

Draft Specification: Guide to audits in the phytosanitary context (2021-009)

Status box

This status box is not an official part of the Guide and will be modified by the IPPC Secretariat.	
Topic number	2021-009
Title	Guide to Audits in the phytosanitary context
Document category	New IPPC Guide
Date of this document	2024-10-01
Current document stage	Specification approved (IC_2023_May)
Major stages completed	<p>2022-03: CPM-16 (2022) added this topic to the List of Implementation and Capacity Development Topics; priority 1</p> <p>2022-11: IC agreed that the draft specification should be prepared for consultation in 2023</p> <p>2023-05: IC reviewed the draft specification and approved it for consultation in 2023 (IC_2023_May)</p> <p>2023-09: Consultation on Draft Specification closed</p> <p>2024-04: IC approved the Specification with comments (2024_eIC_May_04)</p> <p>2024-10: IC-approved specification posted to IPP after consultation with IC lead</p>
Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) lead	2022-04: Dominique PELLETIER, Canada
IPPC Secretariat lead	2023-11: Barbara PETERSON
Working Group experts	
Notes	Development to be coordinated with the Guide on <i>Authorization of entities to perform phytosanitary actions</i> (2018-040) (IC_2022_Nov) to ensure complementarity of both guides and reduce overlap of contents.

Draft Specification: Guide to Audits in the phytosanitary context (2021-009)

1. Title

Guide to audits in the phytosanitary context (2021-009)

2. Type of implementation resource

New implementation resource, Guide

3. Convention articles, ISPMs and CPM recommendations to be addressed by the proposed implementation resource

International Plant Protection Convention (Article IV.2)

ISPM 47: *Audit in the Phytosanitary Context*

4. Scope

This IPPC guide will provide information to assist National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) wishing to establish or enhance their national procedures for phytosanitary audit activities. It will provide practical guidance to assist NPPOs in conducting phytosanitary audits within in their own territory, or in the territory of another NPPO. The guide will focus on the phytosanitary aspects of audits, as laid out in ISPM 47 (*Audit in the Phytosanitary Context*) and will include practical tools, examples and case studies that NPPOs may adapt for use in their particular context.

For the purposes of this document “phytosanitary audits” is assumed to be equivalent to “audits in the phytosanitary context”.

5. Purpose

National plant protection organizations have a number of responsibilities under the IPPC in relation to activities that take place in their territory such as surveillance, inspection, the conduct of pest risk analyses, the establishment of phytosanitary import requirements, phytosanitary certification, the conduct or supervision of treatments as phytosanitary measures and the training of staff. To help them fulfil these responsibilities effectively, NPPOs are increasingly using audits to provide confidence that phytosanitary systems and procedures achieve their objectives.

An audit in the phytosanitary context is a documented, systematic review of a phytosanitary system or procedure to evaluate whether it conforms with the requirements set by the NPPO, and whether the system or procedure is achieving the expected phytosanitary objectives. Unlike supervision, an audit does not involve continuous observation and direction of activities but instead provides an evaluation of a specific phytosanitary system, procedure, or particular elements of a system or procedure, at the time of the audit. Objective evidence is collected on whether the outcomes of the phytosanitary system or procedure conform with the relevant requirements of the auditing NPPO and whether these requirements are implemented effectively to achieve the phytosanitary objectives.

The purpose of this guide is to provide NPPOs with practical guidance and promote best practices for carrying out systems audits and focused audits in their own territory, or in the territory of another NPPO. It is intended to support the harmonized implementation of ISPM 47 (*Audit in the Phytosanitary Context*) and other ISPMs that reference audits, including ISPM 14 (*Use of integrated measures in a systems*

approach for pest risk management), ISPM 15 (*Regulation of wood packaging material in international trade*), and ISPM 45 (*Requirements for national plant protection organizations if authorizing entities to perform phytosanitary actions*).

6. Content of the proposed implementation resource

The working group should develop content for the guide based on the outcomes of the following tasks:

1. Consider the content of ISPM 47 and avoid unnecessary repetition of information that is included in the standard.
2. Consider the development of the Annex to ISPM 47 on Remote Audits and any implementation issues identified by the Expert Working Group (EWG).
3. Consider the scope of the guide, *Authorization of entities to perform phytosanitary actions* (2018-040), as described in the Specification and ensure the two guides are complementary without unnecessary overlap.
4. Explain the purpose of different types of audits, their benefits and their use within the context of national phytosanitary systems.
5. Describe the situations and technical grounds that may result in an audit by the NPPO of the importing country in the exporting country. Provide examples when such audits may not be justified.
6. Describe the circumstances that may trigger a phytosanitary audit (e.g. initial, periodic or in response to non-conformity) and the differences and similarities between audits carried out within the NPPO's territory and audits carried out or authorised by the NPPO of an importing country in the territory of an exporting country.
7. Consider the scope, purpose and procedures used by NPPOs for audits in the phytosanitary context including: audits of authorized entities, internal audits, joint audits involving more than one NPPO, and recognition of audits carried out by other NPPOs. Describe similarities and differences.
8. Describe the methods and use of remote audits, document audits, and physical audits.
9. Describe the similarities and differences between system audits and focused audits and their scope, purpose and use.
10. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the NPPO, the auditor and the auditee.
11. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the NPPO in providing oversight of entities that are authorized to carry out phytosanitary audits on behalf of the NPPO. Consider the information provided in chapter 6 of the *Guide to regulation of wood packaging material* (IPPC, 2023).
12. Provide case studies and practical guidance to show the steps and procedures used to initiate, plan, prepare, undertake and report the outcome of an audit.
13. Provide guidance about what should be included in an audit framework, an audit programme and audit requirements.
14. Provide guidance for NPPOs with limited audit capacity on how to prioritize, design and conduct an audit program.

15. Provide guidance on selecting auditors when assembling an audit team, establishing the audit frequency, considering seasonality in relation to phytosanitary activities, settling disputes over audit findings, and agreeing financial arrangements between the parties involved.
16. Provide guidance on objective evidence to be obtained during audits to support any audit findings.
17. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the different members of an audit team and describe the minimum skills, expertise and training required by each.
18. Describe the basic elements of an audit checklist and provide an example that may be used as a template.
19. Describe the basic elements of an audit report and provide an example that may be used as a template.
20. Describe the basic elements of standard operating procedure (SOP).
21. Describe different types of non-conformities and suggest appropriate corrective actions depending on the type of non-conformity.
22. Describe auditing best practices, including the importance of independence, impartiality, confidentiality, and the benefits of rotating auditors.
23. Describe different types of conflicts of interest and how to ensure independence and impartiality.
24. Review the documents listed in the references section related to audits in the phytosanitary context.
25. Recommend supplemental national or regional resources that might be shared with the IPPC community to enhance the implementation of ISPM 47.
26. Review the implementation issues identified by the EWG that was tasked with developing ISPM 47 (*Audit in the phytosanitary context*), as described in its report (June 2019).
27. Identify case studies that highlight how countries have approached some of the challenges associated with performing audits in the phytosanitary context.

7. Financial and in-kind contributions

The development of this guide will be partially supported through a contribution to the IPPC Multi-donor Trust Fund by Canada.

8. Selection criteria for working group experts

The IPPC Secretariat and the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee support equity, diversity, and inclusiveness and encourage all interested experts to submit their candidature to participate in the working group that will be tasked with developing this IPPC Guide or training material. The members of the working group will be selected based on their technical and practical expertise in the subject matter. Geographical representation from both developing and developed countries will also be considered to ensure that the material developed is globally applicable and reflects best practices from all over the world.

The following criteria should be used for selecting working group members:

Practical experience and knowledge in one or more of the following areas:

- (1) audits in the phytosanitary context, including audits of entities in the exporting country conducted by the NPPO of the exporting country, audits of the phytosanitary certification system carried out by the NPPO of the importing country in the exporting country, and audits of entities who are authorized by NPPOs to perform phytosanitary actions.
- (2) development of training materials, delivery of training, workshops, or courses on auditing principles, participating in phytosanitary audits or leading phytosanitary audit teams.
- (3) strong working knowledge of English and ability to formulate ideas and write clearly in English.

9. References and supporting materials

FAO and WHO. 2023. *Principles and guidelines for the assessment and use of voluntary third-party assurance programmes*. Codex Alimentarius Guideline, No. CXG 93-2021. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/cc5794en/cc5794en.pdf>

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

ISPM 14. 2021. *The use of integrated measures in a systems approach for pest risk management*. Rome, IPPC Secretariat, FAO. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/607/>

ISPM 45. 2022. *Requirements for national plant protection organizations if authorizing entities to perform phytosanitary actions*. Rome, IPPC Secretariat, FAO. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/89734/>

ISPM 47. 2023. *Audit in the phytosanitary context*. Rome, IPPC Secretariat, FAO. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/91185/>

IPPC Secretariat. 2015. *Operation of a national plant protection organization: A guide to understanding the principal requirements for operating an organization to protect national plant resources from pests*. Rome, IPPC Secretariat, FAO. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/90633/>

IPPC Secretariat. 2019. Report of the Expert Working Group on Audit in the phytosanitary context (2015-014) <https://www.ippc.int/es/publications/87497/>

IPPC Secretariat. 2022. *Authorizing entities to perform phytosanitary actions – An overview of the current use of authorization by national plant protection organizations*. Rome, FAO on behalf of the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention. <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb3834en>

IPPC Secretariat. 2022. *Approved Specification: Authorization of entities to perform phytosanitary actions, Guide (2018-040)*. <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/91844/>

IPPC Secretariat. 2023. *Guide to regulation of wood packaging material – Understanding the phytosanitary requirements for the movement of wood packaging material in international trade*. Rome, FAO on behalf of the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc5059en> <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3834en>

NAPPO 2021. Regional Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (RSPM) 9: *Authorization of Laboratories for Phytosanitary Testing*. https://nappo.org/application/files/9216/1676/6222/20210319_RSPM9-e.pdf