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Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

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## INTERIM COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

### Third Session

Rome, 2-6 April 2001

### Identifying Topics and Setting Priorities for Standard Setting (Note from the Chairperson)

#### Agenda Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

1. The development and adoption of international standards for phytosanitary measures is the main function of the ICPM. Because of this, the procedure for identifying and deciding on the topics for standards, and for setting the priorities for standard development is extremely important.
2. At the 1st meeting of the Interim Commission in 1998, a series of criteria were agreed for the establishment of priorities. These are as follows:
  - level of trade affected by non-existence of a particular standard;
  - frequency with which a particular issue emerges as a repeated source of trade disruption;
  - feasibility of applying an international standard at a global level;
  - feasibility of developing and implementing the ISPM within a reasonable time schedule;
  - stage of development of the international standard;
  - relevance and utility to developing countries;
  - emergency need for the international standard;
  - relevance and value to the total framework of standards;
  - availability of expertise needed to develop the proposed international standard; and
  - availability of external resources to support preparation of a standard.
3. Following the recommendations of the ICPM in 1998, the Secretariat conducted a survey of Members to collect suggestions for topics and priorities for standard setting. The results of the survey were reported to the ICPM at its subsequent meeting in 1999. Considering the survey results and the criteria for priorities developed previously, the ICPM agreed on a modified work programme for 2000. This process was useful as a first step toward establishing a procedure for identifying topics and priorities for standards.
4. The ICPM has not asked for the survey to be continued, and the Secretariat has not received further suggestions from Members. Therefore, the ICPM does not have a new list of topics and priorities to evaluate in the present session, nor has the ICPM agreed on a procedure for the submission and evaluation of suggestions of topics and priorities for standard setting.

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5. The ICPM may wish to establish a procedure for routinely identifying topics and agreeing on priorities in a transparent and consistent manner. To develop such a procedure, the ICPM may establish an informal working group to draft a procedure for the consideration of the ICPM.

6. Considering the criteria listed above, the ICPM, or the working group if the ICPM decides to set up such a group, may consider the need for different types of standards that address both long-term and immediate needs in the work programme. It is my experience that when examining topics for standards, the range of topics can be very diverse and may affect a wide range of issues so that it is often difficult to decide on a few topics and priorities to include in the work programme. However, if the range of topics is considered within agreed categories based on the nature of the standard, this process might be easier and the decisions more easily justified. Categories that may be proposed include:

#### **A. URGENT ISSUES AFFECTING ICPM MEMBERS**

7. Such issues include those which have become immediately important and which have not been anticipated in planning.

*Examples:*

- Wood packaging : harmonization is needed because numerous governments are implementing requirements without an international standard as a reference point.
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) issues : the relationship of other international agreements to the IPPC requires clarification for governments and other organizations to understand how the bodies relate so that the CBD does not initiate the development of procedures or instruments that duplicate the functions of the IPPC.

#### **B. ISSUES AFFECTING DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

8. These are issues that are particularly important for developing countries.

*Examples:*

- Legislation and regulations : guidelines for the evaluation and updating of regulatory structures.
- Compliance procedures : manuals and guidelines for port of entry procedures.

#### **C. DEVELOPMENT OF FOUNDATION STANDARDS**

9. The development of some standards, in particular those dealing with concepts, provides fundamental background for specific standards. Such standards require some priority for development.

*Examples:*

- Treatment efficacy : data standards and the criteria for the approval of phytosanitary treatments.
- Inspection methodology : concepts and procedures associated with inspection.

#### **D. ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE SECRETARIAT**

10. The Secretariat has a distinct perspective due to its involvement with the full range of standard setting activities in the IPPC as well as related activities in FAO and other organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Secretariat also has frequent contact with national organizations which allows it to identify common global issues and concerns.

*Example:*

- Transit : the Secretariat has noted a high frequency of notifications to the WTO regarding transit requirements being established by Members. This is an indication of a possible area for the harmonization of phytosanitary measures and perhaps the opportunity for providing guidance to governments contemplating similar actions in the future.

11. The ICPM may establish a working group to develop a procedure for the identifying topics and prioritizing standards to be included in the work programme. If such a group is established, the group should recall the criteria agreed by the ICPM in 1998 and also consider use of a system of categories as suggested above.