



FOCUS GROUP ON SEA CONTAINERS UPDATE TO TC-RPPOS OCTOBER 2023

(Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat)

- [1] The CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers is presently in the final phase of its mandated work, having met physically once this year and virtually several times. At least three more sets of multi-day virtual meetings are planned in order for the Focus Group to complete its work.
- [2] Industry stakeholders continue to be supportive and proactive in identifying potential custodial responsibility approaches, supporting technological and software advances, and helping move things towards a general framework which is intended to reduce pest risks presented by the sea container pathway while avoiding negative impacts to the sensitive container logistics systems.
- [3] One of this year's highlights has been the very successful Sea Containers Workshop in Brisbane, Australia, organized by the IPPC and hosted by the Australian Department of Agriculture Fisheries, and Forestry. Its success is in no small part due to the efforts of its organizers: the Sea Containers Workshop Organizing Committee, IPPC Secretariat staff, financial support from Canada and Australia, and of course the efforts of the local organizers. In addition, this workshop was developed based on the outcomes of the successful workshop in London, U.K., in 2022.
- [4] The first workshop in London, U.K., in 2022, provided the basis for the framework contained in the draft revision of CPM Recommendation No. 6 on sea containers. The second workshop in Brisbane, in July 2023, identified further activities that are expected to support the effectiveness of the revised CPM Recommendation and lead to further options to consider in the future. In addition, much work continues on aspects such as reviewing container structure improvements and port-based technologies, which may contribute to the further development of a general framework.
- [5] Participants at the Brisbane workshop presented information on a number of topics including the risks presented by the sea container pathway, supply chain complexities, risk mitigation, container structure innovations, and further emerging potential solutions, as well as on awareness raising and capacity building. Discussions continued to advance identification of potential regulatory and non-regulatory risk management solutions.
- [6] A key element of the Brisbane workshop was to promote and collect feedback on the draft revision to the CPM Recommendation. Participants engaged in productive discussions relating to specific sections of the revised CPM Recommendation and presented their feedback for further discussion in plenary sessions. The feedback was collated and provided to the Focus Group which met immediately following the conclusion of the workshop.
- [7] The main work of the Focus Group will now be to review all comments received on the draft CPM Recommendation during the workshop as well as from 2023 Country consultations. At the time of writing this paper, the consultation period had not closed and so it was unknown how many comments on the draft CPM Recommendation may be received, or how significant the comments may be. However, the Focus Group has discussed various scenarios in an effort to prepare for all eventualities. The Focus Group members are optimistic that an updated CPM Recommendation can be presented to CPM-18. A series of recommendations relating to the next phase of the IPPC's Sea containers work is also being prepared by the Focus Group for CPM-18 to consider and decide upon.
- [8] One of the several important aspects that has been raised recently is that, given container owners and logistics industries have been increasingly involved in the IPPC's Sea containers work, a strong expectation

of some form of IPPC guidance being adopted at CPM-18 is evident. As above, several key industry associations have actively engaged in helping to develop this guidance and have committed their resources in doing so. This engagement has in itself served to raise awareness of the pest risks presented by the international movement of sea containers, and the need to address this. A corollary of this is that if CPM-18 does not adopt the revised CPM Recommendation in some form, then it may be perceived as a lack of intent by the IPPC to introduce guidance, leading to disengagement, i.e., we have good momentum and support, and a good degree of understanding of the plant health risks among industry representatives, and should capitalize on this as a key factor in the development of practical and commercially feasible solutions.

- [9] Finally, one of the key tasks in the Terms of Reference for the Focus Group on Sea Containers, in addition to making recommendations to the CPM, was to provide CPM with the Focus Group's viewpoint on the option of development of an ISPM on sea containers. In this regard, the Focus Group's existing work in developing the draft revision to CPM Recommendation No. 6 has identified some aspects which could potentially form the basis for an ISPM in the future. Ongoing work being conducted, in particular by industry associations, shows some promise for offering potential components for an ISPM. The Focus Group is also aware of the trials being conducted on sea containers with modified structural factors, and developments in emerging technology. The Focus Group feels that it would be premature to propose an ISPM at the current time, but as we gain experience with the CPM Recommendation 6, if adopted, and can determine what aspects are most effective, this information, in conjunction with the evolving work, may result in it being feasible and appropriate to recommence work on an ISPM in the future.
- [10] The report of the Focus Group to the CPM will include recommendations, proposed decision points, and, of course, the recommended adoption of the revised CPM Recommendation No. 6.
- [11] I would like to note the significant and effective leadership and support from the Secretariat in advancing the IPPC's work on sea containers.