



## COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

### TWENTIETH SESSION

### CONCEPT NOTE FOR CPM-20 (2026) SIDE SESSION

### SEA CONTAINERS STOCKTAKE TO SHAPE CPM-21 RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Interpretation In En/Es/Fr

#### 1. Background

- [1] Established by the Sixteenth Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-16) in 2022, the CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers had the purpose of reviewing all relevant materials and recommendations, developing viable options that will contribute to the phytosanitary risk management of sea containers, and providing the CPM with recommendations, including the option of development of an International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM).<sup>1</sup>
- [2] Since its establishment, the Focus Group has drawn extensively on IPPC contracting parties and industry input through a series of international events. In September 2022, the International Workshop on *Reducing the Introduction of Pests through the Sea Container Pathway* was held in London, UK, followed by the International Workshop on *Pest Risk Mitigation of Sea Containers and their Cargoes and the Facilitation of International Trade – Defining the Way Forward*, in Brisbane, Australia in July 2023. In November 2024, the International Symposium: *Optimizing Container Design to Mitigate Risks of Pest Contamination in the International Containerized Supply Chain* was held in Rotterdam, Netherlands (Kingdom of the). These events were well attended by participants from national plant protection organizations (NPPOs), regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs), international organizations and industry stakeholders such as container owners, shipping lines, container manufacturers, freight forwarders, packers, port authorities, marine terminal operators, shippers, importers, and exporters. These forums provided active and valuable feedback to inform the work of the Focus Group, including the formation of a Working Group with industry on practical and feasible sea-container design modifications to minimize pest risks.
- [3] At CPM-18 (2024), the CPM adopted the revised CPM Recommendation on *Minimizing the pest risk associated with the sea-container pathway* (R-06).<sup>2</sup> The CPM also extended the mandate of the Focus Group until CPM-21 (2027) and approved its terms of reference.<sup>3</sup> Among the key tasks, the Focus Group was mandated to:
- assess the uptake and the impact of CPM Recommendation R-06; and

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<sup>1</sup> CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers webpage: <https://www.ippc.int/en/commission/cpm-focus-group-reports/fg-on-sea-containers/>

<sup>2</sup> CPM Recommendation on *Minimizing the pest risk associated with the sea-container pathway* (R-06): <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/84233/>

<sup>3</sup> Terms of Reference for the CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers (2024): <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/93484/>

- provide recommendations to CPM on whether development of an ISPM is feasible and desirable, including draft specifications for such actions as necessary.

[4] The October 2025 Symposium *Working Together: Clean Containers and Safe Trade – Symposium on Plant and Biodiversity Protection: Mitigating Risks of Pest Contamination in the International Containerized Supply Chain* was held Copenhagen, Denmark. The symposium aimed to further raise awareness of Focus Group work and sea-container pest risks. However, attendance was very low despite extensive multi-channel promotion, with insufficient representation from some key stakeholders.

## 2. Introduction

[5] As part of the Focus Group’s action plan, and to prepare for the Focus Group’s final recommendations to CPM-21 (2027), a side session is scheduled for CPM-20 (2026). The side session is intended as a stocktake of progress made by the Focus Group and an opportunity for IPPC contracting parties and other stakeholders to provide input that will help shape the Focus Group’s recommendations to CPM-21 (2027) on the longer-term management of pest risks associated with sea containers.

[6] A general overview of the work and progress of the Focus Group will be presented at the plenary session of CPM-20 (agenda item 14.2, CPM 2026/23).<sup>4</sup> The side session will then allow for more detailed presentations and interactive discussions on key topics the Focus Group has been working on:

- Outcomes of October 2025 Symposium in Copenhagen, Denmark;
- Framework of regulatory and non-regulatory measures (including CTU Code revision);
- Container design;
- Custodial responsibility; and
- Collection of feedback and experiences on CPM Recommendation R-06.

[7] During the side session, the Focus Group will also collect data from IPPC contracting parties and other stakeholders present, in particular on the uptake of CPM Recommendation R-06. This will be done in interactive tools, such as smartphone or virtual polling, to maximize participation and to support subsequent analysis.

## 3. Objectives

[8] The side session on sea containers has the following objectives:

- To present a concise stocktake of the progress made by the CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers.
- To explain and discuss the emerging framework of regulatory and non-regulatory measures for managing phytosanitary risks associated with sea containers, including the role of container design, custodial responsibility, and CTU Code revision;
- To gather information and quantitative data from IPPC contracting parties on the uptake and implementation of CPM Recommendation R-06 through interactive tools (e.g. smartphone or virtual polling).
- To inform and refine the Focus Group’s work in preparation for its final recommendations to CPM-21 (2027) on long-term management of pest risks in the sea-container pathway, including possible development of an ISPM.

## 4. Expected Outcomes

[9] The side session on sea containers is expected to result in the following outcomes:

- Increased awareness among CPM delegates and stakeholders of the progress and current status of the Focus Group’s work on sea containers, including the rationale for proposed measures.

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<sup>4</sup> CPM 2026/23 - Update from the CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers:  
<https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/95391/>

- A clearer shared understanding of the proposed framework of regulatory and non-regulatory measures, including container design, custodial responsibility and CTU Code revision, and how these elements could be applied in practice.
- Collection of information and quantitative data on the uptake of CPM Recommendation R-06 (e.g. level of implementation and main challenges), through interactive tools.
- Strengthened dialogue and cooperation between NPPOs, RPPOs and industry stakeholders engaged in the sea-container supply chain.
- Input to inform and support the Focus Group in finalizing its recommendations to CPM-21 (2027) on the longer-term management of pest risks associated with the sea-container pathway.

## 5. Target audience

[10] The primary target audience for the side session is:

- CPM delegates and representatives of IPPC contracting parties;
- NPPO officials;
- Representatives of RPPOs;
- Relevant international organizations; and
- Industry stakeholders involved in the containerized supply chain (such as container owners, shipping lines, container manufacturers, freight forwarders, packers, port authorities, marine terminal operators, shippers, importers and exporters).

[11] In line with CPM-20 arrangements, both in person and virtual participation will be encouraged, to enable broad representation from all regions.

## 6. Provisional agenda

<b>Date:</b> Thursday 12 March 2026 - 13:00 – 14:45 (CET) <b>Venue:</b> Red Room (A121), FAO Headquarters, Rome - Lunch will be offered nearby <b>Facilitator:</b> Avetik NERSISYAN (Standard Setting Unit Leader)		
Provisional Timings	Description	Speakers/Leads
5 mins	Opening	<b>Thorwald GEUZE (Co-Chair of the CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers)</b> <b>Enrico PEROTTI (IPPC Secretary)</b>
25 mins	Framework of Measures of Regulatory and non-Regulatory Measures	<b>Wendy ASBIL</b>
15 mins	Progress in Container Design	<b>Michael DOWNES</b>
10 mins	Custodial Responsibility	<b>Lars KJAER &amp; James HOOKHAM</b>
10 mins	Uptake of CPM Recommendation R-06 (voting on smartphone/virtual)	<b>Thorwald GEUZE</b>
25 mins	Question and Answer	<b>Avetik NERSISYAN</b>
5 mins	Closing	<b>Thorwald GEUZE</b>