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ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE GLOBAL ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY TO COLLABORATIVELY STRENGTHEN BIOSECURITY.

Background

This information paper is prepared by AIPH to update the international plant protection sector on the activities that the global ornamental horticulture industry is undertaking to work collaboratively to strengthen biosecurity.

The International Association of Horticultural Producers, AIPH, represents horticultural producers involved in the trade of ornamental horticulture. AIPH is made up of national trade organisations from around the world. Ornamental Horticulture is an exciting, dynamic, and important global industry worth more than \$400 billion, providing livelihoods to vast numbers of people around the world and providing products to almost every person on the planet. Those products – flowers and plants – are easily demonstrated to enhance the lives and well-being of all of us and, indeed, of the living earth itself: Ornamental Horticulture is important beyond the understanding of most people. And yet, as ‘Operators’ in the language of the IPPC, horticultural practitioners recognise that trade in plants is a potential threat to biosecurity. International travel and trade have tripled in volume in the last decade, and this has the potential to quickly spread pests and diseases around the world, possibly causing damage to native plants and ecosystems. Like the IPPC itself, responsible growers aim to both facilitate safe trade and to protect the environment. AIPH represents and leads growers to find ways of discharging, and demonstrating that they discharge, the enormous responsibilities they carry.

AIPH has a clear vision of its role in international horticulture, and recognises that helping its members deliver strengthened, consistent, and global biosecurity is a key part of that role. Our strategy sees AIPH working with its Members who, in turn, will collaborate with their local NPPOs. We believe that this work has high relevance to the goals of IPPC and its members and we feel it is important to keep the CPM informed as this develops. This Information Paper is written to start that process of informing, highlighting trade initiatives that we believe will become increasingly important over time, and to suggest some potential actions and objectives for the CPM to consider.

AIPH Plant Health Strategy

Through our industry research AIPH is confident that a voluntary plant health management standard that is internationally accepted and applied by Operators in ornamental horticulture will support NPPOs in their duties and collaboratively achieve IPPC goals. IPPC supports protocols that facilitate safe trade across international borders, and it is the NPPOs who manage compliance and adherence to regulations. This system relies on Operators to discharge their responsibilities. The degree to which these duties are addressed may vary.

In 2021, as part of our commitment to IPPC’s International Year of Plant Health 2020, AIPH undertook a survey of its members to gain insights into the quality and uniformity of plant health and biosecurity in the international ornamental horticulture industry. IYPH 2020 called on countries to increase their support for national, regional and international plant protection authorities that are the first line of defense. It also call for greater private-public cooperation. Against this backdrop of IYPH 2020, the AIPH commissioned a survey of its members to gain insights from industry stakeholders into the knowledge and use of voluntary plant health and biosecurity standards in countries around the world. The survey was prepared by a technical advisory group which included

representatives from the trade and researchers with backgrounds in ornamental horticulture and the development of plant health and biosecurity standards.

This survey identified eleven standards that covered plant biosecurity in ornamental horticulture. Of these eleven, 6 voluntary plant health standards take a systems approach to plant health to enable healthy production systems, cost-effective and reliable movement of low-risk plant material within global supply chains, and traceability in the event of a biosecurity threat. The AIPH survey also revealed that 78% of respondents had an interest in the development of an international voluntary plant health and biosecurity standard, providing that the requirements are designed with the involvement of horticultural professionals and are widely adopted by the industry.. In the foreword, Mr Ralf Lopian, Chair of IPPC at the time, stated: *“This survey is an exemplary industry-led initiative, and embraces the full intention of IYPH 2020. I congratulate AIPH on this initiative, and I look forward to the next stage in developing greater connection with plant health authorities. The recommendations contained in this report offer a promising roadmap for improved public-private collaboration.”* The full pdf report of the AIPH Plant Health Survey 2021 is available on request from AIPH.

Further work carried out by AIPH since the 2021 survey looked more closely at the voluntary plant health ‘Standards ’revealed by the survey and attempted to identify common features of those that might aid a Horticultural Operator in strengthening biosecurity throughout their business. For the purposes of the AIPH survey, ‘Voluntary Standards ’were defined as: *‘developed by non-governmental entities such as businesses, not-for-profit organisations, or initiatives involving multiple stakeholders and not part of formal plant health legislation’*. Five of the schemes that were examined effectively provide user businesses with a ‘Plant Health Management System ’that operates throughout the business. From our review, AIPH defines a ‘Plant Health Management System ’according to 10 criteria (Table 1).

Table 1: Criteria that define a high quality Plant Health Management System for ornamental horticulture

Criteria defining a high quality Plant Health Management System for ornamental horticulture	
1.	A management system designed specifically to deliver strong levels of biosecurity throughout the business. That is, a plant health management system that is ingrained throughout the whole business, not restricted to one crop or site.
2.	A management system that adopts a ‘Systems Approach’. A systems approach recognises that ‘Biosecurity ’is a complex issue made up of many interacting elements. Strengthened biosecurity is delivered by monitoring and managing many different aspects of business activity and taking different actions that are dependent on the current situation: it is an ‘active ’system, not a prescribed and unchanging set of rules.
3.	A management system that adopts the principles of ‘Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points’. The principles of HACCP demand that a business identifies and assesses potential hazards, understands how these might manifest, and takes action to identify and mitigate these risks.

Criteria defining a high quality Plant Health Management System for ornamental horticulture	
4.	A management system made up in part of non-prescriptive elements that clearly identify the results the Management System must deliver but do not make demands on how those results are delivered.
5.	A system made up in part of prescriptive elements that clearly identify features that must be incorporated into the Management System.
6.	A system that delivers plant 'traceability' throughout the business.
7.	A system that incorporates record keeping throughout.
8.	A system that incorporates both internal and external auditing.
9.	A system that ensures staff know what their responsibilities are and that they are qualified to discharge those responsibilities.
10.	A system designed to deliver continuous improvement of biosecurity.

The AIPH Plant Health Committee considers that the five voluntary Plant Health Management Schemes have these common characteristics. Each has been developed by trade organisations in conjunction with their NPPOs, and each recognise that, while the IPPC and NPPOs are charged with establishing strong regulatory frameworks in which horticultural businesses must work, the task of understanding and responding to those regulatory frameworks can be complex. Around the world we have identified that Horticulture Operators, and the Trade Bodies that represent them, are starting to develop professional business systems that aim to help those involved in Plant Health recognise their responsibilities and develop strategies that will deliver those responsibilities. Such schemes also allow a business to demonstrate to its stakeholders that it understands and discharges its biosecurity responsibilities. We believe this is a positive development that should be encouraged, as it will strengthen biosecurity and facilitate safe trade in horticultural produce.

An International Standard for Plant Health Management

When a 'Plant Health Management System' is established within a nation state, it provides accreditation of businesses demonstrating high levels of biosecurity. Responsible, high-biosecurity operators using the system start to demand the same levels of biosecurity of their suppliers, and take-up of the scheme accelerates. However, the five schemes referred to above were developed within single nation states, by national trade bodies working in conjunction with their National Plant Protection Organisation. As a result, when an accredited Operator imports plants (imported stock is generally recognised as higher in biosecurity risk than locally sourced plants), those plants will not be supplied by similarly accredited operators. We take it as self evident that Horticultural Operators accredited to such 'Plant Health Management Systems' would welcome the opportunity for their third party suppliers to be accredited to a Standard of a similarly high level.

The evidence currently available suggests that the establishment and introduction of these voluntary 'Plant Health Management Systems' has strengthened biosecurity within the nation states in which they operate. The five schemes identified have been developed and implemented by strong, well-

funded 'Horticulture Trade Bodies' that each have a clear understanding of the issues involved in biosecurity and that are able to work in conjunction with strong and well-funded NPPOs. It would seem logical to extrapolate that if such schemes were to be more widely adopted by others around the globe, then biosecurity will be further strengthened. However, it is also clear that successful schemes must be designed and operated in the right way: Some national and regional Trade Bodies may not be well funded, nor have a clear understanding of the issues critical to biosecurity. These are perhaps in greatest need of such systems, and yet these Trade bodies are often not in a strong position to develop them.

Further action for AIPH, NPPOs, and IPPC

AIPH will establish an international panel drawn from industry practitioners and plant biosecurity professionals to further examine the five voluntary schemes that were identified by AIPH as comprehensive and aligned to IPPC goals and objectives. AIPH will prepare detailed descriptions of criteria common to each and desirable in all. We will seek consensus from that panel, which will include representatives from those 5 schemes, and establish an International Plant Health Management Standard to which voluntary Plant Health Management Systems should be held. The International Standard for ornamental horticulture will provide operators around the world with a means of identifying overseas suppliers that manage their businesses in ways that recognise and fully discharge their Plant Health responsibilities. The International Standard will also aid and guide Horticultural Trade Bodies around the world to develop national schemes that will help strengthen biosecurity within their areas of operation. AIPH will use our member networks to facilitate acceptance and uptake of the International Standard.

AIPH proposes that the value of voluntary 'Plant Health Management Systems', accredited to a well defined and ambitious 'International Standard', will be valuable tools that will help a Horticultural Operator fully understand and discharge its plant health responsibilities and so strengthen biosecurity.

With this Information Paper, AIPH looks to the CPM to support the principles of this proposal, and to guide AIPH to find the best means to integrate the proposed International Plant Health Management Standard into current systems and protocols, collaborating with NPPOs to strengthen biosecurity and facilitate safe trade in horticultural produce.

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