draft Terms of Reference – Focus group of the Diagnostic Laboratory Networking

*(Prepared by IPPC Secretariat and revised by CPM Bureau)*

Background

The [IPPC Strategic Framework (SF) 2020-2030](https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1439698/) was adopted by the fifteenth session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-15) in 2021. The framework provides a new operating environment and supports national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) to address the expected structural and operational changes that NPPOs will encounter during 2020–2030. The framework comprises three core activities, three strategic objectives and a development agenda items with eight key programmes of new work areas aligned to the IPPC’s vision, mission, and strategic objectives. One of the identified development agenda items is to establish a network of diagnostic laboratory services and diagnostic protocols to help countries identify plant pests in a more reliable and timely manner. The desired outcome by 2030 is that an international network of diagnostic laboratory services provides reliable and timely pest identifications. National, official laboratories with strong diagnostic functions are widely recognized as capable of offering reliable services within regions or globally, reducing the need for all countries to develop duplicated capacity.

In 2021, the Standard Setting Unit (SSU) of the IPPC secretariat acknowledged that there is a lack of basic information and understanding of a common way forward in this area. Therefore, it presented a first draft terms of reference (ToR) for an international consultant to start the work. Feedback was sought and received by the CPM Bureau and the TC-RPPOs. The draft ToR included gathering information on data on diagnostic laboratories and networks by for example carrying out a literature review on the topic, on diagnostic laboratory networks or recognized laboratories; identifying existing diagnostic laboratory networks (national, regional, international) and collecting information on their technical work and best practices; discussing the topic with a cross section of NPPOs to evaluate conditions/expectations for a network arrangement; conducting a gap analysis on the topic. This consultant would produce a final report including detailed findings and proposals, and present the results to the IPPC Secretariat and relevant groups and IPPC bodies for future development plans.

Subsequently, it was agreed by the CPM Bureau to allocate budgets from the 2020 savings exercise for this topic to commence with information gathering. The IPPC secretariat issued a call for international consultants in [2022](https://www.ippc.int/en/news/ippc-is-hiring-international-consultant/). With the decision from CPM-17 (2023) to establish a CPM Focus Group on Laboratory Diagnostic Networking, the IPPC secretariat is now in the process of hiring this international consultant (see vacancy announcement from 2022 as **Attachment 1**, for information).

Once the CPM agrees with the terms of reference for the CPM Focus Group on Laboratory Diagnostic Networking, the IPPC Secretariat will issue a call for experts.

**Recommendations to the CPM Bureau and SPG:**

The CPM Bureau and SPG are invited to:

1. *discuss* this paper *and* the draft terms of reference of the CPM Focus Group on Laboratory Diagnostic Networking.
2. *provide* any additional feedback and words for the process and tasks.
3. *provide* any other comments and insights for this potential IPPC laboratory diagnostic networking.

**Terms of Reference – CPM Focus Group on Diagnostic Laboratory Networking**

1. Purpose[[1]](#footnote-2)

To assist in gathering information for the design of a global network of diagnostic laboratory services and diagnostic protocols for plant pests. Also, to analyze the results of an assessment on the current “state of the art on diagnostic laboratories network in the world” provided by an international consultant and develop an implementation plan for this IPPC Strategic Framework 2020 – 2030 development agenda item.

The focus group is also to define the scope of what would constitute an “IPPC laboratory diagnostic networking” and develop an implementation action plan.

 2. Process and duration

The focus group will remain active until the CPM-20 (2026) for completion with outputs and final report and recommendations to CPM-20.

Most meetings of the focus group will be held virtually. At least one meeting is expected to be face to face. Attendance in meetings by focus group members is mandatory, but if a member is not able to participate they may with approval of the Chairperson, nominate a substitute with the requisite skill set to engage and participate actively.

3. Membership

The membership should be both skills- and knowledge-based with broad geographical and gender representation.

The focus group will be composed of a maximum of eleven members, taking account of geographical representation and gender balance, with knowledge of the following:

1. Seven members representing national plant protection organizations, one from each of seven FAO regions
2. One representative of the Regional Plant Protection Organizations (RPPOs)
3. One representative of the CPM Bureau
4. One representative of the Standards Committee (SC)
5. One representative of the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC).

The membership should have an understanding of IPPC’s mandate and activities, as well as collective experience and expertise on the following:

1. The operation and functioning of plant health-based including:
	* application of logical frameworks in project development or management
	* in multilateral agreements
	* in capacity development in project management, stakeholders’ engagement and training.
2. Experience in plant pathology, entomology and / or diagnostic laboratory for plant pests, including morphological and molecular pest detection and identification.
3. Extent and relevance of experience in survey designs, concept notes and project management.
4. Development and use of International and Regional Standards for Phytosanitary Measures. Use, development of ISPM 27 Diagnostic protocols for regulated pests is an asset.

5. Functions

The key tasks of the focus group will be to:

1. Identify and review existing material and experiences on the topic.
2. Review the analysis undertaken by an International Consultant and subsequently define the scope of the IPPC laboratory diagnostic networking.
3. Discuss and agree on the components necessary for an efficient and effective IPPC laboratory diagnostic network, considering the regional differences.
4. Discuss and agree on approaches to maintain an IPPC laboratory diagnostic network including aspects on timely detection, diagnosis of new pests and streamlining the development of diagnostic protocols.
5. Examine the practicalities needed for such a system including legal frameworks and liability issues for the FAO of an IPPC laboratory diagnostic networking (or several regional networks).
6. Establish broad criteria for a laboratory to be considered for inclusion in the framework of the programme “IPPC laboratory diagnostic networking”.
7. Consider the creation, scope and utility of database(s) for several aspects that entails laboratory pest diagnostic.
8. Evaluate the potential role of the RPPOs in an IPPC laboratory diagnostic network and make recommendations accordingly.
9. Liaise with IPPC Technical Panel on Diagnostic Protocols (TPDP) as appropriate.
10. Liaise with the CPM Focus Groups on Pest Outbreak Alert and Response Systems and the Phytosanitary Research Coordination
11. Present a draft scope and action plan to the CPM Bureau and the IPPC Strategic Planning Group in 2024 for comments and feedback.
12. Propose a scope and action plan, which takes into account comments received from the Bureau and SPG, to the CPM-19 (2025) for consideration.
13. Estimate the resources required to establish and operate an IPPC laboratory diagnostic network, including sustainable funding mechanisms for the long term.
14. Develop an action plan for the establishment and maintenance of an IPPC laboratory diagnostic network with clear scope, KPIs, timeline, and expected resources to be allocated.
15. Duration

The focus group will remain active until the CPM-20 (2026)

Funding

The organization that employs a member of the focus group is responsible for funding the travel and daily subsistence allowance for that person to attend. If the employer is unable to allocate sufficient funds, participants are first encouraged to seek assistance from sources other than the IPPC Secretariat. Where such demonstrated efforts to secure assistance have been unsuccessful, requests for assistance (i.e. travel and subsistence costs) from the IPPC Secretariat may be made. However, any support is subject to available funds. The IPPC Secretariat will consider funding assistance for participants following IPPC criteria for funding. [Full details on these criteria can be found on the IPP](https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/criteria-used-prioritizing-participants-receive-travel-assistance-attend-meetings/).

**ATTACHMENT 1: For information – Call done in 2022**

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| **CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST - vacancy announcement No: 2201623** |
| **Issued on:** |  |
| **Deadline For Application:** |  08 July 2022  |
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| **Job Title:** Diagnostic Laboratory Specialist |  | **Type of requisition:** | Consultant or PSA  |
|  |  | **Duty Station:** | Home-based and Rome, Italy |
| **Organizational Unit:** | Plant Production and Protection Division (IPPC Secretariat) | **Duration:** | Part-time/11months on WAE basis |
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| *FAO seeks gender, geographical and linguistic diversity in its staff and international consultants in order to best serve FAO Members in all regions.* |
| **Qualified female applicants and qualified nationals of non-and under-represented member countries are encouraged to apply.****Persons with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply.****All applications will be treated with the strictest confidence.** |
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| **Organizational Setting**The Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP) enables the transition to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable plant production and protection through optimization and minimization. This requires the integration and harmonization of all appropriate crop production policies and practices in order to increase production in a sustainable manner in order to eradicate hunger while preserving the natural resources and environment for future use.The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is an international agreement on plant health with over 184 contracting parties, which aims to protect the world's cultivated and wild plants by preventing the introduction and spread of plant pests. The IPPC is governed by the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM). The IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030, with its eight key development agenda items, identifies new priority work areas that are aligned to the IPPC’s vision, mission and strategic objectives. One of the identified development agenda items is to establish a network of diagnostic laboratory services and diagnostic protocols to help countries identify plant pests in a more reliable and timely manner. The IPPC Secretariat is hosted by FAO within NSP and supports the implementation of policies and activities of the CPM carrying out other functions as may be assigned. One of the main functions of the Secretariat is to facilitate the implementation of the Convention as well as the development and implementation of International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) to fulfil the IPPC's mandates. The IPPC Secretariat currently has the ability to function in a virtual work environment, and staff may be required to work from their homes.**Reporting Lines**The Diagnostic Laboratory Specialist reports to the IPPC Standards Setting Unit (SSU) Team Lead or Deputy Lead**Technical Focus** The main responsibility of the Diagnostic Laboratory Specialist is to gather information for the design of a global network of diagnostic laboratory services and diagnostic protocols for plant pests. **Tasks and responsibilities*** Gather data on diagnostic laboratories and networks
	+ Carry out a literature review on the topic: on diagnostic laboratory networks or recognized laboratory
	+ Identify existing diagnostic laboratory networks (national, regional, international) and collect information on their technical work
	+ Collect information on:
		- administrative work of existing laboratory networks
		- legal procedures for existing laboratory networks
		- resources needed for existing laboratory networks
		- countries/regions interested to benefits from/contribute to such a network
		- diagnostic laboratories including operational expertise
	+ Carry out an analysis of the best practices and successes of established laboratory networks
	+ Collect information on laboratory facilities that exist in the research and teaching institutes in the country
	+ Conduct individual interviews with key stakeholders
	+ Discuss with a cross section of NPPOs to evaluate conditions/expectations for a network arrangement
	+ Conduct a gap analysis
	+ Draft papers including preliminary reports on data collected to be presented to the IPPC Secretariat, and potentially to other IPPC groups.
	+ Develop a questionnaire or questionnaires (as needed) based on the preliminary report and data collected targeted to specific NPPOs across all FAO regions and RPPOs, in coordination with IRSS team.
* Develop discussion papers for IPPC Secretariat and relevant groups, as necessary.
* Produce a final report including detailed findings and proposals:
* Present the results to the IPPC Secretariat and relevant groups and IPPC bodies for future development plans
* Develop discussion papers to IPPC Secretariat and relevant groups, as necessary

 * Support the implementation of IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030 on the development agenda item “Diagnostic Laboratory Networking”
* Support the preparation of and participate in virtual meetings with relevant IPPC Secretariat and groups
* Prepare meeting documents according to appropriate procedures.
* Produce minutes of the meetings, if needed.
* Provide support to improve the communication on the development agenda item “Diagnostic Laboratory Networking”
* Help identify major achievements, case studies or examples of activities that could allow better promotion of the development agenda item “Diagnostic Laboratory Networking”.
* Summarize the key messages from the development agenda item “Diagnostic Laboratory Networking” from the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030 in coordination with the communication officer.

**CANDIDATES WILL BE ASSESSED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING****Minimum Requirements*** Advanced degree (Master) in plant pathology, entomology, plant protection or related biological science on plant pest diagnosis.
* At least three (3) years of relevant work experience in plant pest diagnosis, in a diagnostic laboratory or diagnostic services (or related area).
* Working knowledge of English (level C) and limited knowledge (intermediate - level B) of another FAO official language (Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian or Spanish). Working knowledge of English for PSA.SBS

**FAO Core Competencies*** Results Focus
* Teamwork
* Communication
* Building Effective Relationships
* Knowledge Sharing and Continuous Improvement

**Technical/Functional Skills*** Work experience in more than one location or area of work is a strong asset;
* Extent and relevance of experience in plant pathology, entomology and / or diagnostic laboratory for plant pests;
* Extent and relevance of experience in survey designs, concept notes and project management is strongly desirable;
* Familiarity with approaches and concepts used to design and implement a laboratory network;
* Familiarity with the IPPC work and its mandate;
* Ability to effectively coordinate an extensive, multi-stakeholder project with results-based management;
* Ability to deal with technical and people management challenges, and work effectively with all staff and with groups involved;
* Demonstrate high level of effective project management;
* Good written and oral communication skills;
* Demonstrated initiative, problem-solving skills and ability to deliver results within deadlines.

**Selection Criteria** * Experience, skills, and abilities
* Qualification, awareness, and knowledge sharing
* Interpersonal and administrative skills
* Written and oral/verbal communication skills
* Knowledge of context, identification of challenges, and opportunities
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| Please note that all candidates should adhere to *FAO Values of Commitment to FAO, Respect for All and Integrity and Transparency.* |

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| **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION*** FAO does not charge any fee at any stage of the recruitment process (application, interview, processing)
* Please note that FAO will only consider academic credentials or degrees obtained from an educational institution recognized in the IAU/UNESCO list.
* If you are in possession of language certificate/s from [UN accredited external providers](http://www.fao.org/3/I8446EN/i8446en.pdf) and/or FAO language official examinations (LPE, ILE, LRT), please attach the certificate/s when submitting the application.
* For additional employment opportunities visit the FAO employment website: <http://www.fao.org/employment/home/en/>
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| **HOW TO APPLY**To apply, visit the recruitment website at [Jobs at FAO](https://jobs.fao.org/careersection/fao_external/jobsearch.ftl?lang=en) and complete your online profile. Only applications received through the recruitment portal will be considered.Candidates are requested to attach a letter of motivation to the online profile.If you need help, or have queries, please contact: Careers@fao.org  |
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| **FAO IS A NON-SMOKING ENVIRONMENT** |

1. See document 13 from CPM-17: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/91901/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)