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International  
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Convention

# Determination of pest status in an area

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International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

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INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR  
PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

**ISPM 8**

**Determination of pest status in an area**

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## Publication history

*This is not an official part of the standard*

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1995-05 CEPM-2 revised draft text and approved for consultation.

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1997-10 CEPM-4 revised draft text and approved for consultation.

1998 Sent for consultation.

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1998-11 ICPM-1 adopted standard.

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## Adoption

This standard was adopted by the First Session of the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures in November 1998. This first revision was adopted by the Fifteenth Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures in March 2021 as the present standard.

## INTRODUCTION

### Scope

This standard describes the use of pest records and other information to determine pest status in an area. Pest status categories are defined and a description of the use of pest status for pest reporting is provided.

This standard also provides guidance on the possible sources of uncertainty associated with information used to determine pest status.

### References

The present standard refers to ISPMs. ISPMs are available on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) at <https://www.ippc.int/core-activities/standards-setting/ispms>.

**IPPC Secretariat.** 1997. *International Plant Protection Convention*. Rome, IPPC Secretariat, FAO.

### Definitions

Definitions of phytosanitary terms used in this standard can be found in ISPM 5 (*Glossary of phytosanitary terms*).

### Outline of requirements

National plant protection organizations (NPPOs) use pest status for various activities, such as pest risk analysis, the establishment of and compliance with phytosanitary regulations, the establishment of lists of regulated pests, and the establishment and maintenance of pest free areas, areas of low pest prevalence, pest free places of production and pest free production sites.

Pest status is determined exclusively by the NPPO responsible for the area concerned and is categorized under “presence” or “absence”.

The quality of the reported information and the reliability and uncertainty of the data are important considerations to be taken into account by the NPPO when determining pest status in an area.

## BACKGROUND

Pest records and other information are used by NPPOs to determine the presence or absence of a pest in an area. The NPPOs of importing and exporting countries need information concerning the status of pests for pest risk analysis, the establishment of and compliance with phytosanitary regulations, the establishment and maintenance of pest free areas, areas of low pest prevalence, pest free places of production and pest free production sites, and other activities.

The purpose of this standard is to provide guidance on the determination of the pest status in an area using, in particular, information from surveillance and pest records as described in ISPM 6 (*Surveillance*). Pest status is a part of the content of pest reports as described in ISPM 17 (*Pest reporting*).

## IMPACTS ON BIODIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

This standard may contribute to the protection of biodiversity and the environment by helping countries to determine the status of pests whose introduction and spread may have an environmental impact.

Determining and describing pest status in a consistent manner may help countries identify risks associated with such pests and apply phytosanitary measures to protect biodiversity and the environment.

## REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Purpose of pest status determination

Determination of pest status in an area is a vital component of various activities undertaken to implement the IPPC and covered by the principles described in ISPM 1 (*Phytosanitary principles for the protection of plants and the application of phytosanitary measures in international trade*) and elaborated in other ISPMs.

NPPOs may use pest status information when undertaking activities such as:

- pest risk analysis;
- considering market access requests;
- planning national, regional or international pest surveillance and management programmes;
- establishing and complying with phytosanitary regulations;
- establishing and maintaining lists of pests present in an area;
- establishing and updating lists of regulated pests;
- establishing and maintaining pest free areas, areas of low pest prevalence, pest free places of production and pest free production sites;
- exchanging information as outlined in the IPPC.

### 2. NPPO responsibilities

Contracting parties have obligations under the IPPC (Article VIII.1(a)) to report “the occurrence, outbreak or spread of pests”. Pest status should be determined exclusively by the NPPO responsible for the area concerned.

The NPPO should:

- base its determination of pest status on the most reliable and timely information available;
- maintain pest records and supporting evidence, taking into account that they may be needed to support the determination of pest status;
- re-evaluate pest status if appropriate.

### 3. Information used to determine pest status

Information from pest records or other sources should be used as a basis for determining the appropriate pest status among the categories described in section 4.

The information that should be included in pest records is described in ISPM 6.

Information is available from many sources and has varying levels of reliability. Old information is less likely to be reliable about the current status of a pest than recent information because of changes in pest distribution, taxonomy and detection methods.

Highly reliable and current sources should be used to determine pest status. However, when such sources are not available, lower reliability sources may be used. This may increase uncertainty but can also help to identify information gaps which can be addressed through surveillance (see ISPM 6) and pest diagnostics (see ISPM 27 (*Diagnostic protocols for regulated pests*)).

Sometimes it may be difficult or not possible to determine pest status because of uncertainty associated with the available information. Sources of uncertainty may include:

- limited information on pest biology;
- taxonomic revisions or ambiguity;
- contradictory or outdated information;
- difficulties with or unreliability of survey methodologies;
- difficulties with or unreliability of diagnostic methodologies;
- insufficient information on pest–host associations;
- unknown aetiology;
- detection of signs or observation of symptoms without finding the pest;
- insufficient information on the pest distribution in an area;
- unreliability of the information sources.

When an NPPO is not able to determine pest status, the NPPO should indicate that this is the case.

#### **4. Describing pest status in an area**

The NPPO should decide upon the most appropriate description of the pest status in an area, based on information from various sources including results from surveillance (see ISPM 6).

Pests under quarantine for diagnostic or research purposes (e.g. in a laboratory), or pest interceptions on imported consignments under detention, do not affect the pest status in an area.

Similarly, detection of a pest in an area, confirmed by surveillance not to represent a population, may not affect the pest status in the area. Determination of pest status in an area requires evidence and expert judgement on the current distribution of a pest in the area. This judgement should be based on a synthesis of available information from various sources, also taking into account historical pest records, where available.

Pest status should be determined for an area identified and specified by the NPPO. When pest status is determined, the area concerned and the date should be indicated. Information on pest free areas, pest free places of production or pest free production sites may be added to the report (see ISPM 4 (*Requirements for the establishment of pest free areas*) and ISPM 10 (*Requirements for the establishment of pest free places of production and pest free production sites*)). Pest status should be described according to the categories identified below.

##### **4.1 Presence**

If a pest is present and reliable information is available, the pest status should be further characterized using the categories provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Pest status – Present

Pest status	Pest status description
Present: widely distributed	The pest is present throughout the area, where conditions are suitable.
Present: not widely distributed and not under official control	The pest is present in a part or parts of the area and is not under “official control” in accordance with Supplement 1 (Guidelines on the interpretation and application of the concepts of “official control” and “not widely distributed”) to ISPM 5 ( <i>Glossary of phytosanitary terms</i> ).
Present: not widely distributed and under official control	The pest is present in a part or parts of the area and is subject to “official control” in accordance with Supplement 1 (Guidelines on the interpretation and application of the concepts of “official control” and “not widely distributed”) to ISPM 5 ( <i>Glossary of phytosanitary terms</i> ). The purpose of the official control should be stated alongside the pest status determination.
Present: at low prevalence	The pest is present in the area but its prevalence is low in accordance with ISPM 22 ( <i>Requirements for the establishment of areas of low pest prevalence</i> ).
Present: except in specified pest free areas	The pest is present in the area except in parts of the area which are free from the pest in accordance with ISPM 4 ( <i>Requirements for the establishment of pest free areas</i> ). These parts should be described alongside the pest status determination.
Present: transient	The pest is present but the evidence supports the conclusion that the pest is not expected to establish because conditions (e.g. hosts, climate) are not suitable for establishment or appropriate phytosanitary measures have been applied.

In some cases, it may be necessary to provide additional information about pest presence, for instance:

- the extent of a localized outbreak;
- official control measures applied;
- the pest has only been reported under specific conditions, such as:
  - on specific hosts,
  - in enclosed structures (e.g. in a greenhouse),
  - in botanical gardens,
  - in the environment but not on a plant host (e.g. in soil or water),
  - in urban areas,
  - at certain times of the year.

## 4.2 Absence

If a pest is absent and reliable information is available, the pest status should be further categorized using the categories provided in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Pest status – Absent

<b>Pest status</b>	<b>Pest status description</b>
Absent: pest not recorded	Surveillance supports the conclusion that the pest is absent and has not been recorded (see ISPM 6 ( <i>Surveillance</i> )).
Absent: the entire country is pest free	The entire country is established and maintained as a pest free area in accordance with ISPM 4 ( <i>Requirements for the establishment of pest free areas</i> ).
Absent: pest records invalid	Pest records indicate the presence of a pest, but the conclusion is reached that the records are invalid or no longer valid, such as in the following cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- changes in taxonomy have occurred;</li> <li>- misidentification has occurred;</li> <li>- the record or records have not been confirmed;</li> <li>- there are errors in the record or records;</li> <li>- changes in national borders have occurred.</li> </ul>
Absent: pest no longer present	Pest records indicate that the pest was present in the past, but surveillance indicates that the pest is no longer present (see ISPM 6 ( <i>Surveillance</i> )). The reason or reasons may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- climate or other natural limitation to pest perpetuation;</li> <li>- changes in cultivated host species or cultivars;</li> <li>- changes in production practices.</li> </ul>
Absent: pest eradicated	Pest records indicate that the pest was present in the past. Documented pest eradication measures were implemented and were successful (see ISPM 9 ( <i>Guidelines for pest eradication programmes</i> )). Surveillance confirms continued absence (see ISPM 6 ( <i>Surveillance</i> )).

Lack of information due to inadequate or insufficient surveillance activities does not constitute a basis for determining pest absence.

## 5. Exchange of pest status information between NPPOs

Information pertaining to pest status in an area contributes to pest reports (see ISPM 17). It is the responsibility of an NPPO to provide pest records and other supporting evidence on pest status upon request from another NPPO.

There may be some cases where a pest status declared by an NPPO is questioned by another NPPO (e.g. when there are repeated interceptions by importing countries or contradictory pest records). In such cases, bilateral contacts between NPPOs should be made to clarify the situation, and if needed the pest status should be revised by the NPPO responsible for the area concerned.

NPPOs should:

- use the categories of pest status set out in this standard when exchanging pest status information, to promote harmonization and transparency;
- in a timely manner, inform other NPPOs and their regional plant protection organization, where appropriate, of relevant changes in pest status according to ISPM 17.

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## IPPC

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is an international plant health agreement that aims to protect global plant resources and facilitate safe trade.

The IPPC vision is that all countries have the capacity to implement harmonized measures to prevent pest introductions and spread, and minimize the impacts of pests on food security, trade, economic growth, and the environment.

### Organization

- ◆ There are over 180 IPPC contracting parties.
- ◆ Each contracting party has a national plant protection organization (NPPO) and an Official IPPC contact point.
- ◆ 10 regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs) have been established to coordinate NPPOs in various regions of the world.
- ◆ IPPC liaises with relevant international organizations to help build regional and national capacities.
- ◆ The Secretariat is provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

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