INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR
PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

ISPM 48

Field inspection

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome
on behalf of the Secretariat of the
International Plant Protection Convention
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Adoption

This standard was adopted by the Twentieth Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures in March 2026.

INTRODUCTION

Scope

This standard provides requirements for field inspection. Field inspection is used to detect pests, their signs or symptoms, or to meet phytosanitary import requirements. Field inspection may be applied as a stand-alone phytosanitary measure, as a component of a systems approach, or in combination with another phytosanitary measure or measures.

The standard outlines assumptions involved in the application of field inspection as well as the requirements of the field-inspection process and the associated documentation. In this standard, the term "field inspection" applies to the inspection of plants in fields (including plants in open fields, in nurseries, and in controlled environments) during the growing period or dormant stage. The term "pest" may refer to a single regulated pest species or multiple regulated pest species. During field inspection, it may be necessary to take samples for testing to determine the presence or absence of the pest. The standard does not cover testing of samples.

References

The present standard refers to ISPMs. ISPMs are available on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) at https://www.ippc.int/core-activities/standards-setting/ispms.

IPPC Secretariat. 1997. *International Plant Protection Convention*. IPPC Secretariat. Rome, FAO. https://www.ippc.int/en/about/convention-text/

Definitions

Definitions of phytosanitary terms used in this standard can be found in ISPM 5 (*Glossary of phytosanitary terms*).

Outline of requirements

This standard describes the use of field inspection as a phytosanitary measure, including the assumptions that support its application, the factors to be considered when deciding whether field inspection is appropriate, and the specific requirements for planning, conducting, maintaining and evaluating field inspection programmes.

BACKGROUND

Field inspection is required by many importing countries as a phytosanitary import requirement, aimed at reducing, directly or indirectly, the pest risk associated with the international movement of plants. Additionally, some ISPMs (ISPM 10 (*Requirements for the establishment of pest free places of production and pest free production sites*), ISPM 12 (*Phytosanitary certificates*), ISPM 20 (*Guidelines for a phytosanitary import regulatory system*), ISPM 36 (*Integrated measures for plants for planting*) and ISPM 38 (*International movement of seeds*)) describe field inspection.

National plant protection organizations (NPPOs) also use field inspection as part of specific surveillance (ISPM 6 (*Surveillance*)) to determine pest status in accordance with ISPM 8 (*Determination of pest status in an area*).

IMPACTS ON BIODIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Field inspection may help manage the pest risk posed by commodities moved internationally, including the pest risk posed by invasive alien species (as defined in the Convention on Biological Diversity). Harmonized field inspection may help preserve biodiversity by increasing the potential for exchanging healthy commodities (free from pests).

REQUIREMENTS

1. Objectives of field inspection

National plant protection organizations may use field inspection as a phytosanitary measure to meet objectives including:

- the detection of pests, or their signs or symptoms; and
- meeting phytosanitary import requirements, for example:
  - as part of a systems approach (ISPM 14 (*The use of integrated measures in a systems approach for pest risk management*)),
  - for the establishment and maintenance of a pest free place of production or production site (ISPM 10),
  - for verification that plants in a field are free from a specified pest, or
  - in certification programmes for plants for planting, to verify that the infestation by a specified pest has not exceeded the specified tolerance level.

2. Assumptions involved in the application of field inspection

The use of field inspection is based on the following assumptions:

- The pest targeted by inspection, or its signs or symptoms, is visually detectable at a certain stage of plant growth.
- If the pest is detected in a field during field inspection, the commodity derived from that field may be infested.
- If the pest is detected on plants during field inspection, the commodity derived from those plants is infested.
- For some commodities, field inspection may be more effective than inspection or testing of consignments (e.g. for some viruses associated with rootstocks or seeds).

3. Other considerations for field inspection

The decision to use field inspection as a phytosanitary measure involves consideration of many factors, including in particular the phytosanitary import requirements of the importing country and the pests of concern. Other factors that require consideration may include:

- the pest status in the area (present or absent);
- the pest incidence in the field;
- pest biology;
- the phenological stage of plants;
- the susceptibility of the plant species and variety or cultivar to the pest targeted by inspection;
- the origin of the plants being inspected;
- the inspection method, timing and frequency, and the technical equipment needed;
- the field location, size, configuration (layout) and accessibility;
- other biotic factors (e.g. presence of other pests, vectors, natural enemies, hosts in the vicinity) and abiotic factors;
- the specific growing conditions and cultural practices;

- treatments and control measures; and
- the length of time between inspection and harvest.

4. Specific requirements for field inspection

The following requirements should be considered when planning a field inspection.

4.1 Examination of relevant documents

Relevant documents associated with field inspection may include the following:

- field maps, field-identity documents, geographical coordinates;
- producer or farm records;
- documents confirming registration of the field;
- previous test and inspection reports;
- pest-management records (e.g. types and dates of treatments);
- treatment documents or certificates;
- certificates of origin of plants and plant material;
- certification-programme documentation;
- phytosanitary import requirements; and
- records that ensure traceability.

4.2 Verification of the identity of the field and plants

The identity of the field and plants that are subject to field inspection should be verified to ensure that they match and are correctly recorded (e.g. location of field; species, varieties and cultivars).

4.3 Detection of pests

The NPPO should select an inspection method, timing and intensity that will allow the NPPO to determine whether the pest targeted by inspection is present in the field or its vicinity, or whether its incidence exceeds a specified tolerance level (see section 5).

4.4 Verification of conformity with other phytosanitary requirements

National plant protection organizations may conduct field inspection to verify conformity with other aspects of phytosanitary import requirements, such as those relating to:

- the growing medium for the plants;
- the phenological stage and size of the plants;
- the distance between the field and any specific host plants;
- the presence of weeds and other plant species;
- pest-management practices in the vicinity of the field;
- specific production conditions in the field;
- specific cultural practices; or
- sanitation and hygiene.

5. Field-inspection methods

The method, timing and the intensity of inspection should allow the pest targeted by inspection to be detected at the desired level of detection with the desired level of confidence. The ability of the method to do this depends on practical and statistical considerations, such as the effectiveness of the method at detecting the pest, the growing conditions, and the number of plants or the size of the field. The NPPO

should review the method as necessary to take into account the experience gained and new technical developments. The method may include one or more of the following:

- a general visual assessment of a field, or part thereof, to check the physiological condition of the plants, looking for noticeable anomalies within the crop (e.g. poorly growing plants or patches of plants or those with obvious signs or symptoms of pests);
- inspection of the field, a part of the field, or the field and its vicinity, depending on phytosanitary import requirements;
- an inspection scheme that ensures that relevant parts of the field are adequately and proportionally represented, and that is appropriate for detecting the pest; and
- targeted inspection of individual plants or specific plant parts (including underground parts) that are expected to show signs or symptoms of pests.

Field inspection may not be sufficient to verify absence of the pest. Examples of such circumstances include the following:

- the pest is known to exhibit latency;
- infested plants can be asymptomatic;
- the phenological stage of the plants is not appropriate for pest detection (e.g. young plants);
- suspicious signs or symptoms cannot be immediately identified; and
- the life stage of the pest at the time of inspection is difficult to detect.

In such circumstances, the NPPO may carry out field inspection in combination with another phytosanitary measure (e.g. testing, treatment) to provide a specified level of assurance that plants are free from the pest.

6. Field-inspection outcome

The result of the field inspection may contribute to the decision on whether the plants meet phytosanitary import requirements.

If the pest targeted by inspection is detected or its incidence exceeds the specified tolerance level, or if conformity with other aspects of phytosanitary import requirements is not verified, the NPPO may take further actions to meet phytosanitary import requirements.

7. Documentation

Field inspection should be based on reliable, documented, technical and operational criteria, and the NPPO should apply it consistently. National plant protection organizations should develop official documentation for conducting field inspections and recording the results. Such documentation is essential for promoting consistency, improving the interpretation and reliability of results, and facilitating the audit and verification of field-inspection activities.

The NPPO should retain all records about each field inspection to allow trace-back from a non-compliant consignment or to facilitate a later review of results if necessary. Such records should be made available to the NPPO of an importing country on request.

8. Responsibilities of national plant protection organizations

The responsibilities of the NPPO in the country where the field inspection is conducted should include the following:

- deciding on whether to use a field inspection in accordance with the factors listed in section 3;
- designing a field-inspection programme;
- sharing the field-inspection programme with the NPPOs of importing countries, if requested;
- ensuring that the field-inspection programme is consistently implemented;

- providing sufficient operational resources, including personnel, equipment and logistics, to design and implement the field-inspection programme;
- training personnel to ensure that their skills and expertise are maintained at an adequate level to plan and conduct field inspections effectively and consistently;
- developing, reviewing and evaluating field-inspection processes as needed;
- determining the roles and responsibilities of producers with regard to field inspections; and
- if using entities to perform field inspections on behalf of the NPPO:
  - authorizing the entities in accordance with ISPM 45 (*Requirements for national plant protection organizations if authorizing entities to perform phytosanitary actions*), and
  - ensuring that the entities are audited in accordance with ISPM 47 (*Audit in the phytosanitary context*).

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This is not an official part of the standard

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2025-07 Second consultation.

2025-10 Steward revised.

2025-11 SC revised and approved for adoption.

2026-02 Formal objection received.

2026-03 CPM-20 reviewed the objection, revised the draft standard as a stand-alone ISPM and adopted it.

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