



TFT reflection and relevance

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## COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

### NINETEENTH SESSION

#### REFLECTION ON THE RELEVANCE OF THE TASK FORCE ON TOPICS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCE SAVINGS FOR THE SECRETARIAT – A PROPOSAL FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BUREAU

#### AGENDA ITEM 9.3

*(Prepared by Dominique Pelletier and Sophie Peterson, chairpersons of the IC and SC)*

#### Background

- [1] The Task Force on Topics (TFT) was established in 2018 by CPM-13. Its purpose is to: 1) coordinate the biennial call for topics: standards and implementation, 2) evaluate submitted topics and provide recommendations to the Standards Committee (SC) and the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC), 3) finalize topics and priority recommendation to the CPM, based on SC and IC decisions.
- [2] Membership of the TFT includes:
- one Bureau member,
  - the chair and two members of the SC,
  - the chair and two members of the IC
- [3] For a total of seven members. In addition, support is provided from the Secretariat and involves both leads of the Standard Setting Unit (SSU) and the Implementation Facilitation Unit (IFU) as well as officers from both SSU and IFU.
- [4] During the Bureau meetings in April 2024, based on comments made at the October 2023 SPG meetings, it was agreed that the Bureau would ask the SC and IC to consider ways of streamlining and accelerating standard setting. This has been added to the agenda of the June 2024 Bureau meeting.
- [5] The authors of this paper have taken part in several TFT meetings since they became chairs of the SC and IC respectively and feel that the process for developing submissions and reviewing topics for standards and implementation is administratively heavy and would benefit from being further streamlined. The proposal contained in this paper could contribute to an overall improvement in the efficiency of the standard-setting process and be considered in conjunction with other aspects.

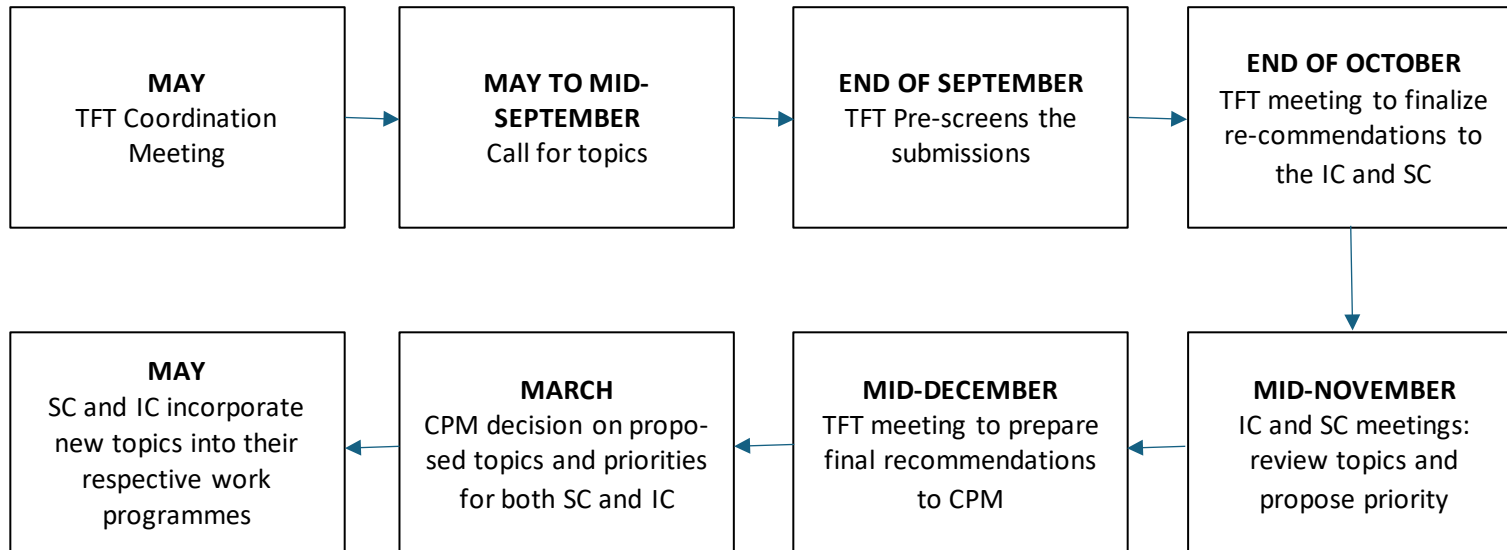
#### An opportunity to streamline the process

- [6] The current process is presented graphically in Annex 1 and can be summarized as follows. The TFT first holds a coordination meeting in May every two years, immediately before the call for topics is issued by the Secretariat. The call for topics is typically initiated in early May and ends in mid-September. After the closing of the call, in late September, the TFT meets to take stock of the submitted topics, identify those that may have incomplete information and require follow up with the submitters, and assign members to review and assign ranking to a subset of the topics, based on evaluation criteria.

- [7] The TFT reconvenes at the end of October to agree on the list of topics that will be retained. The list is then presented to both the SC and IC in November, which in turn determine which topics they will take onboard, assign leads (stewards) and a priority level. This is then communicated back to the TFT which prepares a CPM paper for decision.
- [8] While the process is well organized and well understood, it recently became apparent that it also poses significant impact on resources within the Secretariat, and to a similar degree on the submitters of topics and TFT members dedicating time to review topic submissions. Given the number of topics received in the last two Call for Topic periods, the evolution of commodity standards and the desire for all contracting parties for a more responsive and efficient standard setting process the current process could be significantly revised. For example, the authors feel that an open call may allow for more responsive and higher quality submissions and that those best placed to evaluate topics may be the members of the SC and IC themselves. This would be in line with the current “open” call for Phytosanitary Treatment and Diagnostic submissions. The submission forms and criteria for assessing the Call for Topics submissions are too detailed and repetitive in many places and could be simplified to facilitate development and focus the submitters time on development of the reasoning and draft Specification components.
- [9] Therefore, we would like to propose an amended process. In this new process, illustrated in Annex 2, all submitted topics would be collected by the Secretariat at the end of September each year and sent to both committees for their review, evaluation, and priority ranking at their respective November meeting. Both SC and IC would determine the best way to review the submissions relevant to them based on yet to be revised criteria, in preparation for the November meeting. The chairs of each committee would then coordinate to prepare a single CPM paper capturing the decisions made at their respective November meetings, seeking CPM adoption of the proposed new topics and priorities.
- [10] This proposal removes administrative burden of the TFT (through disestablishment), leaving the decision to consider topics with the competent committees. The submission of all topics, standards and implementation, concurrently to both committees would also allow for the rapid identification of topics that were initially presented as, for example, a standard but where a guide or other implementation material is considered more appropriate by either committee.
- [11] To formalize this process, the Standard Setting Procedure will require amendment. As amendments required CPM adoption, it is proposed that this new process is implemented on a trial basis at first, with CPM approval, to determine if it is a feasible option and also what other consequential changes need to be proposed to ensure it remains feasible into the future.
- [12] This proposal was discussed at the Strategic Planning Group in October 2024 and was well received due to the potential streamlining and reduction in administrative burden, but is presented now to the entire CPM for consideration.

## Recommendations

- [13] The CPM is invited to:
- (1) *discuss* the pertinence of the TFT in the current context of resource pressures.
  - (2) *discuss* the potential of an open call for topics, removing the current biennial cycle
  - (3) *agree* that topics submitted during the currently scheduled 2025 call for topics: standards and implementation be submitted directly to both the SC and IC for their review, prioritization and recommendation to CPM for addition to the work program on a trial basis until a future CPM where proposed changes to the Standard Setting Procedure to formalize this change will be proposed.
  - (4) *encourage* the SC and IC to prepare for the review of topics submitted during the 2025 call for topics, by establishing appropriate structures.

**ANNEX 1 Current timeline and decision process for topics**

**ANNEX 2 Proposed timeline and decision process for topics**