



SPECIFICATION 79

Revision of ISPM 12 (*Phytosanitary certificates*)

(Approved 2025, published 2026)

Title

Revision of ISPM 12 (*Phytosanitary certificates*) (2023-020).

Reason for the revision

A focused revision of ISPM 12 (*Phytosanitary certificates*) was recently undertaken in relation to re-export and the revised ISPM was adopted by the Sixteenth Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures in 2022. However, this revision did not address other issues that could further assist with the harmonization of the preparation and issuance of phytosanitary certificates. A revision of ISPM 12 is therefore needed to:

- promote ease of use of the standard among contracting parties;
- clarify and update requirements to reflect current operational processes of national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) and support the maintenance and harmonization of paper and electronic phytosanitary certificates;
- clarify requirements and provide guidance on the issuance of phytosanitary certificates for re-export of certain categories of consignments with multiple destinations or in cases of partial re-export or partial release of consignments; and
- clarify which inspection date should be included on a phytosanitary certificate when an importing country requests that the inspection date be given.

Scope

The revision of ISPM 12 should update and modernize the standard. This revision should include: updating the information in the standard; clarifying re-export requirements; clarifying what additional phytosanitary information may be included in phytosanitary certificates; and clarifying the options for issuing phytosanitary certificates in paper and electronic form. All the revisions to the standard should remain within the existing scope of ISPM 12.

Purpose

The purpose of this revision is to enhance implementation of, and compliance with, ISPM 12 by promoting harmonized phytosanitary certification practices and to facilitate the transition to electronic certification.

The revision further aims to ensure that phytosanitary certificates issued in paper and electronic form are harmonized and compliant with ISPM 12, and that security mechanisms are in place to avoid fraudulence, in support of the international trade of plants, plant products and regulated articles.

Tasks

The expert working group (EWG) should undertake the following tasks:

- (1) Review the text of ISPM 12 to update information.
- (2) Consider if more guidance is required regarding the duration of validity of phytosanitary certificates for export and phytosanitary certificates for re-export, and their certified copies and replacements. Refer to specific commodities and provide examples for different categories of commodities.
- (3) Consider the inclusion of additional guidance on inspection dates, in case importing countries request that they are recorded on the phytosanitary certificate.
- (4) Review the security and authentication requirements for phytosanitary certificates, including physical and electronic features (e.g. security of wet and printed signatures, stamps, identifying fraudulent and invalid certificates, the use of two-dimensional codes and other online validation tools), and update them as necessary. Encourage good practices (e.g. contracting parties placing a sample of the format of their phytosanitary certificates on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP)).
- (5) Review requirements and provide guidance for the issuance of phytosanitary certificates for re-export to improve clarity and consistency. In doing so, consider the re-export of regulated articles such as seeds or grain that may have been stored for an extended period of time: specify categories of commodities and criteria for long-term storage (conditions, time frame, and duration of validity of the original phytosanitary certificate).
- (6) Consider how the NPPOs of importing countries should manage phytosanitary certification in cases of partial consignment release and partial consignment re-export, including procedures for amending or reissuing phytosanitary certificates to maintain traceability and compliance.
- (7) Review, revise and update the requirements to align phytosanitary certificates in paper and electronic form to better reflect their use by NPPOs (e.g. requirements for management of attachments in cases where, for re-export, both a paper and an electronic certificate are required for a consignment).
- (8) Consider the management of non-phytosanitary attachments in electronic format.
- (9) Establish criteria to determine the validity and compliance of electronically issued phytosanitary certificates that are not transmitted in Extensible Markup Language (XML) format (e.g. those transmitted in portable document format (PDF)).
- (10) Review Appendix 1 of ISPM 12 to ensure that information on electronic phytosanitary certificates is up-to-date. Consider including provisions for a contingency plan when the electronic system used for issuing or transmitting electronic phytosanitary certificates is suspended because of maintenance or unexpected system failure.
- (11) Review all references to ISPM 12 in other ISPMs to ensure that they are still relevant and propose consequential changes if necessary. Review all references to other ISPMs in ISPM 12 and amend as necessary.
- (12) Consider implementation of the revised standard by contracting parties and identify potential operational and technical implementation issues. Provide information and possible recommendations on these issues to the Standards Committee.

Provision of resources

Funding for the meeting may be provided from sources other than the regular programme of the IPPC (FAO). As recommended by ICPM-2 (1999), whenever possible, those participating in standard setting activities voluntarily fund their travel and subsistence to attend meetings. Participants may request financial assistance, with the understanding that resources are limited and the priority for financial assistance is given to developing country participants. Please refer to the *Criteria used for prioritizing participants to receive travel assistance to attend meetings organized by the IPPC Secretariat* posted on the IPP (see <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities>).

Collaborator

To be determined.

Steward

Please refer to the *List of topics for IPPC standards* posted on the IPP (see <https://www.ippc.int/core-activities/standards-setting/list-topics-ippc-standards>).

Expertise

Members with collective knowledge of, and experience in, phytosanitary regulation and certification (both paper and electronic) related to the import, export and re-export of regulated articles.

Participants

Six to eight members.

In addition, one technical expert from the ePhyto Steering Group should be invited to attend as an invited expert.

A member of the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) should also be invited to attend as an invited expert or an IC representative.

Bibliography

The IPPC, relevant ISPMs and other national, regional and international standards and agreements as may be applicable to the tasks, and discussion papers submitted in relation to this work.

ISPM 5. *Glossary of phytosanitary terms.* IPPC Secretariat. Rome, FAO. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/622/>

ISPM 7. 2016. *Phytosanitary certification system.* IPPC Secretariat. Rome, FAO. Adopted 2011. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/613/>

ISPM 20. 2023. *Guidelines for a phytosanitary import regulatory system.* IPPC Secretariat. Rome, FAO. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/602/>

ISPM 32. 2016. *Categorization of commodities according to their pest risk.* IPPC Secretariat. Rome, FAO. Adopted 2009. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/587/>

FAO. 2015. *Export certification – A guide to export certification for national plant protection organizations.* IPPC Secretariat. Rome, FAO. 38 pp. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/ca6379en>

FAO. 2022. Phytosanitary export certification system. In: *FAO elearning Academy.* IPPC Secretariat. [Cited 24 May 2025]. <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=860>

Discussion papers

Participants and interested parties are encouraged to submit discussion papers addressing technical or policy aspects of phytosanitary certification, including electronic certificates, to the IPPC Secretariat (ippc@fao.org) for consideration by the EWG.

Publication history

This is not an official part of the specification

2024-04 CPM-18 added topic *Revision of ISPM 12 (Phytosanitary certificates)* (2023-020).

2025-05 Standards Committee (SC) revised and approved for consultation.

2025-07 Consultation.

2025-11 SC revised and approved the specification.

Specification 79. 2026. *Revision of ISPM 12 (Phytosanitary certificates)*. IPPC Secretariat. Rome, FAO.

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