COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

TWENTIETH SESSION

CPM FOCUS GROUP ON SAFE PROVISION OF FOOD AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN AID FINAL REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 14.1

(*Prepared by IPPC Secretariat and revised by the CPM Focus Group on Safe Provision of Food and Other Humanitarian Aid*)

1. Introduction

[1] The CPM Focus Group on Safe Provision of Food and Other Humanitarian Aid was established by CPM-16 (2022) following increasing international concern regarding the movement of food and other humanitarian aid that may present phytosanitary risks, particularly in emergency contexts. Humanitarian assistance is growing in scale, complexity, and urgency, and the global movement of aid often involves rapid logistics, diverse pathways, and limited control measures.

[2] The Focus Group's mandate[1] was to assess existing challenges, identify phytosanitary risk scenarios associated with humanitarian aid, propose mechanisms to mitigate risks without impeding the delivery of urgent relief, and clarify the role of the IPPC within this sensitive and rapidly evolving domain. More information about the Focus Group, including the current terms of refence (ToR) is available on the FGSA webpage on the IPP.

[3] This final report presents the Focus Group's work, key milestones, findings, and recommendations for CPM consideration.

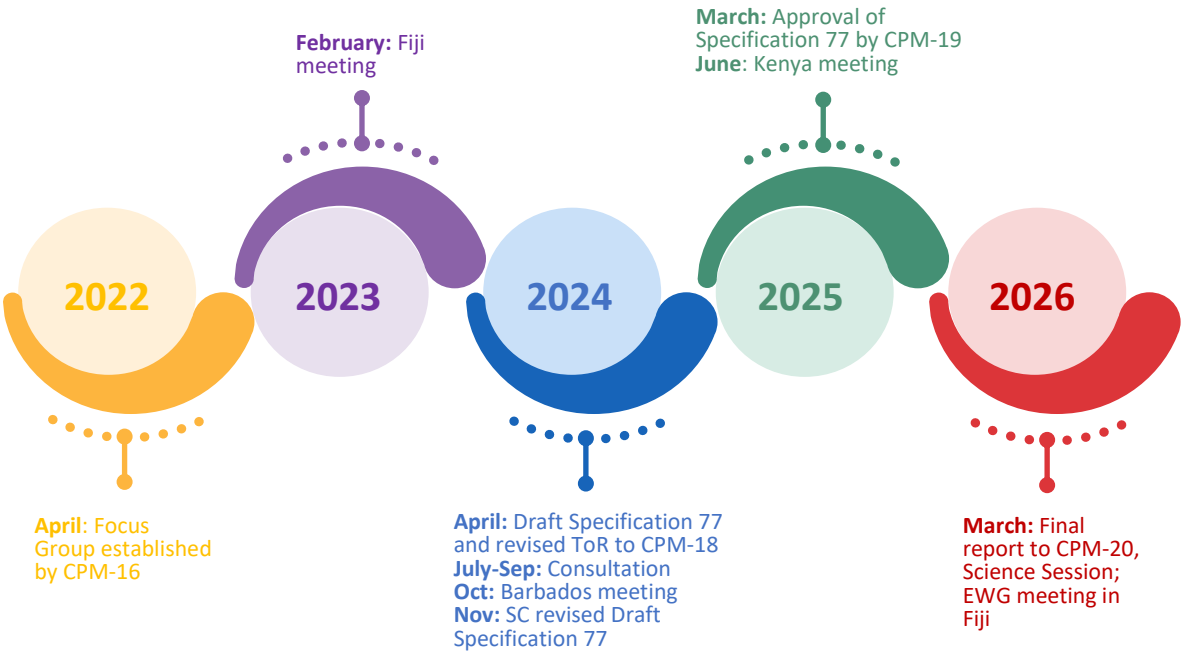
[4] The summary of the membership of the Focus Group (as of December 2025) is on the FGSA webpage on the IPP.

2. Timeline of Work

[5] To support the objectives of the IPPC strategic framework 2030, to enhance global food security and protect the environment from the impacts of plant pests and, where appropriate, environmental pests, the IPPC and its Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) agreed to establish a Focus Group on this matter.

[6] The CPM-16 (2022) established the Focus Group on Safe Provision of Food and Other Humanitarian Aid (FGSA). At CPM-18 (2024), the FGSA mandate was extended for two additional years and up to CPM-20 (2026).

[1] CPM Focus Group on Safe Provision of Food and Other Humanitarian Aid Terms of Reference: https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/93621/



2. Major Milestones

[7] The Focus Group successfully delivered all tasks outlined in its Terms of Reference. Beyond fulfilling its primary mission to support the IPPC Strategic Framework 2030, the group revitalized global dialogue on this critical issue on safe provisions on humanitarian aid in the phytosanitary context. This work underscores the IPPC's commitment to international cooperation in preventing the global spread of plant pests while enhancing food security and environmental protection.

2.1 Approval of Draft Specification

[8] A major milestone for the Focus Group was the approval, by CPM-19, of Specification 77 for the development of a new International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) titled *"Safe Provision of Humanitarian Aid in the Phytosanitary Context"*, with priority 1. This decision marks a crucial step towards ensuring that vital aid shipments do not inadvertently introduce or spread plant pests, reinforcing the principle of "do no harm". After the Focus Group redrafted the draft Specification, and revised it based on consultation comments, this marks one of the biggest milestones for the group.

[9] Since this decision, a Call for Experts has been made with the Expert Working Group planned to meet to draft this document in March 2026. To underscore that this work is under the Standards Committee, and the development of an ISPM is not a task of the Focus Group.

2.2 Three Face-to-Face Meetings and Several Virtual Sessions

[10] Between April 2022 and March 2026, the Focus Group held three face-to-face meetings in Fiji (February 2023), Barbados (October 2024), and Kenya (June 2025), and conducted nine virtual meetings to advance its work.

- **Fiji 2023.** The Focus Group reviewed submissions received through the call for information, drafted key principles for a potential standard, revised the initial draft specification *"Safe Provision of Humanitarian Aid in the Phytosanitary Context" (2021-020)*, and assessed the feasibility of developing and implementing such a standard.
- **Barbados 2024.** The group further revised draft specification 2021-020, addressing more than 200 consultation comments. It refined definitions for terms such as *humanitarian aid*, *regulated articles*, and *disaster relief pathway*, and examined the concept of an "emergency

pathway." Participants exchanged regional experiences in crisis management, analyzed potential obstacles to implementing a future standard, explored humanitarian aid pathways in greater detail, and updated the draft gap-analysis diagram.

- **Kenya 2025.** The Focus Group shared additional case studies and national/regional experiences, finalized a video script containing educational content for NPPOs and RPPOs, drafted a concept note for a webinar, and developed an action plan for IPPC collaboration with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), Codex Alimentarius, the World Food Programme (WFP), and FAO on this topic.

2.3 Engagement with Humanitarian and Logistics Organizations

[11] The Focus Group engaged closely with key actors involved in the disaster relief pathway, thereby strengthening collaboration and fostering awareness of the concerns and a more coordinated approach. Notably, representatives from the WFP and the Kenya Red Cross participated in the Nairobi meeting in June 2025, which significantly enhanced mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities across the humanitarian system.

[12] Discussions highlighted that phytosanitary risks vary depending on the organization involved in delivering aid. For example, WFP manages the entire aid supply chain (from procurement to delivery) allowing it to integrate phytosanitary checks throughout the process. In contrast, organizations such as the Red Cross focus primarily on delivering aid within the receiving country and generally rely on earlier actors in the chain to ensure that necessary phytosanitary inspections have already been carried out. Both organizations highlighted that priority is always given to local aid suppliers, thus in which it can contribute to minimizing any potential phytosanitary risk.

[13] The Focus Group engaged in in-depth discussions on the level and modalities of collaboration with partner organizations. Focus Group members emphasized the importance of working synergistically while aligning efforts within their respective areas of expertise. The group also considered ways to incorporate the One Health approach, particularly from a humanitarian aid perspective, and explored several potential mechanisms to facilitate effective collaboration. The resulting output is an Action Plan (Annex 1) outlining specific tasks to be undertaken by different stakeholders, including IPPC Secretariat, IPPC Contracting Parties, FAO emergency and resilience division (mainly focusing on seed and inputs distribution) and sisters organizations such as WOAH, CODEX and WFP. This action plan, part of the Focus Group's terms of reference, it is up to the CPM to discuss how it should be best implemented.

2.4 Case studies

[14] The Focus Group examined several case studies that provided valuable insights from both donor and receiving countries, highlighting the inherent risk that humanitarian aid can serve as a pathway for the introduction of plant pests. These examples, drawn from diverse geographical and situational contexts, underscored the importance of strengthening phytosanitary considerations in emergency response. Phytosanitary risks are inherent to economic development, particularly during the medium- and long-term recovery phases following an emergency. Potential implications include the inability to cultivate specific crops, a delayed recovery for the agricultural sector, and restricted access to international trade.

[15] In Kenya, a country that plays all three roles of being recipient, transit and donor country of humanitarian aid, has two well-documented cases which illustrate these risks. The large grain borer (*Prostephanus truncatus*), now a major storage pest in East Africa, is widely believed to have been introduced through maize aid shipments from Central America during severe drought and famine in the 1970s and 1980s. Its establishment resulted in devastating losses to stored maize and cassava, sometimes reaching 30–50%. Another example is *Parthenium hysterophorus*, an invasive weed first reported in the 1980s around refugee camps and food distribution points in northern Kenya. Its spread has had significant consequences for biodiversity, agricultural productivity, and livestock health, and it has caused dermatitis and respiratory issues in humans and animals.

[16] Experiences from Syria following the 2023 earthquake further demonstrated the operational challenges faced during emergencies. Humanitarian consignments entered the country without supporting

documentation, including phytosanitary certificates, and often arrived with no clear information on contents or quantities. To avoid delaying essential relief, Syrian authorities relied on rapid visual inspections and laboratory analyses conducted after release, under the condition that aid would not be distributed until test results confirmed that the consignments were safe. However, in some consignments, plant pests were detected in certain grains such as nematodes, and some fungi that can cause human and animal diseases.

[17] A further example from Zimbabwe between 2007 and 2009 highlighted similar concerns. Surveillance undertaken by the Plant Protection Research Institute confirmed the presence of the Large Grain Borer in regions where it had not previously been reported. Initial sightings coincided with drought-related maize imports from neighboring countries, suggesting an introduction pathway linked to emergency grain movements. The pest was found not only in maize but also affecting wooden items, legumes, textiles, and household utensils, demonstrating the broad range of materials that can be affected during aid-related movements.

[18] Some examples of humanitarian aid being a pathway for the introduction and spread of plant pests are stated in the FAO's State of Food and Agriculture report 2001, in which it identifies the introduction of the larger grain borer (*Prostephanus truncates*) into Tanzania as a result of food aid shipments and the introduction of the corn rootworm (*Diabrotica virgifera*) first into Yugoslavia and then Europe as a result of military movements (FAO 2001). The introduction of Strawberry Latent Ringspot Virus into Timor-Leste is another example of a serious exotic disease introduced into a country through aid consignments.

[19] Some other examples of invasive pests via the food aid pathway are reported in the Republic of Korea. Many new stored product pests invaded Korea during the period from the Korean War in 1950 to 1980. During this time, Korea imported a great quantity of rice, wheat, barley, and livestock feed to cover the shortage of food through aid from other countries. It should also be highlighted that most of the warehouses were first established after the Korean War due to the necessity of preserving a large quantity of imported grain. Thus, these warehouses provided alien insects, especially tropical and subtropical species (e.g. *Rhyzopertha dominica*), with favorable breeding habitats. Most of the alien stored product insects in the families Cleridae, Nitidulidae, Tenebrionidae, and Pyralidae are considered to have invaded Korea by this pathway, as they similarly invaded Japan (cited in Hong et al., 2012).

[20] The impact of pests is not limited to production agriculture. The weed known as giant mimosa (*Mimosa diplotricha*) was introduced to the Vava'u Islands (Tonga) with sand from Tahiti as part of reconstruction assistance following Cyclone Waqa in 2002. Parthenium is another example of an invasive weed introduced first into Ethiopia through humanitarian grain shipments that has since spread throughout the country (Murphy and Cheesman 2006). Additional examples of pest introductions through humanitarian assistance can be found in Reaser et al. 2003.

[21] Together, these case studies demonstrate how humanitarian aid, while essential, can inadvertently facilitate the entry and spread of plant pests, especially when delivered under urgent and complex conditions. They reinforce the importance of developing practical, risk-based guidance to support safer aid pathways.

2.5 Awarness raising

[22] Awareness-raising was a central component of the Focus Group's mandate. To support contracting parties and regional organizations, the group developed a video script containing learning and educational content for NPPOs and RPPOs on managing phytosanitary risks during crisis situations and the provision of safe food and other humanitarian aid, drawing on CPM Recommendation R-09. The finalized video will soon be made available by the IPPC.

[23] In addition, the mandate called for the delivery of a webinar to raise awareness of the topic and promote the use of CPM Recommendation R-09 among contracting parties and donor coordination agencies.

During its October 2025 meeting, the CPM Bureau also confirmed a Science Session on "Safe Provision of Humanitarian Aid in the Phytosanitary Context" for CPM-20.

[24] To maximize resources and leverage the global visibility of CPM-20, the Focus Group proposed merging the planned webinar with the CPM Science Session, resulting in the session being delivered at this CPM-20 (2026) session.

2.6 Considerations on the definition of "Emergency Pathway'

[25] In April 2024, CPM-18 considered the proposed definition of "emergency pathway" and agreed that it should be treated as a concept description rather than a formal definition, and therefore not to be included in the IPPC Glossary (ISPM 5). When revisiting the issue in October 2024, the Focus Group reaffirmed that no definition was required at this stage and agreed to describe the concept narratively, as "disaster relief pathway":

[26] *A means that allows the entry or spread of a pest through regulated articles provided to meet the immediate needs of disaster affected communities*.

[27] At its 2025 face to face meeting, the Focus Group further emphasized the need for a clear and appropriate overarching title, noting potential confusion with food safety matters under the auspices of the Codex Alimentarius. It was agreed that the work should be framed under the overarching title *"Preventing plant pest introduction and spread in humanitarian aid."* Under this title, the Focus Group developed a concept description:

[28] *It is recognized that humanitarian aid is necessary to preserve human life and it is often provided under conditions of urgency. Humanitarian aid can inadvertently spread plant pests that may impact future plant health, food security and recovery. Contracting parties already have obligations under the IPPC to prevent pest spread. NPPOs also have the responsibility to ensure other stakeholders (NGOs, donors) along the aid supply chain comply with existing phytosanitary regulations to mitigate pest risks. Governments along the aid supply chain (recipient, transit and donor countries) and other stakeholders need support to do this.*

[29] The FGSA recognized that NPPOs are frequently constrained in fulfilling their normal phytosanitary functions in humanitarian aid contexts due to the following factors:

- Limited ability of the recipient country NPPO to fulfil the normal phytosanitary actions;
- Limited knowledge of existing import conditions of the transit and recipient country;
- The inability to certify due to the uncertainty of the final destination of consignments;
- Risk of contamination due to extended storage time of commodities and regulated articles;
- Pressure on NPPOs to clear humanitarian aid at points of entry with reduced time and resources (e.g. infrastructure, personnel, capacity).

[30] In conclusion, the Focus Group agreed that the work should proceed on the basis of a concept description, highlighting the exceptional circumstances under which humanitarian aid is delivered, while clearly explaining how these situations differ from normal trade without altering existing phytosanitary responsibilities under the IPPC. The Focus Group confirmed that the objective is not to guarantee pest-free humanitarian aid, but rather to facilitate the timely movement of aid while ensuring an appropriate and minimal level of phytosanitary protection to mitigate pest risks.

2.7 Mechanisms of Aid Provision and the Identification of Critical Actors and Resources for Pest-Spread Reduction

[31] The Focus Group examined the pathways through which aid is delivered and the actors and materials that can support reduced pest spread, noting the roles of government agencies, international and national organizations, and community groups. Members distinguished between regulated pathways with adequate assurance and under-regulated pathways that pose higher phytosanitary risks. The discussion also identified priority audiences (e.g. high-level food-security authorities, donor and

recipient countries, and conveyance operators) and reviewed effective outreach options such as webinars, revised factsheets, e-learning modules, case studies, and regional workshops.

[32] To ensure a lasting legacy, the group recommended consolidating key materials, integrating them into NPPO systems, regional and academic institutions, disaster-management frameworks, and relevant private-sector networks, and enhancing coordination with international bodies. Digital tools, media platforms, and SPS-system collaboration were also highlighted as avenues for sustaining and broadening uptake.

3. Impact and Key Findings

[33] The topics addressed by the Focus Group are both highly relevant and sensitive. Humanitarian aid is an essential component of global response mechanisms, and it must reach affected populations quickly and without unnecessary barriers. At the same time, the unintentional introduction of plant pests through aid pathways can have long-term ecological, economic, and food security consequences.

[34] Key findings include:

(1) Aid pathways can introduce plant pests, particularly when commodities originate from multiple suppliers or are handled in non-standard conditions.

(2) Current phytosanitary controls applied to humanitarian aid vary widely, creating inconsistencies and operational challenges for both NPPOs and actors involved in the disaster relief pathway.

(3) Many NPPOs lack specific guidance on how to manage phytosanitary risks during emergencies while ensuring that aid is not delayed.

(4) Improved communication channels between NPPOs, other agencies within their countries and humanitarian actors are needed, particularly during the initial mobilization of assistance.

(5) There is broad support among contracting parties and stakeholders for IPPC-led guidance, provided it remains adaptable and does not hinder emergency response.

4. Next steps

[35] While the Focus Group mandate has terminated, the Expert Working Group -soon to be established following the launch of EWG Call for Experts- will meet in March 2026 in Nadi, Fiji, to commence the drafting of the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measure (ISPM).

[36] The Action Plan to strengthen collaboration will be published as a Focus Group outcome and will be implemented through both business as usual activities and potentially others as contracting parties decide.

[37] Further needs for supporting and implementation material on this topic will be identified through the development of the ISPM and also potentially through requests from contracting parties to the IC through the Call for Topics mechanism.

5. Financial contributions

[38] To support the work of the Focus Group on Safe Provision of Food and Other Humanitarian Aid, Australia has provided AUD $180,000. Moreover, the IPPC secretariat would like to thank the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation (PPPO) and NPPO of Fiji for co-hosting the 2023 meeting, NPPO of Barbados for hosting the 2024 meeting and NPPO of Kenya, the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) for hosting the 2025 meeting.

[39] Additionally, besides all the experts involved and their countries, acknowledgement also goes to the support provided by the Caribbean Agriculture Health and Food Safety Agency (CAFSHA), Caribbean Plant Health Directors (CPHD), FAO Sub-Reginal Office for Latin America and Caribbean – Caribbean Subregional Office, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Barbados Defence Force, and Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CEDEMA),

WFP-Kenya, Red-Cross Kenya, Kenya Disaster Unit, FAO Plant Production and Plant Protection (NSP) – seed security and the WFP.

Recommendations

[40] The CPM is *invited* to:

(1) *note* the final report of the CPM Focus Group on Safe Provision of Food and Other Humanitarian Aid;

(2) *thank* Australia for their financial contributions to the work of the focus group and all NPPOs, RPPOs and organizations noted above their direct support; and

(3) *agree* to consider the action plan and *note* how the IPPC community can assist with implementing relevant proposals or outcomes.

Annex I: Action Plan for collaboration with WOAH, CODEX, WFP and FAO (and others as appropriate/relevant) on the safe movement of humanitarian aid

(Approved by the CPM Bureau in December 2025)

Proposed strategic guiding questions	Key activities
1. How can the IPPC community effectively engage with WOAH, CODEX, WFP, and FAO to promote coordinated biosecurity measures during the provision of humanitarian aid—without compromising its core phytosanitary mandate?	1.1. Establishment of a linkage with the organizations with the support of the IPPC secretary
	1.2. Take opportunities in the existing forums (the quadripartite CODEX, FAO, WOAH) to inform them about the risks related to humanitarian aid not only for plant health, but also for their areas
	1.3. Establishment of an informal cooperation to advocate jointly
	1.4. Promotion of advocacy activities, including webinar, video and the e-learning modules to those organizations
	1.5. Actively request reports to CPM from WOAH, CODEX and WFP combined with information on disease outbreaks related to humanitarian aid
	1.6. IPPC Secretary to seek collaboration with FAO Office of emergencies and resilience
2. What mechanisms can be established to align the implementation of the recommendation on humanitarian aid with the standards, tools, and practices of other organizations (e.g., WOAH Terrestrial Code, CODEX guidelines, WFP logistics)?	2.1. Seek insights through a discussion paper from WOAH, CODEX and WFP on the draft ISPM during the consultation period
	2.2. Seek WOAH, CODEX and WFP to send reports to be provided at the CPM session on what those organizations are doing with regard to humanitarian aid in their areas (food safety, animal health, capacity building)
	2.3. Request a side meeting with WOAH, CODEX, FAO Office of emergencies and resilience reps at the margins of CPM-20 science session to give an introduction
	2.4. Encourage IPPC contracting parties and RPPOs to engage with WOAH, CODEX and WFP counterparts within countries and regions to promote collaboration and partnership in the implementation of the CPM Recommendation 09.
3. What specific joint actions, communication channels, and knowledge exchange mechanisms should be included in the action plan?	3.1. Seek report on what those organizations are doing in their area (food safety, animal health, capacity building)
	3.2. Encourage contracting parties and relevant FAO areas to advocate to be part of regional FAO forum agendas (e.g. SIDS, World Food Forum and others)

Strategic objectives

(1) Strengthen inter-organizational collaboration and governance mechanisms
(2) Align risk management procedures for biosecurity in humanitarian aid
(3) Facilitate timely information exchange and joint assessments
(4) Promote coordinated capacity development across sectors
(5) Safeguard the IPPC mandate while supporting holistic biosecurity

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

- Target groups: NPPOs, veterinary authorities, food safety regulators, humanitarian logisticians
- Engagement methods: Regional consultations, technical workshops, written feedback on drafts
- Outreach tools: Joint newsletters, multilingual guidance briefs, webinars, field demonstrations

Risk Management

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Organizational dilution of visibility of phytosanitary concerns	Medium	High	Shared leadership roles and consensus-based decision-making
Being required to implement a framework or a system that is not suitable for the phytosanitary context	High	High	Shared leadership roles and consensus-based decision-making; there must be room for phytosanitary-related needs (e.g. systems and procedures)
Conflicting mandates or standards	High	Medium	Clarification of scope of the different stakeholders
Limited field-level uptake	Medium	High	Involvement of national authorities early in process
Not achieving agreement for implementation of the action plan	Medium	High	Advocate CPM that is needed
The other “SPS-sisters” do not need to be involved	Medium	Medium	Use other entry points or mechanisms to achieve our needs