



CPM-20 (2026) SCIENCE SESSION: FOSTERING PLANT HEALTH FOR SAFE PROVISION OF FOOD AND HUMANITARIAN AID

CONCEPT NOTE

Thursday, 12 March 2026

15:00–17:30 (CET, UTC+1)

FAO headquarters, Plenary Room (Rome, Italy)

Webcasted and interpretation in all FAO official languages

[Webcast link](#)

(Updated version: 2026-03-04)

Introduction

- [1] In an era of increasing crises, safeguarding plant health is essential to ensuring that humanitarian assistance supports, rather than undermines, food security and livelihoods. Humanitarian relief efforts, while critical in saving lives, can unintentionally introduce plant pests which can cause long-term impacts on the economy, livelihoods, environment and communities.
- [2] During conflict-related and natural disaster situations, conditions at borders can be highly irregular, hindering national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) from carrying out their normal functions. Treatment and processing infrastructure may be damaged or inaccessible, while water, electricity, personnel and essential services are often disrupted. Roads and ports become inaccessible, preventing the use of dedicated facilities and requiring activities to occur outside of declared ports of entry. The volume of commodities arriving as humanitarian aid may also be overwhelming to NPPOs. At the same time, the rapid movement of people – including first responders, military personnel internally displaced persons and refugees – adds further pressure. Staff may be unable to reach their workplaces or may be reassigned to emergency duties, even as authorities call for the swift clearance of relief goods. If such aid is not prepared in accordance with the phytosanitary import requirements of the recipient country prior to export, it may inadvertently introduce plant pests, causing lasting harm to livelihoods, food security and the environment.
- [3] The [International Plant Protection Convention \(IPPC\)](#) recognizes the necessity for international cooperation to prevent the global spread of plant pests. In emergency situations, affected countries can be temporarily constrained in their ability to implement their phytosanitary responsibilities. On the other hand, contracting parties to the IPPC that are donors, countries of origin, or exporters and transit countries of aid, often have capacity during emergencies, making their commitment to comply with Article IV of the IPPC particularly critical.

[4] With the increasing frequency of natural and human-induced disasters, ensuring that food and humanitarian aid are provided safely has become critical to prevent the introduction of plant pests. In response, the IPPC has adopted [CPM Recommendation R-09 “Safe provision of food and other humanitarian aid to prevent the introduction of plant pests during an emergency situation”](#). The IPPC is also coordinating the drafting of an international standard to guide the safe movement of aid under the logistical challenges of emergencies. Building on this work, the Twentieth Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures ([CPM-20, 2026](#)), will feature a Science Session led by the IPPC Secretariat and the [CPM Focus Group on Safe Provision of Food and Humanitarian Aid](#). The session will bring together international experts and organizations to tackle challenges, build capacity and foster collaboration for the safe delivery of humanitarian aid that protects plant health and supports resilient agricultural systems.

Objectives

[5] The Science Session will follow a seminar approach and outline the importance of addressing plant health and phytosanitary risks as described by the IPPC, balanced with the need to preserve human life when providing humanitarian aid during emergency situations, highlighting key challenges, opportunities and strategies for action.

[6] The session will include examples of plant pest introductions associated with humanitarian aid and examine their potential medium- and long-term impacts on the economies and livelihoods of affected countries. Such pest introductions pose a direct threat to plant health, which is essential for food security and nutrition. Protecting plants is therefore critical not only for maintaining crop yields, quality and diversity, but also for safeguarding economic prosperity.

[7] [REV]: No Q&A is planned for the session due to time constraints.

Audience

[8] The Science Session is designed for:

- national and regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs);
- relevant United Nations agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs) civil society, regional economic communities and the research and development sectors as well as other entities involved in humanitarian aid supply; and
- national and regional multidisciplinary teams, including policymakers and stakeholders from government agencies responsible for agriculture, environment, aid, emergency and disaster management and human health.

Key Concepts

[9] The following key concepts will guide interventions in the Science Session, reflecting the priorities for safeguarding plant health and enhancing the delivery of humanitarian assistance:

[10] **1. Challenges and Opportunities:** The Science Session perspectives will explore key challenges in protecting plant health during humanitarian crisis, such as:

- limited ability of the recipient country NPPO to fulfil the normal phytosanitary actions;
- limited knowledge of existing import conditions of the transit and recipient country;
- the inability to certify due to the uncertainty of the final destination of consignments; and

- pressure on NPPOs to clear humanitarian aid at points of entry with reduced time and resources (e.g. infrastructure, personnel and capacity).

[11] **2. Awareness raising and capacity building:** The Science Session will highlight the importance of awareness raising among policy and decision makers. More specifically, it will stress the importance of capacity building to equip aid workers, logisticians and government personnel with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement and comply with phytosanitary measures in an emergency context. Strengthening such capacities is critical to ensure that humanitarian aid provides urgent relief but does not inadvertently introduce pests that harm recovery of recipient communities or their agricultural and ecological systems in the long term.

[12] **3. Collaboration and partnerships:** Strengthening humanitarian aid delivery while managing plant pest risks requires effective coordination among governments, NPPOs, RPPOs, NGOs, consignment owners and other stakeholders. By working together and building strong partnerships, these actors can align their efforts, share expertise and respond more efficiently to emerging threats. Incorporating gender-responsive approaches further enhances these collaborations, fostering resilient plant health systems and ensuring that humanitarian aid programs are both effective and inclusive.

Expected outcomes for the audience:

[13] This Science Session aims to enable participants to:

- understand the link between humanitarian aid and the spread of plant pests and its impacts on food security, livelihoods, the environment and economies;
- recognize challenges in managing plant health risks during disasters, including border controls and disrupted environments;
- apply the “Do No Harm” humanitarian aid principle and adopt a One Health approach to integrate plant health across all phases of humanitarian aid;
- understand the IPPC framework, especially CPM [Recommendation R-09](#) and the role of NPPOs in managing pest risks in aid movements; and
- recognize the importance of collaboration among government agencies and humanitarian actors, including integrating gender perspectives to strengthen resilient plant health systems.

Proposed agenda

Time	Title	Presenter
High-level segment		
Moderated by DDG Beth Bechdol, FAO Deputy Director-General		
10'	Opening Remarks	FAO Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol
5-10'	Strengthening Resilience: Why Safe Aid is Critical for Jamaica's Food Security	Video Message from the Honourable Minister Floyd Green, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining of Jamaica - TBC
10'	Strengthening Resilience: Integrating Plant Health into the Humanitarian Response - The Australian Perspective	Remarks from H.E. Julianne Cowley, Ambassador, Permanent Representation of Australia to FAO
5'	Closing remarks	FAO Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol
Launch of FAO-IPPC Video on “Safe Aid in Times of Crisis: Protecting Plant Health to Protect People”		
5'	Video on “Safe Aid in Times of Crisis: Protecting Plant Health to Protect People”	Adriana Moreira, Programme Officer and Officer-in-Charge of the IPPC Integration and Support Team
Technical segment		
Moderated by Enrico Perotti, IPPC Secretary		
5'	Opening remarks	Enrico Perotti, IPPC Secretary
10'	Lessons learned and strategic directions from the IPPC and CPM Focus Group on Safe Provision of Food and Other Humanitarian Aid	Sophie Peterson, Director, Pacific Engagement and International Plant Health at Australian Chief Plant Protection Office Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
10'	The perspective from FAO Office of Emergency	Elisabetta Tagliati, Senior Emergency and Rehabilitation Officer at FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER)
10'	The perspective from FAO Seed Security	Shawn Mcguire, Agricultural Officer at FAO Plant Genetic Resources and Seeds Team (NSP)
10'	The perspective and experience from Codex Alimentarius	Sarah Cahill, Codex Alimentarius Secretary

10'	Insights from Focus Group Member from the European Region	Marco Traa, Chief Plant Health Officer for Policy Affairs at the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Netherlands
10'	Insights from the Africa Region	Saliou Niassy, Coordinator African Union Inter-African Phytosanitary Council (AU-IAPSC) / Luiza Mbura Munyua, Senior Scientific Officer (Phytopathology) Inter-African Phytosanitary Council AU- IAPSC
10'	Insights from the Southwest Pacific Region	Nitesh Datt, Chief Plant Protection Officer at the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji
10'	Insights from the Caribbean Region	Juliet Goldsmith, Plant Health Specialist at Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Agency (CAHFSA)
5'	Closing remarks	Adriana Moreira, Programme Officer and Officer-in-Charge of the IPPC Integration and Support Team