The need for a renewed IPPC communications strategy

1. Background and current situation on IPPC communications

1. Providing effective communications is recognized as a core activity in the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030. If used effectively, communications can ensure that all stakeholders are informed and engaged regarding the IPPC’s goals, plans, activities, successes, challenges, and needs, etc., and this outcome will in itself further support the IPPC’s purpose and responsibility of securing common and effective action to prevent the spread and introduction of plant pests.
2. Effective communications require clear objectives, impactful messages, identified audiences with tailored messaging approaches, and the use of appropriate channels. This is maximized by having a communications strategy.
3. From 2013 to 2018, the IPPC benefited from a dedicated [IPPC communications strategy](https://www.ippc.int/static/media/uploads/ippc_communicationsstrategy_cpm8_2013.pdf)**[[1]](#footnote-1)**, supported by relevant guidance provided by the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) and the Strategic Planning Group (SPG)[[2]](#footnote-2). However, since the expiry of this communications strategy in 2018, it is essential that it be refreshed in order that a coordinated, coherent and effective approach to communications can continue to be pursued, particularly in light of the ongoing saturation of available communications channels with messages that must all compete for the limited attention available.
4. In conjunction with the former IPPC communications strategy, the IPPC Secretariat had oriented communications around annual themes to promote specific aspects of the IPPC mandate on an annual basis. For the period 2016–2020, the IPPC work programme was focused on the following themes:
   * [2016 Plant Health and Food Security](https://www.ippc.int/en/themes/food-security/)
   * [2017 Plant Health and Trade Facilitation](https://www.ippc.int/en/themes/trade-facilitation/)
   * [2018 Plant Health and Environmental Protection](https://www.ippc.int/en/themes/environment-protection/)
   * [2019 Plant Health and Capacity Development](https://www.ippc.int/en/themes/capacity-development/)
   * 2020 International Year of Plant Health (IYPH).
5. Failure to ensure that the IPPC develops and implements a robust and effective communications strategy will result in the absence of effective coordination and use of communications, impeding advancement of the IPPC’s purpose and responsibility.
6. At the 2019 SPG meeting, participants recommended establishing a Communications Advisory Group to develop an IPPC communications strategy that would build on experiences with the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) 2020[[3]](#footnote-3). The next SPG meeting to benefit from communications experiences during the IYPH.
7. The global COVID-19 pandemic poses many communications challenges and has significantly curtailed expected IYPH activities by the IPPC, RPPOs, NPPOs and contracting parties, further emphasizing the need for a strong, effective communications strategy. Key IYPH activities were extended to 1st July, 2021, providing additional opportunity to promote the importance of plant health and actions to protect it, and additional insights for the development of a communications strategy for 2021 and beyond. SPG discussion and recommendations regarding an effective communications strategy can also benefit from being informed by the impact on IPPC activities resulting from the COVID-19 situation.

2. Proposed IPPC communications objectives for a refreshed communications strategy

1. The proposed objectives of the refreshed IPPC communications strategy are:
2. Proactively and effectively communicate the objectives of the Convention to a wide audience by increasing global awareness of the IPPC and its roles, objectives and activities. These include key aspects of the IPPC’s Strategic Framework, emphasizing the three strategic objectives of trade facilitation, enhancing food security and agricultural productivity, and protecting the environment from plant pests. This would include advocacy on key related subjects.
3. Strengthen the IPPC’s standing as the sole international plant health standard setting organization with the objective of facilitating the safe trade of plants and plant products.
4. Improve the implementation of International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) by coordinating communications among contracting parties, RPPOs and NPPOs on focused IPPC initiatives.
5. Support resource mobilization and sustainable funding for the IPPC programme by providing targeted communications and promotional materials relating to IPPC activities, and supporting the development of targeted messages for different audiences.
6. The communications strategy must be adaptable to ensure that unforeseen situations (such as major pest outbreaks, environmental disasters, etc.) can quickly be responded to or taken into account while maintaining a communications approach that is consistent with the purpose and role of the IPPC. This would complement any separate/dedicated FAO crisis channel.

3. Proposed target audiences

1. Proposed target audiences include:

* FAO stakeholders (the “IPPC community”): contracting parties, NPPOs, RPPOs, governments, FAO.
* External stakeholders: relevant partners, including United Nations Organizations (UNO), Inter-governmental Organizations (IGOs) and Non-State Actors (NSA). NSA include Academia and Research Organizations (AROs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Private Sector (PSO); parliamentarians, relevant media, donors and potential donors,.
* The general public.

4. Proposed channels

1. Communications should be conducted via relevant channels for reaching specific audiences:

* primarily through the IPPC website, IPPC social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube), the FAO website.
* Also through relevant social media channels, publications, traditional media, and scientific publications, as appropriate.

5. Implementation Framework

1. An implementation framework should be included in the communications strategy and be based on identifying broad annual themes for the period 2021–2025, noting the need for adaptability in the face of continued uncertainty. UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that may offer annual themes are:

* 2021: Contribution of Plant Health to SDGs 2 (Zero Hunger)
* 2022: Contribution of Plant Health to SDGs 8 and 17 (Economic Growth and Partnerships for the Goals - Safe Trade)
* 2023: Contribution of Plant Health to SDG 15 (Life on land – Protection of biodiversity)
* 2024: Contribution of Plant Health to SDG 13 (Climate Action)
* 2025: Contribution of Plant Health to SDG 1 (No Poverty)

1. To deliver the objectives and achieve the expected impact, the following actions are suggested:
2. A Communications Advisory Group (CAG) could be established, drawing its members from the IPPC Secretariat, FAO’s communications group, and communications leads from among the IPPC’s contracting parties (e.g., through regional representation and /or SPG volunteers).
3. This CAG would be responsible to develop, maintain, adapt, implement and evaluate the refreshed communications strategy.

6. Recommendations

1. The SPG is invited to:
2. *Recommend* to the CPM to agree to develop and implement an IPPC Communications Strategy.
3. *Identify* any key components that should be included in an IPPC Communications Strategy.
4. *Recommend* target audiences for IPPC communications.
5. *Recommend* to the CPM to establish an IPPC Communications Advisory Group tasked of developing and supporting the implementation and monitoring of the new IPPC communication strategy.

1. Ref. IPPC Communications Strategy 2013-2018: <https://www.ippc.int/static/media/uploads/ippc_communicationsstrategy_cpm8_2013.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ref. SPG 2015 meeting report: <https://www.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2015/11/Report_SPG_2015_Oct_2015-11-09.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ref. SPG 2019 meeting report: <https://www.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2020/01/SPG_2019_Oct_Report_2020-01-14.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)