



COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

NINETEENTH SESSION

UPDATES ON THE IPPC REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

AGENDA ITEM 20.2

(Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat)

Introduction

- [1] IPPC Regional Communications Networks were envisioned to function as a two-way platform between national and regional plant protection organizations (NPPOs, RPPOs) and the IPPC Secretariat to help broaden the reach of plant health communication. The IPPC Secretariat drafted and presented the draft principle and the Terms of Reference of the proposed Steering Group to the CPM Bureau in June 2024, following CPM-18 approval in April 2024. The bureau recommended that the secretariat share these documents for onward discussion and feedback to the Technical Consultation on RPPOs (TC-RPPOs) in its annual meeting in October 2024.
- [2] The TC-RPPO reviewed the documents and the chairperson shared their feedback with the Strategic Planning Group in the latter's annual meeting in October 2024, summarized below:
- how would these networks affect RPPOs' work, considering that NPPOs, rather than RPPOs communicate directly to their publics;
 - what exactly is expected of RPPOs, i.e. their roles and deliverables in their respective networks;
 - what are the consequences if there is no uptake from some RPPOs; and
 - a regional approach, in theory, may not work considering that NPPOs/countries communicate differently, e.g. multiple languages are used in every region.
- [3] The SPG noted that further discussion will be needed at the CPM Bureau meeting in December 2024.

Consultation meeting with former members of the CPM Focus Group on Communication

- [4] To address the TC-RPPO concerns and as a way forward, the IPPC Secretariat consulted former members of the CPM Focus Group on Communication (henceforth referred to in this paper as the 'group') for their insights and advice, including Lihong ZU, former chairperson; James STAPLETON, former vice chairperson; Gabrielle VIVIAN-SMITH; and Lucy CARSON-TAYLOR. A summary of the consultation meeting held virtually on 13 November 2024 is as follows:
- [5] **What do we want to achieve?** It is important that the secretariat determines exactly what it wants to achieve through the networks and what NPPOs want support on, e.g. campaigns, capacity building or greater collaboration. The group supported the idea but cautioned that establishing regional networks is a huge and ambitious undertaking that, over time, the laborious process of doing so may far exceed the intended outcomes. This could get problematic since regions and RPPOs vary in structure, function, funding, as well as in their levels of interest, capacity and uptake. Some regions may be better prepared to contribute to their respective networks while others may struggle to get more organized. Moreover,

while some RPPOs may be receptive to the idea, they may need a system where they can opt in and receive feedback but trying to over-engineer their structure through these networks will not work.

[6] The group recommended to take a step back and look at communications from a larger framework by revisiting the IPPC's core business (pest prevention and plant protection) and the IPPC Communication Strategy's goals and approaches. These would guide the secretariat in identifying clear, realistic and doable target outcomes that are responsive to NPPOs' communication needs.

[7] **Clarity on RPPOs' and NPPOs' roles.** The group emphasized that NPPOs communicate directly with their publics and that the RPPOs' role is to provide their NPPOs with a platform where they can exchange information, best practices and successful communication initiatives. The draft principle does not clearly explain what is expected of RPPOs and NPPOs and it gives an impression that this will be additional work for them. The group, however, noted that NPPOs do have a common desire to communicate better to their stakeholders and that they are always interested in learning what other NPPOs are doing. The secretariat asked the group if it would make sense to pilot 2-3 networks and see what works and what doesn't work.

[8] The group recommended the following:

- (a) Convene RPPOs and NPPOs, determine their communication needs and plan activities collectively. It is important that RPPOs, NPPOs and other stakeholders lead the planning process to engage and incentivize them;
- (b) Narrow down the communication objectives and targets per region and make them clear to NPPOs to avoid competition;
- (c) Focus on countries' audience and what they need to know;
- (d) Initially work with two NPPOs and highlight successful communication efforts to provide regions and NPPOs with new or suitable options that can be shared with the network, as well as core assets or templates that can be regionally and globally useful.
- (e) Present proof of concept to test the feasibility if an activity or product addresses NPPOs' communication needs, e.g. 1) templates to communicate pest alerts and early warning; 2) case studies and stories; 3) shared events such as training on how NPPOs can engage stakeholders; or 4) information on chemicals and pesticide, among others. Understand which assets will have greater uptake in each region considering their interests and differences, then focus on producing and disseminating these first. Evaluate if these would merit further investment after a few years.

[9] Some examples of products and activities shared by the group include:

- (a) [EPPO plant information platform](#) - a useful online platform for countries to put materials that NPPOs can use;
- (b) Create a similar template like that developed by EPPO on the emerald ash borer. As this is one of the problems identified in the region (and on the EPPO website), a template that NPPOs can customize to communicate to their publics is a simple product to develop that countries can easily reuse; and
- (c) Hold a forum wherein countries that have held IDPH campaigns can do a quick-fire sharing to engage other countries and provide ideas to jumpstart or improve their IDPH campaign.

[10] Considering all these points, the IPPC Secretariat held further internal discussion and thus, recommends the following action points:

[11] **Conduct a communication needs assessment survey among NPPOs.** The survey will focus on 1) what information NPPOs currently communicate and what they need to communicate better; 2) what communication materials or tools need to be developed that NPPOs, RPPOs and stakeholders can use; and 3) what are the most appropriate channels where these information can be most effectively disseminated. If the CPM Bureau approves this recommendation, the secretariat will proceed in

administering the survey from the 3rd-4th week of December 2024. The survey form can be found on Annex 1.

[12] **Develop a better understanding of how NPPOs' communication structures, processes, activities and products** (or lack thereof) differ. After analyzing the survey results, the secretariat will hold a consultative meeting with NPPOs in each region (voluntary participation via an IPPC call for interest). These meetings aim to draw out insights that the survey cannot capture, for instance, sentiments on how NPPOs desire to communicate better but their current structure or funding limits them to do so. Outcomes from these meetings will complement the survey results and will then be a more solid basis for conceptualizing a feasible set up that would support NPPOs to communicate better, which is one of the aims of setting up the Regional Communication Networks. These will also guide the secretariat on the scope and nature of the networks, considering existing frameworks, activities, gaps, challenges and opportunities. Convening NPPOs as a first step will also signal that establishing a two-way communication flow (whether through the communication networks or in another form), should be participatory, allowing NPPOs to identify their communication gaps, and eventually, leading the planning and implementing what works best for them.

[13] At the CPM Bureau meeting on 12 December 2024, the Bureau approved to proceed with the survey and hold the consultative meetings in January 2024. Based on the feedback and outcomes of the survey and consultative meetings, the secretariat will propose the next steps at the CPM Bureau meeting in March 2025.¹

[14] For reference, the draft principle and the Terms of Reference for the Steering Group are in Appendix 2.

Recommendations

[15] The CPM is invited to:

- (1) *Note* the updates and summary results of the survey and consultative meetings

¹ See related INF paper

Appendix 1: Survey: Assessment of NPPOs' communication and information needs

Organization
Country
Title/designation
Email

1. Who are your primary, secondary and tertiary target audiences and stakeholders? Check each one as appropriate.

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Ministry of environment/ agriculture/ trade			
Parliament			
Policy- and decision-makers			
Farmers and growers			
Industry and agribusiness associations			
Plant and plant product producers and exporters			
Shipping and freight companies			
Postal services			
E-commerce service providers			
Academia/Research institutions			
International organizations			
IPPC Secretariat, subsidiary bodies and FAO			
Regional plant protection organizations			
Donors			
Other national bodies (please specify)			
General public			
Media			
Others (please specify)			

2. What communication and advocacy **activities** about plant health has your NPPO done in the last 2-3 years? Select all that applies.

High-level ministerial meeting
Workshops, webinars, conferences
Observance of International Day of Plant Health
Public campaign on regulated pests
Press briefing/ conference
Plant health clinic
Exhibitions
Online/social media campaigns
Others (please specify)

3. What communication and advocacy **products** about plant health has your NPPO produced in the last 2-3 years? Select all that applies.

Newsletter/Bulletin

Social media cards/posts/reels
 Poster/banner
 Brochure/flyer/factsheet
 Website and/or web content
 Publications
 Digital assets/Trello board
 Promotional materials (e.g. bags, pens, mugs, etc.)
 Videos
 Others (please specify)

4. What plant health information do you **currently communicate** to your audiences and stakeholders? Select all that applies.

Pest alerts
 Pest status
 Pest report
 Pest-risk analysis
 Pest surveillance
 List of regulated pests
 Information about certain pests
 List of pest entry points
 Revision of phytosanitary regulations /
 Official control in progress in the country
 Phytosanitary requirements, restrictions and prohibitions
 International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs)
 Pest identification and diagnostic protocols
 Phytosanitary treatments
 Biocontrol
 Roles and duties of NPPO and IPPC
 Climate change and plant pests
 e-commerce risks to plant health
 IPPC ePhyto Solution/digital phytosanitary certification
 Others (please specify)

5. Which information below would you like to **communicate better** to your audiences and stakeholders? Rank by clicking on the arrows (1 – top priority) and indicate the target audience (exporters, growers, general public, customs officials, media, etc. or see list in Question #1).

Topic	Target audiences/stakeholders
Pest alerts Pest status Pest report Pest-risk analysis Pest surveillance List of regulated pests Information about certain pests List of pest entry points Revision of phytosanitary regulations / Official control in progress in the country Phytosanitary requirements, restrictions and prohibitions	

International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) Pest identification and diagnostic protocols Phytosanitary treatments Biocontrol Role and duties of NPPO and IPPC Climate change and plant pests e-commerce risks to plant health IPPC ePhyto Solution/digital phytosanitary certification Others (please specify)	
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6. What is the most appropriate medium or tool to communicate your top priority topics? Rank the following by clicking on the arrows (1 – top priority).

Newsletter/Bulletin
 Case studies/success stories
 Website
 Poster/banner
 Brochure/flyer/factsheet
 Infographics
 Social media cards/posts/reels
 Digital assets/Trello board
 Videos
 Media (specialist, mainstream or public media)
 Others (please specify)

7. Does your NPPO have a communications unit or communications personnel/function?

Yes
 If yes, explain briefly.
 No

8. What capacity building/trainings in communication does your NPPO need? Select as many as applicable.

Communications planning
 Campaigns (e.g. International Day of Plant Health)
 Social media strategy
 Media training
 Developing publications
 Organizing events
 Writing news, blogs, press releases
 Report writing
 Developing visuals, e.g. infographics
 Photography and/or photo curation
 Scriptwriting and video production
 Podcasts, radio or TV broadcast
 Evaluating impact of communication

9. What communication products or activities made by other NPPOs/organizations did you like or found useful e.g. case studies, posters, social media campaigns, International Day of Plant Health campaign, etc.? Please provide links if applicable.
10. Please indicate which of the above examples that your NPPO would like to do (if any).
11. Do you monitor or evaluate the impact of your communication activities or products?
 - Yes – If yes, describe briefly the methodology and overall results.
 - No

If you would like to share further information or have questions, please email ippc@fao.org and mutya.frio@fao.org.

Appendix 2. IPPC Regional Communication Networks and Steering Group TORs

Objectives

The IPPC Regional Communication Networks (RCNs) will serve as a formal and structured platform to achieve the following:

- (1) widen the reach and strengthen the impact of communications on plant health.
- (2) facilitate information and knowledge sharing, collaboration, cooperation and capacity development of communication professionals in promoting plant health in the IPPC community and;
- (3) strengthen communication between RPPOs and NPPOs in their respective regions and between RPPOs, the IPPC Secretariat, with other RPPOs, FAO regional and national offices and with relevant organizations.

Structure and governance

The IPPC Secretariat will centrally manage and coordinate the RCNs as well as provide technical support to establish and maintain them, with advice and guidance from the Steering Group of the IPPC Regional Communication Network (to be established).

Seven regional networks will be established to represent each region including Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, the Near East and North Africa, and Southwest Pacific. Each network will be led by the respective RPPO and composed of members from NPPOs in that region, and centrally coordinated by the IPPC Secretariat.

The governance mechanism is envisioned to help facilitate the exchange of information concerning various events, campaigns, communication materials and activities, as well as opportunities, challenges and solutions related to communications within each region. It will also provide a platform for the IPPC Secretariat to stay informed about opportunities for potential collaboration or lending support to their respective communications campaigns.

Each Regional Communication Network is expected to:

- (1) nominate a plant health communication focal point.
- (2) organize regular meetings, the frequency of which will be determined by the RPPO according to their needs.
- (3) develop and implement an annual communications workplan based on the needs and opportunities in that region.
- (4) populate their respective communications webpages on the IPP by submitting content to the IPPC Secretariat (that meets IPPC and FAO standards and guidelines on web publishing); and
- (5) liaise with the IPPC Secretariat on communication-related opportunities or matters.

Steering Group

The IPPC Secretariat will establish a Steering Group tasked with providing advice and guidance on how to establish and maintain these networks. The Steering Group, which will meet virtually every two months, will develop and implement an annual workplan together with the IPPC Secretariat to ensure that the networks remain active. It will also develop and implement communication initiatives that will build the networks' capacity in communication related to plant health. For information regarding membership, the process of selection, tasks and other details, see the Terms of Reference outlined in Annex 2 of this paper.

Membership

Membership in the regional networks will be voluntary and open to all communication practitioners in each region, including those involved in advocacy and partner engagements and those performing communication functions in NPPOs, RPPOs, FAO regional and national offices, for IPPC partners and other relevant organizations. The IPPC Secretariat will support each network in sending out calls for members as well as managing and updating the member database in each region.

Information and knowledge management

A landing page about the Regional Communications Network on the IPPC website or the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) will be created, managed and maintained by the IPPC Secretariat. A subpage will be created for each of the regional networks, which will serve as a central platform for communications related to plant health in that region. The following information will be posted on each of the regional subpage:

- (1) campaign materials, digital assets, publications related to communicating on plant health that can be used for cross-promotion.
- (2) calendar of relevant communication and advocacy events, such as trainings, conferences, workshops and webinars (could be linked to the external event website, if available).
- (3) opportunities for training and employment (could be linked to the external website); and
- (4) email address of the network's official plant health communications focal point as a contact.

Each regional network will be invited to generate content and update it on their respective subpages, to be submitted for the secretariat to post (provided that they meet IPPC and FAO standards and guidelines on web publishing).

Each subpage will be available in English and in the official language of the region (Arabic, French, Chinese, Russian or Spanish) to encourage participation and information exchange on the part of NPPOs and RPPOs.

When creating the subpages, care will be taken not to duplicate existing platforms, such as the [EPPO Plant Health Information website](#), which can be linked to the IPP page.

Potential key activities

IDPH 2025 – getting RPPOs, NPPOs and FAO regional and national offices involved in early planning and promotion; finding out what NPPOs are planning to do and exploring opportunities for collaboration with the IPPC Secretariat.

Capacity development activities – webinars on various topics to be held throughout the year (2024–2025), including:

- (1) developing year-round digital campaigns on plant health, e.g. EFSA's #planthealth4life campaign; Don't Risk it campaign, etc.;
- (2) engaging national and local media on plant protection and plant health – potential resource speaker from an FAO regional or decentralized office or from an NPPO or RPPO;
- (3) best practices in advocacy and outreach; developing effective advocacy materials for policymakers; and
- (4) measuring the reach and impact of communications.

Terms of Reference of the Steering Group of the IPPC Regional Communication Network (RCN)

Background

In 2023, the seventeenth session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-17) adopted the IPPC Communications Strategy 2023–2030. CPM-17 (2023) also approved the IPPC Secretariat's proposal to establish a Community of Practice in Communications to provide a two-way platform for communication among NPPOs, RPPOs, IPPC partners, FAO regional and national offices, relevant organizations and the IPPC Secretariat.

After consultations with RPPOs in July-August 2023 and internal discussion within the IPPC Secretariat in November 2023, the IPPC Secretariat decided that the best way to facilitate a two-way communication process is through Regional Communications Networks, which can better address communication issues and opportunities at the regional rather than global level with contracting parties as initially envisaged for the Community of Practice.

In April 2024, CPM-18 approved the IPPC Secretariat's proposal to establish the IPPC Regional Communication Networks and Steering Group.

Purpose

The Steering Group for the IPPC Regional Communication Networks will serve as an advisory body to the IPPC Secretariat with a view to establishing and maintaining the seven regional communication networks.

Membership

The Steering Group will be composed of up to 11 members with relevant skills and experience in communications as well as knowledge of the IPPC and related activities of the IPPC Community. The CPM Bureau, having consulted the IPPC Secretariat and considered the skills and experience required, gender balance and geographical representation, will be a requirement in the selection and appointment of members.

Members will include:

- (1) 7 representatives (one from each region)
- (2) CPM Bureau member
- (3) TC-RPPO member
- (4) Up to 2 members from IPPC partners or interest groups

Functions

The key tasks of the focus group will be to:

- (1) provide guidance and advice on establishing and maintaining the networks by sharing best practices or lessons learned from similar undertakings, including key considerations or potential barriers and challenges, and recommended solutions.
- (2) provide guidance and advice in establishing and maintaining the knowledge- sharing platform on the IPP, ensuring that it is used in the most efficient and impactful way for the collective benefit of all the NPPOs in each of the regional network.
- (3) develop procedures and processes to ensure that the regional networks remain active and functioning, including providing recommendations to address potential issues.

- (4) propose capacity development activities on communications and advocacy for members of the regional network; develop a communications toolkit on plant health; best practices in advocacy and outreach for policymakers; and engage with media by pitching stories to raise the public's awareness of plant health.
- (5) elaborate procedures and processes on how the IPPC, the regional networks and NPPOs can plan for future International Days of Plant Health campaigns at the global, regional and national levels.
- (6) prepare updates on the progress of its annual workplan to be presented at CPM sessions, at annual meetings of the CPM Bureau, the SPG, TC-RPPOs, IPPC Regional Workshops and FAO regional communications meetings.
- (7) identify, solicit and help to mobilize resources for the establishment and maintenance of the IPPC Regional Communication Networks; and
- (8) perform other related functions as required.

Process

The establishment of the Steering Group for the IPPC Regional Communications Networks was approved at CPM-18 (2024).¹ The IPPC Secretariat will publish a call for nominations on the IPP for contracting parties and RPPOs to nominate their representatives to become a member of the Steering Group. The IPPC Secretariat Management Team will review the nominations and select the group members, ensuring gender and geographical balance, and submit nominations to CPM Bureau for endorsement.

Funding

The Steering Group meetings will be held virtually but, in the event that face-to-face meetings or workshops are agreed on by the group, the organization that employs an IPPC meeting participant will be responsible for funding the travel and daily subsistence allowance for that person to attend the in-person meetings or workshops. 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 proved 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/publications/criteria-used-prioritizing-participants-receive-travel-assistance-attend-meetings>).

Duration

The Steering Group will commence work once the CPM Bureau has endorsed the members and will remain effective until CPM-20 (2026) to effectively carry out its mandate, subject to possible subsequent CPM Bureau decisions on extending its mandate.