



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).¹
- [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).² The CPM also extended the mandate of the Focus Group until CPM-21 (2027) and approved its terms of reference.³ Among the key tasks, the Focus Group was mandated to:
- assess the uptake and the impact of CPM Recommendation R-06; and

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

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

³ 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).⁴ The side session will then allow for more detailed presentations and interactive discussions on key topics the Focus Group has been working on:

- 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.

⁴ 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.
- 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. Agenda

Date: Thursday 12 March 2026 - 13:00 – 14:45 (CET) Venue: Red Room (A121), FAO Headquarters, Rome - Lunch will be offered nearby Facilitator: Avetik NERSISYAN (Standard Setting Unit Leader)		
Duration	Topic	Speakers
5 mins	1. Opening	Enrico PEROTTI (IPPC Secretary) Thorwald GEUZE (Co-Chair of the CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers)
25 mins	2. Framework of Regulatory and non-Regulatory Measures	Thorwald GEUZE
15 mins	3. Progress in Container Design	Lars KJAER
10 mins	4. Custodial Responsibility	James HOOKHAM
10 mins	5. Uptake of CPM Recommendation R-06 (voting on smartphone/virtual)	Michelle GRAY
25 mins	6. Question and Answer	Avetik NERSISYAN
5 mins	7. Closing	Thorwald GEUZE

7. Speakers

Speakers	Bio
 <p>Enrico Perotti, Secretary International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)</p>	<p>Dr. Enrico Perotti has over 30 years of experience in scientific research and biosecurity, spanning government, academia, and the private sector. A passionate advocate for food security and sustainable agricultural productivity, he has held senior roles including leadership of the biosecurity risk assessment team at New Zealand’s Ministry for Primary Industries and key positions within the Australian Public Service focused on biosecurity policy and emergency response.</p> <p>He also advanced Australia’s trade and market access as Australia’s first Agriculture Counsellor to Malaysia and Brunei. Since January 2023, Enrico has served as General Manager of the Invasive Species Program at Biosecurity Queensland, leading efforts to prevent, manage, and mitigate the impacts of invasive plants and animals across the state.</p> <p>Coming from a multicultural background, he champions collaborative approaches that harness diverse strengths and perspectives to tackle biosecurity challenges. Enrico supports scientific innovation and the development of novel tools to enhance biosecurity and agricultural outcomes. His broad expertise includes managing operational and research programs, driving industry-wide initiatives, and building strategic partnerships across primary industries. He has worked with the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) in Mexico and Australia, and previously lectured in plant biology, biochemistry, genetics and epigenetics at the Universities of Lausanne and Zurich in Switzerland.</p>
 <p>Avetik Nersisyan, Lead of the Standard Setting Unit, IPPC Secretariat</p>	<p>Avetik oversees functions such as staffing, budgeting and resource mobilization. He coordinates standard-setting activities of the IPPC Standards Committee, technical panels and expert working groups. As the Unit Lead, he makes a substantial input to preparations for sessions of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM), the Strategic Planning Group, the CPM Bureau, and other ad-hoc meetings. Avetik is also a liaison between the IPPC Secretariat and some key organizations and stakeholders. Before joining the secretariat, he managed the FAO’s Strategic Programme Two (SP2) in the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. SP2 focuses on making agriculture, forestry, and fisheries more productive and sustainable.</p> <p>He has previously served as an alternative FAO Representative for Moldova, FAO Technical Officer for Plant Production and Protection in the region and Assistant FAO Representative in Armenia. Avetik is an agronomist with a PhD in plant production and about three decades of experience in management of agriculture, plant production and protection programmes at local, regional, and global levels. Avetik has authored and co-authored several scientific publications, book chapters and training materials.</p>

 <p>Thorwald Geuze, Senior Plant Health Officer, Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA), NPPO of the Kingdom of Netherlands</p>	<p>After completing his studies in Tropical Forestry at Wageningen University, Thorwald worked as an agroforester in Guyana and Burkina Faso for eight years. In 2001, he joined the Plant Protection Service of The Netherlands, eventually serving as Team Manager and thereafter Regional Manager at the Port of Rotterdam. Following the 2012 merger to form the Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority of The Netherlands (NVWA), Thorwald became the manager responsible for implementation of legislation and development of supervision and enforcement.</p> <p>Since 2018, he has served as a specialist advisor to the NPPO Director and the official IPPC contact point for the Netherlands. He also oversees the export certification system and plays a key role in electronic certification processes. Thorwald is actively engaged in the Implementing and Capacity Development Committee of the IPPC, where, among other things, he serves as vice-chair and leads efforts on e-commerce. He is also member and co-chair of the CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers.</p>
 <p>Lars Kjaer, Senior Advisor, World Shipping Council (WSC), United States of America</p>	<p>Lars has been with the World Shipping Council since its inception in 2000. He has during his tenure been involved in a multitude of safety-related and other regulatory matters. He currently focuses on measures to prevent the loss of containers at sea, prevention of illegal wildlife trafficking and minimization of pests in the global containerized supply chain. He is a member of the CPM's Focus Group on Sea Containers and before then participated in the work of the Sea Container Task Force.</p> <p>He is also chairman of ISO Technical Committee (TC 104) that is responsible for all container-related standards. Prior to joining the World Shipping Council, Lars served as the Washington Representative for the Council of European and Japanese Shipowners' Associations (CENSA), following a career with the Danish Foreign Service, including postings at the Royal Danish Embassy in Washington, DC, and the Danish Delegation to NATO, Brussels.</p>
 <p>James Hookham, Director, Global Shippers Forum (GSF), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</p>	<p>James is the Secretary General and a Director of the Global Shippers Forum, the voice of cargo owners in international supply chains. He is a graduate in Environmental Science from the University of Bradford and completed a master's degree in the safe transport of dangerous goods at the University of Manchester.</p> <p>Until 2020 James was Deputy Chief Executive of the Freight Transport Association (now Logistics UK) and has held numerous positions on UK, EU and global transport and logistics advisory bodies. He is a member of the CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers and before then participated in the work of the Sea Container Task Force.</p>



Michelle Gray, Director, International Phytosanitary Standards, Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), U.S. Department of Agriculture, NPPO of the United States of America

Michelle is the Director for International Phytosanitary Standards, Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. In this position, she leads strategic planning and international collaboration to develop and implement harmonized phytosanitary standards that protect plant health from invasive pests and diseases and facilitate safe, efficient global trade.

Michelle joined PPQ in 2019 as an Assistant Director in PPQ's Science and Technology, Plant Pest Risk Analysis unit supporting plant pest prioritization, detection, and response activities. She also served as Chief of Staff in PPQ Emergency and Domestic Programs. In 2025, Michelle became the North America representative on the International Plant Protection Convention's Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) Bureau and member of the CPM Focus Group on Sea Containers.