



COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

TWENTIETH SESSION

MANAGEMENT OF E-COMMERCE AND POSTAL AND COURIER PATHWAYS

AGENDA ITEM 13.3

(Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat with input from the IC Team on E-commerce Lead)

1. Introduction

- [1] Management of electronic commerce (e-commerce), and related postal and courier plant pest pathways, is one of eight development agenda items (DAIs) in the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020–2030. The work programme on this DAI began following the adoption of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) Recommendation R-05 on *Internet trade (e-commerce) in plants and other regulated articles*,¹ with the aim of supporting its implementation and fostering stronger international collaboration to reduce the spread of pests associated with online trade.
- [2] The work under this DAI is organized in two phases, as identified by the Focus Group for the Strategic Framework DAI² and illustrated in Figure 1. Phase 1 focuses on developing foundational tools, guidance materials, and baseline data, and is expected to continue until December 2025. With Phase 1 nearing completion, this is a critical juncture at which time the CPM can determine whether or not to initiate Phase 2 (2026–2030), which would build on the achievements of Phase 1 and the findings of the Observatory study.

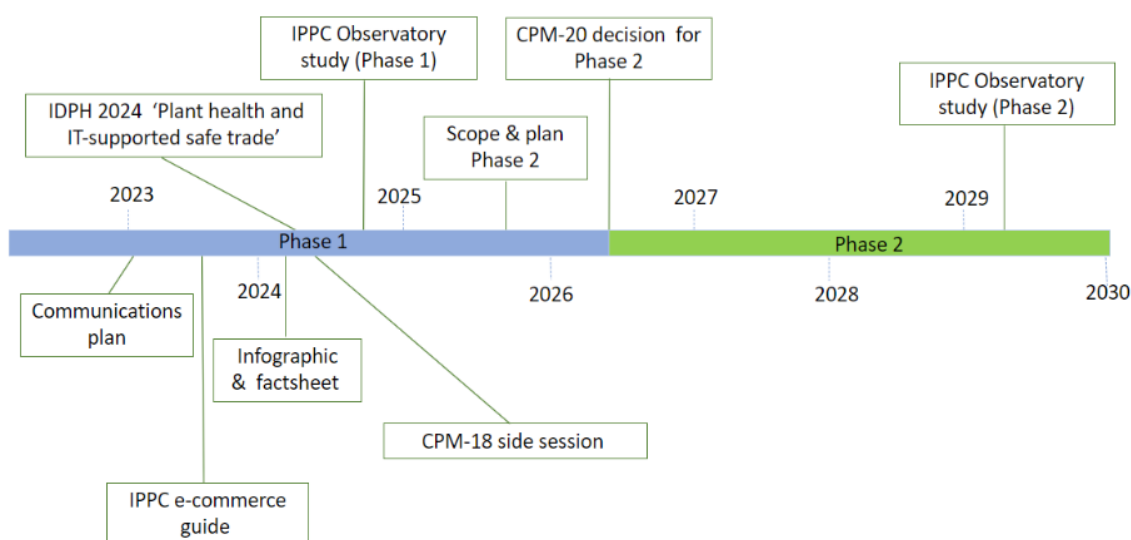


Figure 1. Revised timeline of activities for the e-commerce work programme (2023-2030).

¹https://www.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2017/08/R_05_En_2017-08-23_Combined_5Pax7M6.pdf

² IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030 Development Agenda Items Implementation Plan, pp. 17-19: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/91889/>

- [3] The IPPC work on this DAI is under the oversight of the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC), with input from the Standards Committee, and coordinated by the Implementation and Facilitation Unit.
- [4] An IC team³ was established in 2021 to guide the work on e-commerce. CPM-17 (2023) approved the overarching implementation plan for all DAIs within the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020–2030, which has since guided activities under the e-commerce DAI.⁴
- [5] E-commerce activities have been carried out thanks to in-kind and financial contributions provided by Canada. Deep gratitude is expressed to Canada for its strong support of the activities related to the implementation of the e-commerce development agenda.
- [6] This paper provides an update on recent progress of IPPC activities under the e-commerce DAI and presents a proposed roadmap for Phase 2 of the workplan for CPM's consideration and approval. The paper further requests the CPM allocate financial resources required to implement Phase 2.

2. Update on the status of implementation

2.1 Progress made during 2024–2025

- [7] The e-commerce infographic video Managing the Pest Risk posed by E-commerce⁵ was launched in January 2024 and was viewed more than 1 900 times as of November 2025. The IPPC guide on e-commerce⁶ continues to be one of the most downloaded guides, now available in English, French and Spanish, with more than 1400 downloads to date.
- [8] Engagement with IPPC contracting parties and partners was strengthened through key IPPC and external events. A well-attended e-commerce side-session at CPM-18 (2024) featured presentations from NPPOs and the Universal Postal Union. E-commerce was also highlighted during the 2024 International Day of Plant Health, with high-level participation and awareness-raising displays on pest risks linked to online trade.
- [9] The secretariat expanded collaboration with external organizations, including active participation in relevant groups of the Universal Postal Union postal security group, World Customs Organization, and the International Seed Federation. These engagements included multiple presentations on plant health, the IPPC ePhyto Solution and e-commerce trends. Future collaboration will be guided by CPM recommendation for Phase 2 of this DAI.
- [10] Communication efforts were enhanced through the redesign of the International Phytosanitary Portal e-commerce webpage,⁷ integration of the e-commerce communications plan into broader IPPC Secretariat planning, and publication of several e-commerce-related stories in the IPPC newsletter throughout 2023–2024.

2.2 IPPC Observatory study on e-commerce

- [11] The IPPC Observatory Study on E-commerce was launched in August 2024. Members of the IC Team on E-commerce and the IC Subgroup on the IPPC Observatory contributed to the survey's design, review, and testing, and supported the proofreading of its Arabic, French, Spanish and Chinese versions.

³ IC Team on E-commerce membership list: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/92398/>

⁴ IPPC SF DAIs implementation plan

⁵ Managing the Pest Risk posed by E-commerce video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDEaNfAZ2sM>

⁶ E-commerce: A guide to managing the pest risk posed by goods ordered online and distributed through postal and courier pathways: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc8209en>

⁷ IPP e-commerce page: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/capacity-development/e-commerce/>

- [12] All relevant materials—including the survey links, glossary, and questionnaire—were published on the International Phytosanitary Portal.⁸ The secretariat implemented a targeted communications plan to raise awareness and promoted the survey through mass emails and major IPPC events, including the 2024 Regional Workshops and the 36th Technical Consultation among Regional Plant Protection Organizations (TC-RPPO).
- [13] The survey closed in December 2024, yielding 112 responses (76 valid), representing a 41 percent response rate and participation from all FAO regions (at least 24 percent in each). The results provide a strong basis for assessing phytosanitary risk management in e-commerce, highlighting key strengths and gaps.
- [14] The preliminary analysis and draft report were reviewed by the IC, the IC Team on E-commerce, and the IC Subgroup on the IPPC Observatory in 2025 and subsequently refined and finalized. The recommendations stemming from the draft IPPC Observatory Study on E-commerce are presented in Appendix 1.
- [15] Based on these recommendations, a roadmap for a potential Phase 2 of work has been developed, reviewed and approved by the IC team, as presented in Appendix 2. The IC team agreed that the financial resources required to deliver the workplan cost approximately USD 120 000 per annum, as stated in the overarching implementation plan for the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030 DAIs.⁹

3. Next steps

- [16] In the case of a favourable CPM decision regarding the Phase 2 of the workplan of the DAI on e-commerce, a detailed workplan will be developed based on the proposed roadmap. Additionally, the investment prospectus¹⁰ will be updated to reflect the findings of the Observatory study, the proposed roadmap and estimated funding requirements. The prospectus is intended to raise awareness of the implementation plan and to support resource mobilization.
- [17] A second IPPC Observatory study is tentatively planned for 2029 to measure key e-commerce outcomes, as specified in the Strategic Framework (see figure 1).

Recommendations

- [18] The CPM is *invited* to:
- (1) *note* the IPPC Observatory E-commerce Study report;
 - (2) *invite* the IPPC contracting parties and RPPOs to take action at national and regional levels based on the recommendations from the IPPC Observatory E-commerce Study, as presented in Appendix 1;
 - (3) *review* the proposed roadmap for the Phase 2 of the workplan for the *DAI on management of e-commerce and postal and courier pathways* (2026-2030), noting the financial resources required to deliver this workplan, as presented in Appendix 2;
 - (4) *agree* whether Phase 2 of the workplan for the DAI on management of e-commerce and postal and courier pathways (2026-2030) should commence; and,
 - (5) if agreed, *acknowledge* that implementation of Phase 2 is contingent upon the availability of adequate financial resources and *request* that the necessary funding be secured to enable its commencement.

⁸ IPPC Observatory Study on E-commerce: <https://www.ippc.int/en/resources/multimedia/online-tools/ippc-observatory/ippc-observatory-e-commerce-study/>

⁹ IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030 Development Agenda Items Overarching Implementation Plan, page 18.: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/91889/>

¹⁰ CPM 2024/13_01: https://assets.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2024/04/13_CPM_2024_01_DAIS_Flyers_29_03_2024.pdf

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Appendix 1: Recommendations from the draft IPPC Observatory Study on E-commerce

RECOMMENDATIONS

The IPPC Observatory is a crucial system that monitors the implementation of the IPPC, its international standards for phytosanitary measures, and recommendations of the CPM. It plays a vital role in helping NPPOs identify challenges and best practices in implementing these measures, ultimately contributing to the creation of strategies and capacity and implementation resources to support NPPOs.

The objective of this *IPPC Observatory Study on E-commerce* is to understand the extent to which the CPM recommendation on internet trade has been implemented by IPPC Contracting Parties and to provide baseline data to understand whether the desired outcomes specified in the DAI have been reached.

GLOBAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Three general recommendations are derived from the analysis of data and invite the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) to support NPPOs at the global level. While these recommendations stem from the *IPPC Observatory E-commerce Study*, their relevance extends beyond e-commerce and small parcels moving through postal and courier pathways. Therefore, they hold broader implications for strengthening national phytosanitary systems at the global level and improving border management. Addressing these recommendations is expected to enhance the regulation of online trade and contribute to the development of a more robust and efficient phytosanitary import system at national, regional, and global levels.

1. Global recommendation 1: Increase awareness of key IPPC e-commerce resources

The IPPC has developed a guide, recommendations, and an infographic video, along with a centralised hub that provides access to multiple resources designed to assist contracting parties and other stakeholders in tackling the phytosanitary challenges posed by e-commerce trade. However, findings from this study reveal gaps in awareness regarding some key support documents such as *CPM R-05* and the *E-Commerce Guide*. These gaps highlight the need for IPPC Secretariat to continue with outreach efforts and encouraging greater engagement with these essential tools.

To improve awareness and encourage greater engagement with IPPC study documents relevant to e-commerce trade, the following actions could be considered:

- **Expanding accessibility through multilingual translations:** The E-commerce Guide is currently available in English and Spanish. Translating it into additional FAO languages (Arabic, Russian, and Chinese) would improve accessibility for contracting parties with different linguistic profiles. Ideally, future IPPC e-commerce resources should be published simultaneously in all FAO official languages to promote inclusivity and equal access from the outset as is done with the managing e-commerce pest risk video on the dedicate IPPC e-commerce website.
- **Further integration into IPPC regional workshop agendas and other relevant IPPC events:** Continuing to raise awareness about available IPPC e-commerce resources will promote use of these key resources among NPPO staff.

2. Global recommendation 2: Encourage enhanced interagency collaboration on border risk management

As e-commerce continues to grow, strengthening collaboration between customs, postal services, and other border agencies is crucial for effectively managing phytosanitary risks. Survey findings reveal gaps in mechanisms that facilitate direct communication and coordination between these agencies, highlighting the need for enhanced interagency cooperation. To address these challenges, the IPPC could consider implementing initiatives aimed at encouraging greater cooperation between customs, postal services, and other border agencies. For example, the IPPC could develop targeted documents or online training modules focused on fostering interagency collaboration, while also sharing success stories from contracting parties to demonstrate how challenges were overcome and showcase effective strategies for building stronger cooperation.

3. Global recommendation 3: Enhance technical support on strengthening border risk management

With the rapid growth of e-commerce, effective phytosanitary border risk management is more critical than ever. Study findings reveal significant gaps in risk profiling and inspection of high-risk small parcels, with all regions scoring below 61% on the at-border risk management indicator. Given the complexity of at-border risk management and the multiple entities involved, NPPOs are encouraged to assess existing mechanisms in their geographic areas, and if necessary, pinpoint priority areas for improvement and create action plans to address key gaps. IPPC resources could play a pivotal role in supporting the efforts of NPPOs by enhancing and disseminating technical guidance on risk profiling methods detailed in the *E-commerce Guide*. For example, the IPPC could undertake an activity to review all its capacity-building and implementation support resources specific to inspections (e.g., e-learning courses, the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation process) to assess the extent to which they address aspects specific to dealing with high-risk small parcels, update these resources accordingly if needed, and reshare.

REGION-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The regional disaggregation of indicators also offered valuable insights into areas that may require heightened regional focus to strengthen phytosanitary risk management in response to the challenges posed by e-commerce (Table 1). While not conclusive and exhaustive, these study insights highlight opportunities for targeted interventions either by national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) and regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs) to enhance compliance, enforcement, and monitoring mechanisms at the regional level.

Table 1. Potential areas of regional focus on e-commerce capacity-building

Region	Potential area of focus
Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulatory and non-regulatory frameworks At border risk management Public awareness campaigns Accessibility of lists or lists or databases of prohibited and regulated articles
Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implementation of advance information sharing systems
Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At border risk management Public awareness campaigns Accessibility of lists or lists or databases of prohibited and regulated articles
Latin America and Caribbean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At border risk management Public awareness campaigns

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building for key e-commerce stakeholders
Near East and North Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At border risk management • Public awareness campaigns • Comprehensiveness of e-commerce governance frameworks
North America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training workshops or sessions to build capacity
South West Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility of lists or lists or databases of prohibited and regulated articles

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IPPC CONTRACTING PARTIES

Survey respondents also emphasised several national-level recommendations to support NPPOs in addressing ongoing challenges in managing phytosanitary risks in e-commerce trade. These recommendations of support relate to: (i) updating of phytosanitary legislation, (ii) capacity building and training of NPPO staff, (iii) enhanced awareness campaign, (iv) improving data sharing, and (v) technical and financial support.

1. Updating phytosanitary legislation

Survey respondents called on the IPPC to assist countries in updating outdated phytosanitary legislation to align with modern e-commerce realities. A number of countries also pointed out the lack of harmonised international standards for managing pest risks associated with e-commerce, underscoring the importance of global cooperation in developing and implementing standardised regulations.

2. Capacity building and training of NPPO staff

Survey respondents expressed a strong need for training programs aimed at NPPO staff, inspectors, and stakeholders at both national and regional levels. Many NPPOs reported limitations in technical capacity related to non-intrusive inspection mechanisms. These gaps in training and resources were seen as barriers to the effective implementation of phytosanitary measures.

3. Enhanced awareness campaign

There was a clear call for enhanced awareness campaigns targeting e-commerce companies, customs officials, and the public. Several respondents suggested the development of harmonized awareness materials for NPPOs to use and improving communication channels between NPPOs and stakeholders to ensure better compliance with phytosanitary regulations.

4. Improving data sharing

The theme of data access and information sharing emerged as a critical area for improvement. Many NPPOs reported lacking direct access to customs and courier data related to plant-related parcels, which is essential for effective risk assessment. Respondents proposed the creation of a shared international database for phytosanitary interceptions and improving data-sharing mechanisms to streamline the process and enhance compliance monitoring.

5. Technical and financial assistance

Several countries also requested support from the IPPC, particularly in the form of technical and financial assistance. The most common requests included help with implementing electronic certification systems (ePhyto), reforming phytosanitary legislation, and acquiring inspection tools and systems.

Appendix 2: IPPC E-commerce Strategic Roadmap Phase 2 (2026-2030)

Development Agenda Item: Management of E-commerce and Postal and Courier Pathways

Strategic Context: Building on Phase 1 (2021-2025) achievements, Phase 2 will translate the 2025 IPPC Observatory on E-commerce study recommendations into actions (2026-2030).

Funding and resources: The roadmap outlines activities requiring funding for implementation, which are **bolded and underlined**, while those not bolded and underlined are expected to be deliverable using existing IPPC resources and capacities.

The overarching implementation plan for the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030 Development Agenda Items mentions that if phase 2 were to go ahead with a similar size of work programme, CPM could anticipate costs of approximately USD120,000 per annum.¹¹

YEAR	FOCUS AREA	MAIN ACTIVITY	KEY DELIVERABLES	RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS
2026	Finalizing Phase 2 design and establishing coordination mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present the final IPPC Observatory E-commerce study report to CPM-20 CPM-20 approval for Phase 2 programme & budget Publish updated investment prospectus flyer <u>Initiate Arabic, Russian, and Chinese translations of E-commerce Guide</u> Improve IPP E-commerce page accessibility Conduct gap analysis of existing IPPC materials on e-commerce and relevant ISPMs Integrate e-commerce content into Regional Workshops and TC-RPPOs Maintain the IC Team on E-commerce as governance mechanism <u>Conduct stakeholder mapping</u> <u>Develop communication campaign on CPM R-05 & E-commerce Guide***</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2 roadmap approved Investment prospectus flyer published <u>Multilingual guides in progress (publication to be finalised in 2027)</u> Improved accessibility Gap analysis completed and analysis presented and approved IC Team on E-commerce mandated <u>Stakeholder mapping produced and approved</u> <u>Communication strategy developed and approved</u> Collaboration with UPU, WCO, ISF continued and strengthened 	IPPC Secretariat/ IC/ IC Team on E-commerce	

¹¹ IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030 Development Agenda Items Overarching Implementation Plan, page 18.: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/91889/>

YEAR	FOCUS AREA	MAIN ACTIVITY	KEY DELIVERABLES	RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance collaboration with UPU, WCO, ISF 			
2027	Capacity Building & Technical Resource Development: Strengthening NPPO capabilities and border risk management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Study on good examples of legislative frameworks</u> <u>Develop technical guidance for data sharing and communication between NPPOs, customs, courier services</u> <u>Create awareness materials for NPPOs targeting e-commerce platforms, buyers, and sellers</u> <p>Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Continue implementing targeted communication campaign</u> Maintain engagement with UPU Postal security group/ Illicit Goods Mitigation Expert Team and WCO e-commerce working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Study on good examples of legislative frameworks finalized</u> <u>Guidance developed and shared with NPPOs</u> <u>Awareness raising materials disseminated and relevant stakeholders engaged</u> <p>Ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Communication campaign implemented</u> Continuous engagement with UPU Postal security group/ Illicit Goods Mitigation Expert Team and WCO e-commerce working group 	IPPC Secretariat/ IC/ IC Team on E-commerce	
2028	Capacity Building & Technical Resource Development: regional and national levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Develop an e-learning course on the basis of the gap analysis IPPC e-commerce materials (also including modules on interagency collaboration, updating legislation etc)</u> <u>Produce case study compilation showcasing successful interagency collaboration, border risk management, up to date legislation, and Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)</u> <u>Prepare for the launch of the 2nd phase of the IPPC Observatory Study on E-commerce – finetune methodology and questionnaire from the 1st study (2024)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>New e-learning course developed to address any potential gaps from the analysis</u> <u>Case study compilation is developed and published</u> <u>Methodology of the IPPC Observatory Study on E-commerce (2024) and the survey questionnaire reviewed, finetuned.</u> <p>Ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Communication campaign implemented</u> Continuous engagement with UPU Postal security group/ Illicit Goods Mitigation Expert Team and WCO e-commerce working group 	IPPC Secretariat/ IC/ IC Team on E-commerce Coordinated with RPPOs	

YEAR	FOCUS AREA	MAIN ACTIVITY	KEY DELIVERABLES	RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS
		Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Continue implementing targeted communication campaign</u> Maintain engagement with UPU Postal security group/ Illicit Goods Mitigation Expert Team and WCO e-commerce working group 			
2029	Continued awareness raising and preparations for the second phase of the IPPC Study on E-commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue disseminating and awareness raising for the IPPC e-commerce related materials <u>Launch the 2nd IPPC Observatory Study on E-commerce</u> <u>Analyze results, compare the data of 2024 vs 2029 studies, measure impact as per the IPPC SF DAI implementation plan and the roadmap for phase 2</u> Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Continue implementing targeted communication campaign</u> Maintain engagement with UPU Postal security group/ Illicit Goods Mitigation Expert Team and WCO e-commerce working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>The second IPPC Observatory Study on E-commerce launched, responses gathered, and results analyzed</u> Ongoing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Communication campaign implemented</u> Continuous engagement with UPU Postal security group/ Illicit Goods Mitigation Expert Team and WCO e-commerce working group 	IPPC Secretariat/ IC/ IC Team on E-commerce Coordinated with RPPOs	
2030	Impact evaluation and future planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Finalize the IPPC Observatory Study report, disseminate the results and recommendations.</u> <u>Prepare evaluation report to be presented to CPM-25</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>The second IPPC Observatory Study on E-commerce Study report produced and published.</u> 	IPPC Secretariat/ IC/ IC Team on E-commerce Coordinated with RPPOs	

