



COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

NINETEENTH SESSION

THE AFRICA PHYTOSANITARY PROGRAMME (APP) PROGRESS UPDATE

AGENDA ITEM 16.2

(Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat)

Introduction

- [1] The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat is implementing the [Africa Phytosanitary Programme \(APP\)](#), to empower phytosanitary officers of national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) and relevant national stakeholders, with modern science and advanced digital tools to boost their capacity to rapidly detect and respond to and recover from outbreaks of plant pests that have regulatory, economic, and environmental consequences.
- [2] The APP is designed to enhance the resilience of Africa's plant health systems against significant plant pests and is envisaged to support all 54 African countries within five years. The IPPC is implementing APP in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the African Union Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment.
- [3] APP implementation commenced in September 2023 with a Train-the-Trainer workshop in Cairo, Egypt. The IPPC is implementing APP in a phased approach, with 11 countries in the pilot phase. These are: Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Below are some progress updates:

- [4] **Countries**
 - (1) **Operational plans:** All countries in the pilot phase submitted to the secretariat operational plans to guide their implementation of the APP. The countries have planned national-level training workshops, during which phytosanitary officers who received training at the Train-the-trainer workshop in Cairo, Egypt in September 2023, will train their national colleagues. Countries submitted their training plans and budgets for funding consideration by the IPPC Secretariat.
 - (2) **Capacity development:** The secretariat plans to combine national training of two of the pilot countries with refresher training for the officers trained last year in Cairo.
 - (3) The Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) will host refresher training for English-speaking pilot countries (Egypt, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) from 27-31 January 2025. The NPPO of Cameroon will host similar training for French-speaking countries (Guinea-Bissau, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and Morocco) from 20-24 January 2025. Both sessions will coincide with national training, facilitated by the IPPC Secretariat team.
 - (4) All pilot countries have received at least 40 tablets in addition to five/six distributed last year. Some countries are already using tablets and APP tools to conduct pest monitoring and detection surveys while other countries intend to conduct national-level training first. Among these

countries, Kenya has used APP tools for monitoring and training on surveillance for *Fusarium* TR4 of banana and Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV), Uganda is using APP tools for the second time to conduct its annual *Xylella fastidiosa* survey and Zambia conducted a training and survey for fruit flies and false codling moth.

- (5) A USDA-APHIS team is supporting the secretariat in developing three instructional videos for monitoring and detecting fruit flies and citrus greening and on data management and use of tablets.
- (6) **Phase 2:** In collaboration with the two regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs) in Africa-African Union Inter-African Phytosanitary Council (AU-IAPSC) and the Near East and Plant Protection Organization (NEPPO), eight countries were selected to join the second phase of APP. They are Algeria, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo, Liberia, Malawi, South Africa and Tunisia. The nominated Eastern African countries — Burundi, Somalia and South Sudan were excluded and opted to join the next phase when they would have developed sufficient phytosanitary systems to support their participation.
- (7) All phase two countries have submitted lists of five priority pests of economic, environmental and regulatory significance. These lists will be sent to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop field survey protocols for the named pests.
- (8) To start the onboarding process and welcome the new countries, the IPPC Secretariat held a meeting with their representatives (NPPO contact points), on 25 November 2024. The countries were briefed on the APP, its governance, implementation modalities and planned activities.
- (9) The NPPO of South Africa has indicated its willingness and readiness to host the Train-the-trainer workshop for countries in the APP second phase, in June 2025. The NPPO will send official communication from the relevant ministry/government agency in South Africa as confirmation. The proposed training location is Mbombela, formerly Nelspruit in South Africa's Mpumalanga Province.

A team from USDA-APHIS will support the IPPC Secretariat in delivering the training. The secretariat will invite representatives from AU-IAPSC, NEPPO, the APP technical working group, and at least two phytosanitary officers from the countries in phase one, to share their APP implementation experience.

[5] APP Governance

- (1) The secretariat liaised with AU-IAPSC and NEPPO to form three groups to support the coordination and governance of the APP activities — the Operational Coordination Group (OCG), Technical Working Group (TWG) and Communications Working Group (CWG). The 17-member TWG includes representatives from African regional and international plant health and agricultural organizations such as ANSES France, USDA, CABI, CIRAD, International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) and International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). It provides ongoing technical support to the IPPC Secretariat and participating countries, including bridging knowledge gaps to ensure effective APP implementation. The OCG is led by AU-IAPSC and NEPPO and oversees and guides the implementation of the programme.
- (2) The TWG met on 16 October and discussed the roles of the Chair and Vice Chair as well as the group's way forward in supporting the countries. On 4 November, the TWG joined the monthly meeting with NPPOS to understand their pest surveillance and identification needs and support them accordingly.

The Communications Working Group held its first meeting on 20 November, with representatives from four of the sub-regions, AU-IAPSC and the IPPC Secretariat. The group agreed on the need for a Chair and Vice Chair and noted the upcoming APP activities.

[6] Technical support

- (1) The IPPC Secretariat approved the renewal of the ESRI license to enable countries to continue accessing the APP platform online and therefore conduct surveys. ESRI is the developer of the geospatial platforms being used under APP.

- (2) The secretariat team is collaborating with the USDA APHIS and United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC) to assist users in the different ways to access the platforms correctly and address any technical or device-related concerns.
- (3) **Survey protocols:** USDAAPHIS developed 28 survey protocols for the pests listed by the pilot countries. Ten protocols have so far been reviewed by two copy editors and USDA responded to the comments. These were submitted for publication through the FAO Publication Workflow System (PWS). The remaining 18 protocols are being reviewed by a copy editor and will be shared with USDA to address any comments.
- (4) **Field supplies:** The secretariat is working with FAO's procurement division (CSLP) to source vendors for assorted field supplies such as bucket insect traps and pheromones. The APP team reviewed all submitted bids and returned to CSLP the documents cleared by the Lead Technical Officer.
- (5) The secretariat will engage the APP Technical Working Group (TWG) to identify other procurable field supplies such as diagnostic kits and other supplies indicated in countries' operation plans.

[7] **Staffing**

- (6) Currently, the IPPC Secretariat staff supporting the implementation of APP are Arop Deng- IPPC Officer-in-Charge and Team Lead for the Integration and Support Team, Avetik Nersisyan- Team Lead for Standards Setting Unit, John Gilmore- Agriculturist and Foreign Service Officer, Tanja Lahti- IPPC Meetings Associate, Descartes Koumba- Implementation Facilitation Officer, Tommaso Teti- Project Management and Resource Mobilization Specialist and Anita Tibasaaga- Communication Specialist.
- (7) Artur Shamilov- Agriculture Officer, was recently posted to FAO Regional Office for Europe (REU) for six months and will be replaced by Avetik Nersisyan during this period. John Gilmore, seconded by the United States, will retire at the end of December 2024 and USDA APHIS nominated Russell Caplen to replace him, starting in 2025. Arop Deng, who is currently leading the APP interim team, is also expected to retire, at the end of January 2025.
- (8) This interim APP team has monthly meetings with NPPOs of the 11 pilot countries. During the monthly meetings, NPPOs receive an update from the secretariat and share their implementation progress updates or discuss other programme-related matters.
- (9) The team proposes the recruitment of a Geographic Information System (GIS) specialist to support technical backstopping for NPPOs on using the APP mobile applications and liaising with USDA technical support team.
- (10) The team drafted Terms of reference (ToRs) for a GIS specialist, in consultation with colleagues at the secretariat and USDA APHIS. The secretariat will check if FAO has rosters for GIS specialists from which one can be selected to support APP.

[8] **Budget and planning**

- (1) The APP's initial funding of USD 250 000 was from USDA. Additional funding will support the procurement and distribution of more tablets to the second set of countries, the acquisition of field supplies, and the provision of onsite and virtual technical support to countries.
- (2) The APP Multidonor Trust Fund (MDTF) was finalized and is ready to receive contributions from donors and countries. The secretariat will announce to the plant health community to this effect.
- (3) An agreement with the European Commission has been finalized and a project (including an APP component) started on 1 November. The European Commission will provide support over 3 years for a total value of around USD 600 000.
- (4) The team drafted a two-year work plan and budget to anticipate APP activities. This plan will be shared with donors, FAO and IPPC management team for review and approval.

[9] Communication and visibility

- (1) The secretariat continues to create awareness about APP and the work being done in countries to promote active pest surveillance. In the last month, the secretariat collaborated with KEPHIS to publish a [news article](#) on the IPPC website, on the handover of tablets to and training for national phytosanitary technicians in Kenya. Messages were also promoted on the [IPPC](#) and [KEPHIS](#) social media pages, generating over 1000 impressions (number of times online users saw the content). An article was published in a Kenya news daily. More news articles are available [here](#).
- (2) As mentioned in the Governance section of this update, the Communication Working Group held its first meeting on 20 November and is developing Terms of Reference for a Chair and Vice Chair of the group.
- (3) The secretariat continues promoting the APP webpage on the IPPC website and the APP brochure is available in [English](#), [French](#), [Arabic](#) and [Portuguese](#). The team is developing social media messages to highlight the ongoing pest surveillance work. The FAO liaison office in Washington (FAOLOW) also supports awareness creation about APP (supported by the United States) by republishing the articles on its website and promoting the social media messages.
- (4) The secretariat will also create messages to document the upcoming training in January and will conduct a communication campaign for the start of APP phase 2.

The APP has been mentioned in FAO news and African regional media outlets (print, TV, audio) at least 45 times in the last one year. This media coverage has raised awareness about APP and the IPPC's support to countries in strengthening their national phytosanitary and pest monitoring capacity. Here are some examples, [Egypt](#), [Uganda](#), [FAO RNE](#), [FAO Kenya](#), [African Union](#).

[10] Advocacy and outreach

- (5) Frontiers in Science, an open-access science publisher published an article titled [Bridging plant health policy implementation gaps](#) written by Osama El-Lissy, former IPPC Secretary, while he was still in office. The article highlights the importance of combining science, technology and skilled human resources to strengthen the resilience of plant health systems and bridge policy gaps. El-Lissy presents the APP as an example of an intervention that can potentially address this issue.
- (6) Between March and July 2024, Osama El-Lissy, former IPPC Secretary travelled to all pilot countries to discuss the APP with the political and technical leadership of the ministries responsible for the work of NPPOs.
- (7) He met cabinet ministers in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Zimbabwe and representatives of ministers in Morocco and Uganda. The Ministries continue to support APP implementation, in collaboration with FAO country offices.

Recommendations

[11] The CPM is invited to:

- (1) *Note* the report
- (2) *Discuss* the report and *make* recommendations on the APP plans moving forward.