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COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

Ninth Session
Rome, 31 March - 4 April 2014
IPPC Communications Needs Assessment Results
Agenda item 13.1
Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat
English only

I. Background

1. Following the CPM-8 (2013) adoption of the IPPC Communications Strategy, two distinct communications concerns were identified for consideration before a Communications Work Plan could be developed. The two concerns are that the IPPC needs to be committed to creating a global understanding of the role and work of IPPC, and the creation of a sense of urgency towards the importance of protecting plant health. To determine the best method for addressing these concerns, the IPPC conducted a “needs” assessment with an external communications company supported by a generous donation from USDA APHIS to determine key audiences, identify the most effective channels of communication, and clarify what types of messages should be transmitted along these channels.

2. Despite bureaucratic infrastructure difficulties, the needs assessment has recently been completed and reviewed by the IPPC Secretariat. The assessment consists of a general survey of stakeholders, semi-structured interviews with Secretariat staff and non-Secretariat partners, and a website usability analysis. The final document reports key themes and recommendations based on the responses.

II. Results

3. In general, the assessors noted that IPPC material is regarded as high quality. Respondents noted, however, that there are difficulties sometimes in finding the right document, in available languages and in the timeliness of publications. There was a wide range of familiarity with the IPPC communications strategy and in how active respondents are in communication. From the responses, it

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seems stakeholders primarily want to improve communication with the respective Ministries of Agriculture and NPPOs.

4. One worrying aspect of the results is the lack of response to the survey conducted for the needs assessment (many participants needed a lot of cajoling) and to follow-up emails. This may be due to survey fatigue, or it could be indicative of a greater problem: that offices contacted do not feel their link to the Secretariat is important. The authors suggested that some bridge-building may be needed if the Secretariat wants to achieve a more frequent and consistent flow of information globally.

5. Another key point from the report is that internal communications are not functioning as well as might be expected, with institutional and cultural barriers to be overcome. Solving these issues might also improve external communications, which frequently are not discussed at the outset when new activities are considered. Included with this was a frequent comment that there is a significant lack of resources and experienced senior staff dedicated to communications.

6. With regard to the website, the assessment suggested that the website would benefit from a thorough overhaul focussed on a unifying design, improved information architecture and more functional search and find-ability.

7. In a closing general statement, the document stated that IPPC communications are generally well regarded and that the lack of resources for specialised communications staff has clearly had an impact on overall performance.

8. CPM is asked to:

- 1) *note* the comments presented as a result of the Needs Assessment Report, and
- 2) *encourage* the Secretariat to develop a communications work plan for presentation to CPM-10 which addresses the needs identified in the assessment.