



## COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

### NINETEENTH SESSION

## UPDATE ON THE PHYTOSANITARY CAPACITY EVALUATION

### AGENDA ITEM 14.3

*(Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat)*

#### 1. Introduction

##### *Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation overview*

- [1] The phytosanitary capacity evaluation (PCE),<sup>1</sup> one of the IPPC's flagship processes, consists of multiple phases and offers a wide range of benefits. The IPPC Strategic Framework 2020–2030 lists the PCE as one of the three (3) key implementation and capacity development result areas.<sup>2</sup>
- [2] The PCE empowers countries to develop a national phytosanitary capacity development strategy, outlining a pathway to achieve their desired phytosanitary goals. By selecting the legislation module, countries can also revise existing laws/regulations or create new ones to support this strategy. National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs), guided by the PCE output, then work to implement the strategy and adopt the necessary legal frameworks. Transitioning from diagnosis to action, countries can leverage the PCE results to address critical capacity gaps, mobilize resources and ultimately strengthen their plant health systems.
- [3] Since 1999, nearly 60 PCEs have been successfully conducted globally, showcasing the effectiveness of collaborative approaches with donor agencies and contracting parties, despite financial constraints.

##### *Key highlights of 2024 progress*

- [4] 2024 marked significant progress in the evolution of PCEs. The year focused on finalizing the evaluations and actively fostering the implementation of the National Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategies in targeted countries. Intensive communication efforts amplified transparency and awareness of the impact of the PCEs, fostering greater engagement from countries, donors and stakeholders. A desk study was completed, offering key recommendations to improve the PCE. The IPPC Secretariat (hereafter referred to as "the secretariat") advanced in implementing several recommendations and laid the groundwork for improving the PCE process in 2025 and beyond.

##### *Purpose and context of this paper*

- [5] This paper aims to provide an update on the PCE activities and the next steps for improving the PCE process. It builds on the roadmap approved by the IC in November 2024, which aligns with the PCE

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<sup>1</sup> PCE webpage: <https://www.ippc.int/en/about/core-activities/capacity-development/phytosanitary-capacity-evaluation/>

<sup>2</sup> IPPC Strategic Framework: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/a01aa160-a92d-40dd-9384-b6c9c0b62d79>

strategy for 2020–2030. This strategy aims to continuously strengthen countries' phytosanitary systems by addressing six (6) key result areas.<sup>3</sup> This paper is structured around these six areas.

## 2. Advancements on the key result area 1: Countries, donors and development organizations are aware of the PCE and understand the benefits arising from its application

### 2.1 Modalities to access a PCE: a quick refresher

[6] Each of the three modalities for conducting PCEs offers a structured approach, with varying degrees of support and responsibilities of the IPPC-certified PCE facilitators and the secretariat:

- (a) **Facilitated modality with secretariat support** – This option provides technical guidance from both an IPPC-certified PCE facilitator and the secretariat, ensuring adequate oversight and support throughout the process;
- (b) **Facilitated modality without secretariat support** – In this modality, the evaluation is conducted with the support of an IPPC-certified PCE facilitator but without direct involvement from the secretariat; and
- (c) **Independent modality (NPPO-led)** – The NPPO assumes full responsibility for the PCE process, managing it independently without support from the secretariat or IPPC-certified PCE facilitators. Consequently, the secretariat does not oversee the deliverables, cannot guarantee their alignment with PCE standards, and is not involved in promoting or facilitating the implementation of the resulting strategies.

[7] The NPPO selects a certified facilitator from the existing pool, depending on the modality.<sup>4</sup> The International Phytosanitary Portal PCE webpage mentions the three modalities.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.2 Modalities of the recent PCE implementation in countries

#### *PCEs in African Union countries conducted under the framework of the project “Strengthening Food Control and Phytosanitary Capacities and Governance” (GCP/GLO/949/EC)*

[8] Under the facilitated modality with support from the secretariat (modality a), 11 PCEs were successfully completed in the African Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) countries, namely, Djibouti, Egypt Eswatini, Kenya, Mauritius, Malawi, Seychelles, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

[9] Within the framework of this project, the secretariat has ensured that countries accessing the PCE also gain complementary skills and resources through Wolverhampton University's Results-Based Management Course, and collaborations with the Committee Linking Entrepreneurship, Agriculture and

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<sup>3</sup> 1) Countries, donors, and development organizations are aware of the PCE and understand the benefits arising from its application; 2) long-term sustainable funding is in place to support the maintenance and administration of the PCE, and resources are mobilized to support the application of the PCE; 3) the PCE software and platform are reliable, effective and easy to use; 4) the PCE Tool is revised and updated regularly, and new modules and strategic planning tools are added as needed (e.g. environmental module, implementation follow up tool); 5) a strong network of phytosanitary expertise is available to facilitate the application of PCEs; and 6) the Monitoring and Evaluation framework is used to measure outcomes from the application of PCEs.

<sup>4</sup> Certified PCE facilitators: [https://assets.ippc.int/static/media/uploads/pce/pce\\_facilitators\\_certified\\_2022.pdf](https://assets.ippc.int/static/media/uploads/pce/pce_facilitators_certified_2022.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> PCE webpage: <https://www.ippc.int/en/about/core-activities/capacity-development/phytosanitary-capacity-evaluation/>

Development (COLEAD) and the FAO elearning Academy, as detailed later in this paper, to maximize the opportunities to implement their national phytosanitary capacity development strategy.

- [10] This project, co-implemented by the secretariat and the FAO's Agrifood Systems and Food Safety Division (ESF), initially targeted nine (9) countries. With three (3) project extensions, including one (1) project cost extension, it became possible to cover two (2) more countries, with a new project end date of June 2025.

#### ***Other PCEs conducted in 2024***

- [11] Nigeria and Namibia completed their PCEs in 2024 using the facilitated modality (modality b) with the support of IPPC-certified PCE facilitators and without direct involvement from the secretariat.
- [12] Nigeria's PCE, funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) under the project preparation grant "STDF/PPG/817", is working on the implementation of the strategy and has developed a project proposal based on the PCE findings.<sup>6</sup>
- [13] The FAO office in Namibia is considering whether a project should be developed to mobilize resources to implement the strategy from the PCE.

#### ***Upcoming PCEs in Central Africa***

- [14] In the framework of the STDF project "Contribution to the harmonization of the phytosanitary legislative framework in Central Africa," an agreement has been reached between the secretariat and the Regional Center for Applied Research in the Development of Agricultural Systems in Central Africa to conduct PCEs in six (6) countries – Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. The objective of this project is to revise the phytosanitary legislation of these countries, as well as harmonize the phytosanitary legal framework at the sub-regional level.
- [15] The six (6) countries have submitted their official letters of request. The preparatory phase for PCEs is underway to ensure access to the online PCE system for national coordinators, and to support them in identifying the relevant stakeholders to be invited for the consensus workshops. The first PCE workshops are expected to take place in 2025.

#### ***Upcoming PCEs in Pakistan, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam***

- [16] Pakistan, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam expressed their interest in receiving technical assistance from FAO to evaluate and enhance their phytosanitary infrastructure, regulatory frameworks and organizational capacities using the PCE. This work will be delivered under the new project "Strengthening trade through enhanced Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) in Lao PDR, Pakistan, and Viet Nam" (TCP/RAS/4002) implemented by the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific from October 2024 to 2026.

#### ***Other upcoming PCEs***

- [17] The Philippines is arranging a self-funding PCE, and the secretariat has provided relevant guidance regarding the terms of reference for the facilitator engagement (modality b).
- [18] In Ethiopia, the PCE national coordinator has been granted access to the PCE online system. The PCE is being funded through an STDF project and the process is expected to be initiated soon (modality b).
- [19] Mali is arranging a self-funded PCE, and the secretariat has provided relevant guidance regarding the terms of reference for the facilitator engagement (modality b).

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<sup>6</sup> "Strengthening Nigeria's Phytosanitary System to Facilitate Safe Trade". Available: <https://www.standardsfacility.org/PPG-817>

[20] Other countries such as Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea and Togo sent an official letter of request to conduct a PCE if funds are available at the secretariat level.

### 2.3 PCE communication and advocacy activities

[21] **COAG Side event.** During the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) side event, *Plant Health: why is it Crucial to One Health*,<sup>7</sup> the PCE national coordinator from Zimbabwe shared their experience with conducting the PCE and the FAO/World Health Organization Food Control System Assessment. The presentation emphasized the benefits that can be created when the PCE is conducted along with other sectoral assessments, leading to inter-sectoral collaboration and synergies at the national level. Additionally, a panel composed of high-level speakers, such as the FAO Deputy Director General, underscored the PCE as a One Health tool that continues to contribute to the higher goals of the One Health approach.

[22] **Key intervention from Kenya during the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) 2024 meeting.** A representative from the NPPO of Kenya shared the country's experience in conducting a PCE and its benefits. The NPPO of Kenya had conducted its first PCE in 2002, which had led to funds being obtained from the European Union and other donors to build two diagnostic laboratories and pay for laboratory equipment, staff training and accreditation of its plant-health laboratories. The second PCE, conducted in 2018, resulted in revised national phytosanitary policies and phytosanitary regulations. The third PCE, conducted in 2023, identified further phytosanitary areas to focus on for capacity development. Overall, with the three (3) PCEs conducted, the NPPO had digitalized import and export processes, created well-functioning pest risk analysis and surveillance units, set a directorate for laboratory services to enhance the coordination of laboratory services, and created a research unit within the NPPO.

[23] **IPPC Secretariat 2024 communications plan.** The secretariat leveraged its 2024 communications plan to enhance transparency and highlight transformative outcomes from PCEs. Through dissemination of news and spotlight stories, the secretariat showcased countries' progress in enhancing phytosanitary systems, including:

- [How the IPPC's Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation exercises boosted plant health in 2023;](#)
- [South-South Cooperation: End of project heralds positive changes for plant health in Cambodia and Sri Lanka;](#)
- [Zimbabwe concludes evaluation of national phytosanitary system, starts developing strategy to enhance plant health;](#)
- [Rethinking and strengthening: Kenya's approach to its phytosanitary system;](#)
- [Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation to strengthen Egypt's food security and agricultural trade;](#)
- [Building a resilient plant health system in Senegal;](#)
- [Uganda to undertake a Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation to boost agricultural trade;](#)
- [Healthy plants, healthy planet: The key to One Health success;](#) and
- [Critical milestone achieved in strengthening phytosanitary capacities across COMESA countries.](#)

[24] The secretariat promoted these news and spotlight stories to a wider audience through the following channels:

- **IPPC newsletter** – regular features on PCE achievements;
- **social media platforms** – strategic promotion through various platforms, with key content reshared by FAO country offices and the FAO Liaison Office in Belgium; and

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ippc.int/en/news/healthy-plants-healthy-planet-the-key-to-one-health-success/>

- **Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP) Newsletter** – featuring IPPC news and spotlights.

[25] These efforts were amplified at key events, including an update presented at the STDF working group meeting in June 2024.

[26] The secretariat's thematic communications plan on PCE include the following upcoming initiatives:

- **global impact video** – a compelling narrative showcasing PCE successes worldwide;
- **feature stories** – highlighting newly certified PCE facilitators;
- **project highlights** – tangible outcomes from COMESA and other regional initiatives; and
- **SPS Gap Analysis** – sharing actionable insights and recommendations from the SPS gap analysis.

### 3. **Advancements on the key result area 2: Long-term sustainable funding is in place to support the maintenance and administration of the PCE, and resources are mobilized to support the application of the PCE**

#### 3.1 **Projects implemented and managed in full compliance with existing frameworks and strategies ensuring transparency**

[27] *Funding challenges and solutions proposed by IPPC governing bodies*

[28] During the Eighteenth Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-18) in 2024, developing countries requested financial assistance to conduct a PCE. The secretariat had explained that, at present, no funds were allocated for such activity but noted that they would support countries in approaching donors for resource mobilization.

[29] The financial challenges for PCE activities encompass two key areas: resources required to maintain and enhance the PCE tool and process at the secretariat level; and financial support for countries wishing to implement a PCE.

[30] During the CPM Bureau April 2024 meeting, the secretariat reiterated the lack of funds for both maintaining and improving the PCE process and online PCE system and implementing PCEs, as originally requested by ICPM-3 (2001). The IC and the CPM Bureau discussed this issue further during their May and June 2024 meetings, where the secretariat again underscored the importance of securing sustainable funding for PCE activities. The CPM Bureau proposed further discussions on the subject at the Financial Committee meeting to explore funding mechanisms.

[31] September 2024, the IC Team on PCE highlighted the need for stronger advocacy to secure funding and proposed allocating a percentage of project funds for platform maintenance and seeking external funding.

[32] During its November 2024 meeting, the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) discussed how the funding for implementing PCEs and maintaining the online PCE system can become sustainable, and made the following recommendations:

- *requested* the Financial Committee to earmark USD 50 000 from the IPPC regular programme budget and the IPPC Multi-donor Trust Fund (MDTF) for maintaining the PCE system;
- *requested* the secretariat to liaise with relevant FAO Resource Mobilization Division, or any other relevant FAO division, for resource mobilization for PCE activities; and
- *requested* the secretariat to establish a dedicated resource mobilization task force within the secretariat to mobilize resources.

[33] As of December 2024, USD 96 000 was still allocated to the PCE activity, planned for both staffing and operational costs.

### ***Breakdown costs for conducting a PCE***

- [34] During the CPM Bureau May and June 2024 meetings, and the IC May and November 2024 meetings, the secretariat presented a breakdown of the cost to conduct a PCE.
- [35] The total cost of conducting a PCE ranges between USD 81 500 and USD 106 000, comprising:
- a **technical component** (51.4 percent) including three workshops, facilitator honorariums, travel and logistics. This breakdown encompasses both pre- and post-PCE mission activities, not solely the days spent during the mission; and
  - a **legal component** (48.6 percent) covering legal workshops, FAO lawyers' fees, national legal consultant fees and travel. This cost decreases when the country does not select the module on phytosanitary legislation.
- [36] PCE facilitator costs account for approximately nine (9) percent of the total budget, covering pre- and post-mission activities, that is between 33 to 40 working days.

## **4. Advancements on the key result area 3: The PCE software and platform are reliable, effective and easy to use**

### **4.1 PCE Terms and Conditions for accessing the PCE online system**

- [37] The PCE online system is FAO property and terms and conditions have been set according to FAO rules. The PCE Terms and Conditions for using the PCE online system were noted at CPM-18 (2024) and established accordingly by the secretariat. Subsequently, Currently, system users are requested to accept the terms and conditions when accessing the system for the first time. The content of the PCE Terms and Conditions is also publicly available on the PCE webpage.<sup>8</sup>

### **4.2 Improvement of the PCE online system**

#### ***Understanding the issue***

- [38] The online PCE platform has been experiencing several IT defects, requiring frequent intervention by the IPPC IT officer at all hours. Recognizing the need for improvement through the PCE Desk Study, the secretariat plans to undertake an IT needs assessment and to migrate the PCE to a more efficient platform in 2025 for smoother functioning.

#### ***Understanding the progress made***

- [39] Following 2024 discussions with the CPM Bureau and the IC to address the IT issues, the secretariat asked the UNICC to provide an updated quotation for assessing the needs of the PCE platform aimed to evaluate the system, identify gaps, confirm requirements and provide comprehensive recommendations. UNICC quoted this assessment at USD 18 830. Following receipt of this quotation, the secretariat will initiate a service provider competition to receive alternative proposals in 2025.

## **5. Advancements on the key result area 4: The PCE tool is revised and updated regularly, and new modules and strategic planning tools are added as needed (e.g. environmental module, implementation follow up tool)**

### **5.1 Desk study recommendations and roadmap to improve the PCE**

#### ***Study purpose and key findings***

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<sup>8</sup> Terms and conditions for using the online PCE system: [https://assets.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2024/05/Terms\\_and\\_conditions\\_for\\_using\\_the\\_online\\_PCE\\_system.pdf](https://assets.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2024/05/Terms_and_conditions_for_using_the_online_PCE_system.pdf)

- [40] In its October 2021 meeting, the SPG agreed that a desk study should be conducted to include considerations related to the PCE's accessibility and flexibility. In 2024, the desk study results were presented during the IC May 2024 meeting and were well received.<sup>9</sup> The paper presented to the SPG 2024 meeting in October<sup>10</sup> included findings from the PCE Desk Study and highlighted the activities undertaken or planned to address the study's recommendations.
- [41] The desk study revealed that while the PCE has significantly contributed to improving phytosanitary systems globally, several enhancements are needed. Key recommendations include:
- clearly communicating the benefits of the PCE;
  - sharing success stories and results to demonstrate its value;
  - ensuring the PCE meets the needs of both developing and developed countries;
  - involving donors early in the process;
  - providing detailed information about the PCE's modules and processes;
  - offering more training courses for users and facilitators;
  - creating a community for facilitators to share best practices;
  - updating the online system;
  - emphasizing transparency in costs; and
  - providing ongoing support for countries after completing the PCE process.

***From desk study findings to action: key achievements***

- [42] The secretariat developed a roadmap to address the findings from the desk study. The IC subsequently approved this roadmap in May 2024 and revised it during the IC November 2024 meeting. Key achievements include the PCE web and communications plan, work under the EU-funded project, and the PCE project definition workshop.
- [43] **PCE web and communications plan.** Progress has been made using secretariat resources, including updates to the PCE webpage and the development of a communications plan. The development of a comprehensive PCE communications plan, including explanatory materials and a video is planned for 2025.
- [44] **EU-funded project.** Under the EU-funded project, "Strengthening Food Control and Phytosanitary Capacities and Governance" (GCP/GLO/949/EC), further advancements have been achieved, including:
- completing the SPS gap analysis of National Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategies, to be published in 2025;
  - sharing the PCE cost structure with the CPM Bureau and IC (completed in 2024);
  - organizing a PCE project definition workshop in Rome (7–10 October 2024) for enhancing project management and funding proposal skills;
  - exploring alternative formats for the PCE, such as PCE "light";
  - developing the IPPC Plant Health Campus for PCE facilitators with new e-learning courses; and

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<sup>9</sup> The secretariat shared the desk study results via the International Phytosanitary Portal work area <https://www.ippc.int/en/work-area-pages/capacity-development/implementation-and-capacity-development-committee-ic/2024-ic-meetings/2024-ic-may-meeting/>

<sup>10</sup> [Improvements to the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation \(PCE\) - International Plant Protection Convention](#)

- delivering a 4-week virtual course on the Rapid SPS Assessment Tool (R-SAT)<sup>11</sup>, delivered in collaboration with COLEAD, which provided practical guidance on using R-SAT as a complementary tool to support the implementation of PCE strategies, with a focus on preparing project proposals based on the RSAT methodology.

[45] **PCE project definition workshop to foster national strategies implementation in targeted countries.** Held in Rome, Italy, from 7–10 October 2024, this workshop brought together PCE national coordinators, facilitators, and secretariat and COLEAD staff. It aimed to enhance project proposal development skills and provided an opportunity to present draft proposals to global stakeholders and potential donors for feedback. As a result, eight (8) initial project proposals were drafted which will be refined and presented at the final mutualization workshop for the project “Strengthening Food Control and Phytosanitary Capacities and Governance” (GCP/GLO/949/EC).

[46] Efforts to improve the PCE process will continue in 2025. The secretariat, working closely with the IC, other FAO divisions, national PCE coordinators and PCE facilitators, will undertake several key actions, including:

- **revision of the PCE modules** – leveraging the experience of PCE national coordinators and facilitators to revise the questions in the PCE modules;
- **learning from PVS** – The secretariat has liaised with the World Organisation for Animal Health to learn about their Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) tool. Like the PCE, the PVS assesses strengths and weaknesses, but within animal health systems. This collaboration will help to understand PVS's best practices and, where possible, innovative approaches for the PCE;
- **pre-PCE training** – This training will equip national coordinators and NPPO staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively use the PCE tool and implement its recommendations. In collaboration with the FAO eLearning Academy, a new e-learning course on PCE has been developed and will be launched soon; and
- **innovation in gender and youth to increase the PCE impact** – Efforts will be made to incorporate a social component, considering gender and youth dimensions, maximizing projects and activities resulting from the National Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategies and related projects.

## 6. Advancements on key result area 5: A strong network of phytosanitary expertise is available to facilitate the application of PCEs

### 6.1 Procedure for the certification of new PCE facilitators

[47] In 2021, the IC agreed on the “Procedure for PCE facilitator certification”<sup>12</sup> to ensure a clear and consistent process for certifying PCE facilitators. The certification process involves the following steps:

- **e-learning courses** – trainee facilitators complete e-learning courses;
- **face-to-face training** – trainee facilitators attend an intensive two-week, face-to-face training course;
- **mentored facilitation** – trainees who pass the face-to-face training certification facilitate at least one PCE under the mentorship of a certified PCE facilitator, who assesses the trainee's performance during each mission; and

<sup>11</sup> [IPPC RSAT project – COLEAD](#)

<sup>12</sup> Procedure for PCE facilitator certification: [https://assets.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2022/02/Procedure\\_for\\_PCE\\_facilitator\\_certification.pdf](https://assets.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2022/02/Procedure_for_PCE_facilitator_certification.pdf)



- **recommendation for certification** – upon successful completion of their first PCE, the certified PCE facilitator may recommend the trainee to the secretariat for recognition, to be validated through examination of the PCE board.

[48] Five (5) PCE certification boards were established in 2024 to assess the facilitators aspiring to be certified, each comprising members from the CPM Bureau, IC, SC, and certified facilitators acting as mentors. As of December 2024, eight (8) new PCE facilitators were certified as follows:

- Barbara PETERSON (Canada);
- Brenda MWEEMBA (Zambia);
- Camilo BELTRAN MONTOYA (Colombia);
- Descartes KOUMBA MOUENDOU (Gabon);
- Isaac MACHARIA (Kenya);
- Justina CHIVANGA (Zambia);
- Lucien KOUAME KONAN (Cote Ivory); and
- Nhamo MUDADA (Zimbabwe).

## Recommendations

[49] The CPM is invited to:

- (1) *note* the advancements in PCE activities according to the PCE strategy 2020–2030;
- (2) *note* the progress made addressing the recommendations from the desk study on PCE and the planned next steps for improvement;
- (3) *note* the eight (8) newly certified PCE facilitators and the list of facilitators previously certified; and
- (4) *approve* the funding allocation requested by the IC of USD 50 000 from the IPPC regular programme budget and the IPPC MDTF to maintain the PCE system.