



Minutes of the Sea Containers Task Force Virtual Meeting

Thursday, 22 October, 14:00 – 16:00 (CET)

Participants:

- Mr Greg WOLFF (CPM Bureau representative, the Chair of the meeting)
- Ms Stephanie BLOEM (IC Lead)
- Ms Marina ZLOTINA (SC representative)
- Ms Guanghao GU (NPPO of China)
- Mr Rama KARRI (NPPO of Australia)
- Ms Wendolyn BELTZ (NPPO of USA)
- Mr Frederick MAKATHIMA (NPPO of Kenya)
- Ms Sina WAGHORN (RPPOs representative)
- Mr Bingbing SONG (IMO representative)
- Ms Özlem SOYSANLI (WCO representative)
- Mr Nicolaas (Nico) Maria HORN (Expert from ex-SC EWG for sea containers)
- Mr Lars KJAER (Observer from WSC)
- Shane SELA (Observer from WB)
- Mr James Hookham (Observer from GSF)
- Ms Wendy ASBIL (Observer from Canadian NPPO)
- Mr John Hedley (Observer)
- Ms Ketevan LOMSADZE (IPPC Secretariat lead for the SCTF)
- Mr Brent LARSON (Lead of the Implementation Facilitation Unit of the IPPC Secretariat)
- Mr Artur Shamilov (future IPPC Secretariat lead for the SCTF, Standards Setting Unit)

[1] Mr Jiang MINDE (Observer from Chinese Industry) and Mr Uffe ERNST-FREDERIKSEN were absent due to an internet connection problem and unavailability, respectively.

Agenda

- Key updates from SCTF participants relevant to the work of the SCTF in the next 12 months (15 mins)
- Plans for SCTF work for next 12 months (90 mins)
- Next steps, plans for next meeting (15 mins)

Opening

[2] The meeting was opened by Mr Greg WOLFF, CPM Bureau representative to the SCTF and the Chair of the meeting. He mentioned that due to COVID 19 the SCTF would not have an opportunity to convene their face-to-face meeting initially planned for December 2020 and recalled that the SCTF mandate was extended for an additional year as per CPM Bureau July virtual meeting decision. He thanked the Secretariat for the support provided to the SCTF. He highlighted the need to capture what has been delivered and agree on the plan for the future activities. For this reason, a discussion on the SCTF implementation status paper (prepared by the Secretariat) was proposed.

[3] The Chair informed on the upcoming changes in the IPPC Secretariat that would impact SCTF operations: Ketevan, the current IPPC Secretariat lead for the SCTF is resigning her post and the lead will be taken over by Mr Artur Shamilov, the Standards Setting Unit staff member.

Discussion

Key updates from participants

- [4] IPPC Secretariat – Ketevan briefed the SCTF on the collaboration with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and highlighted the fourth round¹ of consultation of the IMO Correspondence Group relative to cleanliness and pest management issues in the IMO inspection programmes.
- [5] She also highlighted the purpose/intent of the SCTF Implementation status paper. Because the SCTF has only one year left to develop CPM recommendations, it was important to compile information on gaps, challenges, successes and future activities of the SCTF in one document to assist the SCTF in developing CPM recommendations by the end of 2021. Ketevan invited the SCTF to comment on the paper and propose suggestions to improve its format, structure and content.
- [6] Representative from the NPPO of USA – Wendy briefed the SCTF on activities undertaken within the framework of the North American Sea Container Initiative (NASCI) in collaboration with the World Bank (WB) and North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO). The NASCI has been working on the development of an industry-focused workshop, initially planned for May 2020, but postponed due to COVID 19. The workshop, most probably, will be rescheduled for either summer or fall of 2021 depending on COVID 19 developments. Instead of the workshop NASCI is organizing webinars for small different industry groups to better understand roles and responsibilities of, and existing packing processes, parties in the supply chain to be able to develop a more focused Agenda for the workshop, as well as to propose improved procedures for the management of risks associated with the movement of sea containers. The webinars planned for 12 November will involve the Global Shippers Forum (GSF) and the International Cargo Handling Association (ICHCA). Wendy informed that the NPPO of Mexico has joined NASCI making it a true North American initiative. The NAPPO annual meeting in 2020 discussed NASCI regional issues. It is hoped that the outcomes of NASCI initiatives can inform the SCTF work and its deliverables.
- [7] IC Lead for the SCTF – Stephanie highlighted the SCTF recorded presentation that was used to deliver the SCTF update during 2020 IPPC regional workshops. The objective of the presentation was to raise awareness of NPPOs on SCTF activities and request national actions to support improved management of the risks associated with the movement of sea containers and their cargoes. The presentation was prepared by the Secretariat in collaboration with the SCTF, translated into all FAO languages, recorded² and shared with all FAO regions.
- [8] SCTF members commented that this recorded presentation could be used as outreach material for different stakeholders/meetings.
- [9] World Shipping Council (WSC) – Lars informed on CTU Code related publications developed by industry. The Quick Guide³ includes a Checklist⁴ of actions and responsibilities for guidance to those responsible for the packing of cargoes in freight containers, the Quick Guide is available free, to all interested stakeholders in English and Simplified Chinese. Stephanie kindly offered the assistance of NAPPO in producing a Spanish version. The roll-out of these publications resulted in numerous press releases around the world, although only a few highlighted contamination issues. Therefore, an ongoing and future challenge is improved how to ensure that the pest risks associated with the movement of sea containers and their cargoes are communicated to and, in particular, acted upon by all stakeholders according to their roles in the supply chain. Greg noted that the phytosanitary community was hoping

¹ The 3rd was just completed, and the Coordinator of the CG has now launched the 4th round with a deadline for comments of March 3, 2021.

² Update on the SCTF activities to 2020 IPPC RWs - <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/88613/>

³ Quick Guide to the CTU Code and the Container Packing Checklist - https://www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/CTU_Code_Guide_Oct_2020_WEB.pdf

⁴ Container packing checklist - https://www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/CTU_Code_Checklist_WEB.pdf

to raise awareness during the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH), however plans have been impeded by the COVID 19 pandemic. There is a global trend to highlight the negative impact of pests in international trade from the standpoint of their presence causing delays in the movement of goods, rather than highlighting their negative impact on plant health. If both negative impacts were communicated together, it would improve communication of these negative effects for plant health and for commerce.

[10] It was mentioned that future outreach efforts should target not only large industry groups but also small players along the sea containers supply chain.

[11] Representative from the Chinese NPPO – Gu informed on the activities delivered by the Chinese NPPO during 2020. Close connections with industry were established and the IPPC cleanliness factsheet was published in Chinese. Work on the development of the following three national standards was completed:

- Code of practice for the plant quarantine of import freight containers;
- Code of practice for the plant quarantine of exit containers;
- Guidelines for the establishment of plant quarantine system in entry and exit container depot.

[12] She indicated that these standards might provide a basis for the formulation of an international standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM).

[13] The SCTF:

- Noted updates;
- Agreed that the WSF would provide the press articles (Quick Guide and Checklist) developed by the industry.

I. Plans for SCTF work for the next 12 months

[14] The Chair proposed discussion of the SCTF implementation status paper to understand where the SCTF was with implementation of tasks and to plan for future activities.

1.1. Monitoring uptake of CTU Code through industry reporting and NPPO monitoring

[15] NPPOs surveys are still challenging, especially because of COVID 19. Gu mentioned that it is challenging to measure the impact of the CTU Code uptake as not many NPPOs are in a position to conduct surveys, also because industry reports on survey findings are not available to NPPOs and, finally, because baseline data to measure the impact of the CTU Code uptake does not exist.

[16] Frederik reported that Kenya is conducting container surveys albeit at a reduced level due to lack of resources due to COVID 19. Kenya had hoped to raise awareness of the risks associated with sea containers at the International Phytosanitary Conference attended by many contracting parties (CPs) to the Convention, but the conference got postponed.

[17] Sina, informed that New Zealand continues conducting surveys at the same level although at a slower pace. They hope that data will be available by the next SCTF face-to-face meeting.

[18] Rama, the representative of the Australian NPPO, once again highlighted concerns on how data, even if available, could support the measurement of the uptake of the CTU code in the absence of baseline data. The issue of deleting of some fields from the inspection template of the Guidelines on Sea Container Surveys for NPPOs (to be shared with the IPPC Secretariat by NPPOs conducting surveys) was raised. It might help improve reporting while protecting NPPOs from sharing sensitive data. Shane, the representative of the World Bank (WB), thought that even though not having baseline data is a gap, the information gathered through NPPOs surveys could assist with the analysis of pests - pathway associations to enable the SCTF to track pest risk trends in different climate and country specific conditions.

- [19] Sharing pest specific container contamination case studies to highlight the need for NPPO surveys and to raise awareness on the pest risks associated with the movement of sea containers is a future activity included in the SCTF implementation status paper. Some NPPOs noted that case studies have already been shared at several SCTF meetings and requested clarification on the Secretariat's expectation in this regard.
- [20] The Secretariat indicated that short catchy articles/case studies are needed for publication in the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) and to be made available to any NPPOs and RPPOs for increased awareness/communication purposes.
- [21] Different organizations and NPPOs use different communication approaches to raise awareness of pest risks. These could be adopted for SCTF awareness raising purposes. For instance, the NPPO of New Zealand publishes regular updates on what Biosecurity NZ is doing to keep their borders protected from pests and diseases. The information is shared with industry and other interested parties. Another good example is the website on wildlife trafficking⁵ that informs on illegal shipment interceptions. Irrespective of the approach decided by the SCTF, case studies and messages should target the broader stakeholder community. They could be published in container industry magazines as well.
- [22] Lars requested clarification on the action item entitled Development of an outline for a guide on - Development and implementation of legislation and regulations to manage phytosanitary risks on regulated articles for NPPOs, Guide (2018-008)". He thought that it was not realistic for the SCTF to participate in this work. He thought the SCTF should be focused on updating the CPM Recommendation on sea containers as it would be one of the main final deliverables of the SCTF work.
- [23] Ketevan inquired whether information on the container inspection pilot in North America Maersk implemented by MAERSK was available to SCTF members. Lars informed that the MAERSK pilot involved a container inspection organization that inspected 500 containers mainly in relation to dangerous goods. It was a single undertaking and the SCTF should expect any contamination related data coming out of this initiative.
- [24] The SCTF agreed:
- To investigate whether deleting of some fields from the inspection template of the Guidelines on Sea Container Surveys for NPPOs to be shared with the IPPC Secretariat might result in better reporting by NPPOs;
 - That NPPOs would develop and submit short articles on pest risks to be published on the IPP and shared with NPPOs, RPPOs, industry and different trade magazines;
 - To focus on updating the CPM Recommendation on sea containers for subsequent submission to CPM in 2022.

1.2. Development of a joint IPPC/IMO/industry protocol for data collection on contamination of sea containers - due by CPM-16 (2021)

- [25] Lars requested clarification, from those present at the first SCTF meeting, on this point. Ketevan indicated that this action is part of the Complementary Action Plan. Nico indicated that the development of joint protocol had the objective of facilitating the conduct of surveys through simplified and standardized data collection protocols by both NPPOs and industry. The IPPC Guidelines for surveys were developed for that purpose; however, it seems that industry does not have sufficient resources to conduct surveys.
- [26] Lars suggested the task be deleted as the development of a joint protocol cannot be achieved within the mandate and timeframe of the SCTF. Bingbing, the IMO representative to the SCTF, also indicated that the IMO would not be in a position to address the issue in one year.

⁵ Wildlife trafficking webpage - <https://www.fws.gov/international/wildlife-trafficking/>

[27] The SCTF agreed:

- To recommend following the deliberation of CCC's Correspondence Group and depending on its outcomes, further consider a collaboration with IMO for data collection on contamination of sea containers, after the SCTF is disbanded at a future stage;
- To reflect achievements, challenges and future steps previously identified for this action item in the appropriate parts of the SCTF implementation status table.

1.3.Verifying the efficacy of the CTU Code in ensuring the arrival of clean sea container through monitoring for pest contamination and freedom from soil by NPPOs

[28] This seems to be very similar to action item 1.1 Monitoring uptake/implementation of the CTU Code through industry reporting and NPPO monitoring. However, it seems that the SCTF will need to report on both actions to CPM as both are part of the Complementary Action Plan.

[29] Lars clarified that a future activity under this action item could be the development of an App to raise/increase awareness of the CTU Code. However, due to various reasons, the industry and UNECE will not be in position to develop the App as previously planned, therefore the IPPC community could consider taking on this task. The video developed by NASCI could be used as a basis for the development of the App. Shane indicated that if an App is developed then funds for its maintenance/upgrades should be considered as well.

[30] The SCTF agreed:

- That the development of an App would be beneficial for awareness raising, subject to the availability of funds.

1.4.Assisting NPPOs in managing pest risks associated with sea containers

[31] Shane indicated that the lack of national legislative framework, relevant infrastructure and NPPOs' capacity negatively affected the implementation of the WB's pilot to support selected CPs /NPPOs to conduct national surveys. The WB continues working with countries in the Pacific region on this. However, the progress is slow as the work is being delivered remotely due to COVID 19. The Secretariat inquired how the WB is dealing with the lack of national legislative framework. He clarified that the priority is in the development of infrastructure and capacity. Legislative issues will be dealt with at a later stage.

[32] Ketevan suggested to involve FAO legal in the development of a model national legislation or minimal provisions that could be included in national legislation that would provide NPPOs with a mandate to act accordingly.

[33] Brent invited the SCTF to develop and submit a proposal to the Secretariat for an IRSS study to collect best practices and relevant legislation frameworks available to be shared with CPs in the future.

[34] Bingbing briefed the SCTF on IMO activities. IMO meetings have been postponed due to COVID-19, however it is expected that IMO IPPC collaboration will continue. The 102nd session of the Maritime Safety Committee of the IMO will convene virtually, and the Secretariat will prepare and deliver a statement in support of IMO-IPPC collaboration. The Correspondence Group (CG) of the Subcommittee on Carriage of Cargoes and Containers (CCC) continues working on the revision of the inspection programmes for cargo transport units carrying dangerous goods (MSC.1/Circ.1442, as amended by MSC.1/Circ.1521). This revision includes issues related to inclusion of CTU Cleanliness among the selection criteria for CTU Inspection Programmes.

[35] Bingbing thanked the Secretariat for their contribution to the CG and urged continuation of this work. He indicated that once the CG finalizes their work and relevant decisions are made by the CCC and MSC, then decisions can be made on if and how to assist member countries to deal with container cleanliness issues, e.g. through IMO technical cooperation programmes.

[36] The SCTF agreed:

- To develop an interim or a final recommendation to the CPM on:
 - o clarifying legislative barriers preventing NPPOs on dealing with pest risks associated with sea containers and their cargoes; and
 - o suggesting possible solutions.
- To postpone discussions on the potential support of member countries on sea containers cleanliness issues through the IMO technical cooperation programmes until the CG finalizes its work and CCC and MSC make decisions on the inclusion of cleanliness issues in the IMO inspection programmes.

II. Increasing awareness of pest risks of sea containers

2.1. Publication by the IPPC Sect. of data from the Expert Working Group (EWG)

[37] A range of activities were identified for this action item in the implementation status paper. Several SCTF members highlighted that the main challenge is to find appropriate channels to reach the target audience. The messages should target all stakeholders along the supply chain. The NASCI WB regional workshop could assist and might map channels to be used in future communications with stakeholders. Even though the workshop is postponed, interim webinars with industry could be used to ask industry how to better reach them. Outcomes of these discussions would be reported back to the SCTF to take next relevant steps.

[38] John thought that contacting journalists known to be writing/publishing articles on sea container issues could help identify relevant journals to collaborate with.

[39] Greg informed that the CPM Bureau and Strategic Planning Group (SPG) are working on the development of a new IPPC communication strategy to include proposals on improved targeting of relevant stakeholders. SCTF communication issues could be reflected in that strategy.

[40] Stephanie informed the group that Mexico committed to develop an article on Khapra beetle in sea containers.

[41] The SCTF agreed:

- The NASCI would investigate ways to better target the industry during planned webinars;
- Stephanie to follow-up with Mexico on submittal of the article on Khapra beetle;
- The Secretariat would identify relevant journals to communicate information on sea containers pest risks and emerging pests.

2.2.A request from IPPC Sect. to countries that have data on contamination of sea containers

[42] The low level of response to the Questionnaire for Monitoring Sea Container Cleanliness issued to CPs in March 2019 was highlighted once again. The Secretariat thought that an IRSS study, if initiated, could assist with aggregation of relevant data and best practices available worldwide.

[43] The SCTF agreed:

- To further discuss the need for an IRSS study and, if agreed, submit a proposal to the IPPC Secretariat and IC IRSS Sub-group.

2.3. Call for and publication of pest risk management guidance material for sea containers

[44] Brent underscored that the Secretariat is very much dependent on publications and materials submitted by the NPPOs and RPPOs. He invited all to contact their organizations as well as other NPPOs to locate and share materials with the Secretariat. The process for submitting/providing contributed resources could be followed for these materials.

[45] The SCTF agreed:

- To look for risk management guidance material for sea containers and share with the Secretariat. Special attention paid to materials that are easily to translate into different languages.

2.4. Encourage NPPOs to inform industry on risks and possible international actions to manage pest risks associated with sea containers

[46] A range of activities already outlined under other action items could contribute to the delivery of this item. In addition, attention needs to be paid to collaboration with port authorities and establishment of collaboration with the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH). The IAPH is very active and was involved in the development of the CTU Code.

[47] The SCTF agreed:

- That Lars would provide the Secretariat with the contact details of the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH) to establish contact and initiate discussions on the possible collaboration⁶.

2.5. Ensuring that regulations developed/implemented by NPPOs are based on PRA and consistent with Recommendation CPM 10/2015_01 on Sea Containers

[48] The SCTF agreed that any phytosanitary measure should be justified based on a PRA as per provisions of the Convention. This is the way NPPOs should be operating. Doubts were expressed on how the SCTF could deal with this action. It was thought that the idea is related to existing concerns that measures required/emplaced by NPPOs should not unduly impede international trade as per IPPC Article VII 2.

[49] The SCTF agreed:

- To provide ideas to the Secretariat on how the SCTF could address this action.

III. Complementary actions

3.1. Provide information on pest risks of sea containers and their management

[50] This action item has similar content to previous action points and will be addressed through activities identified before, such as delivering communication/awareness-raising activities, NASCI NPPO-industry workshop on container logistics and related pest concerns, and promotion of cleanliness aspects of CTU Code to shippers/packers, among others.

3.2. Coordination with CPs, RPPOs, industry and other organizations

[51] The NPPOs reported that they were not in a position to move forward on a feasibility study for the potential inclusion of new fields to track contamination issues into the WCO Data Model. COVID 19 has impeded the work on how the concept of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) could be extended to cover the interests of all border agencies and possibly provide the basis for the mutual recognition of an AEO.

[52] The SCTF agreed that:

- The NPPOs of Australia and New Zealand would conduct national feasibility studies to identify ways forward on adding new fields to the WCO Data Model to potentially track contamination issues;

⁶ Secretariat will contact the managing director of IAPH, Dr. Patrick Verhoeven: patrick.verhoeven@iaphworldports.org

- The IPPC and WSO Secretariats would organize a meeting to discuss how to support this work on WCO Data Model IPPC Secretariat to discuss with WCO Secretariat to include phytosanitary aspects/criteria into global AEO framework.

3.3. Establish a mechanism for CPs to report to CPM on progress and achievements

[53] The CPM Bureau discussed adding sea containers as a standing agenda item to CPM. The final decision is pending.

[54] The SCTF agreed:

- To request to the CPM Bureau to add sea containers as a standing agenda item to CPM. The IPPC Secretariat will follow up on this.

3.4. Advice on updates to the CTU Code or any other instrument

[55] Bingbing highlighted that the open period for the revision of the CTU code depends on confirmation by the International Labor Organization, one of the co-sponsors of the Code. The final decision is expected in 2021. This provides the SCTF with time to internally discuss and propose amendments for amendments to the CTU Code with regards to contamination issues. Lars informed that one of the authors of the CTU Code initiated a draft revision of the CTU Code *inter alia* on the cleanliness aspects. He proposed that the SCTF should work on the revision of the CTU code be so that it would be ready to provide relevant contributions once the work is officially initiated.

[56] The SCTF agreed:

- That the Secretariat would contact the Secretariat of the UN European Economic Commission (UNECE) to find out if the revision of the CTU code has already been commissioned and report back to the SCTF. Based on feedback received from UNECE the timeframe for development of proposals to update the CTU Code by the SCTF will be agreed.

3.5. Update on activities to CPM, and final report for presentation to CPM in 2022

[57] This will be the final action of the SCTF.

[58] The SCTF agreed:

- To defer this discussion either to a face-to-face meeting, hopefully convened in 2021, or at during future virtual meetings.

Close of the meeting

[59] The Chair thanked the SCTF members for their participation and identified the following follow-up actions:

- Ketevan will prepare minutes of the virtual meeting;
- Ketevan will extract action items from the SCTF implementation status paper and share with SCTF members for further discussion and prioritization;
- Ketevan will update the SCTF implementation status paper as per meeting suggestions;
- The next SCTF virtual meeting will be scheduled in the next two months. The date is to be determined.

Appendix 1 – SCTF Implementation Status Table as updated after the meeting (shared as a separate document as an attachment to the email. Once agreed by the SCTF to be attached to the minutes).