the e-Commerce Coordinator. In 2020, Canada provided a further financial contribution of USD 60,789 to advance the e-Commerce programme.
2. The estimated budget does not consider that, as a result of current travel restrictions, some activities may be carried out virtually, rather than with face-to-face meetings. Particularly in Year 1 and 2, activities such as the development of the guide and other resources, governance meetings and liaison with WCO and other international organizations are expected to be virtual.
3. The SPG is invited to:
4. *Note* the ongoing and proposed activitiesrelated to the e-Commerce programme.
5. *Request* the IPPC Secretariat to review the e-Commerce programme budget in light of COVID-19 and the funding received, and recommend whether additional co-funding arrangements are needed.

1. Link to the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030, as endorsed by CPM-14 (2019) and presented in CPM-15 document: CPM 2020/08: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/88125/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CPM R-05: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/84232/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 2017 CPM Special Topic: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/governance/cpm/scientific-sessions-during-commission-phytosanitary-measures/2017-e-commerce-internet-trade-of-plants/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Five year investment plan of the IPPC Secretariat – in relation to the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030 (CPM 2019/30): <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/86993/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. IPPC e-Commerce proposed project work plan and budget (CPM 2019/16): <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/86924/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. List of Topics for Standards: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/standards-setting/list-topics-ippc-standards/list> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Report\_2019\_Nov\_IC (Appendix 6, page 49): <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/88046/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Joint work plan between the WCO and IPPC Secretariats: <https://www.ippc.int/en/partners/wco/publications/2019/03/joint-work-plan-between-the-wco-and-the-ippc-secretarait/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. World Customs Organization overview: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/88126/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. IPP webpage on e-Commerce: https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/capacity-development/e-commerce/ [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. IPPC e-Commerce proposed project work plan and budget (CPM 2019/16) : <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/86924/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)