



COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

STRATEGIC PLANNING GROUP

UPDATE ON THE PEST OUTBREAK ALERT AND RESPONSE SYSTEM (POARS)

(Agenda item 6.5)

1. Introduction

- [1] This paper provides an update to the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) on the key outcomes from the work of the Pest Outbreak Alert and Response Systems (POARS) Steering Group (SG) since CPM-19. It builds on the progress report presented to the CPM Bureau in October 2025.
- [2] The POARS SG has made significant progress in operationalizing the POARS framework, including finalizing the pilot pest assessments and establishing key workflows. This paper summarizes these achievements and informs the SPG of the decisions requested by the POARS SG to the Bureau. More importantly, it seeks strategic guidance from the SPG on the long-term implementation of POARS and its integration within the broader IPPC Strategic Framework.

2. Governance and Long-Term Sustainability

- [3] With the current Steering Group's mandate set to conclude in February 2026, ensuring a seamless transition to long-term governance is a priority. CPM-19 approved the Steering Group model as the long-term governance body for POARS and tasked the CPM Bureau with approving its Terms of Reference (ToR).
- [4] To implement this decision, the Bureau was invited to approve the draft ToR for the new long-term SG, prepared by the current group (see Annex 1), along with a proposed timeline to guide the transition. The Bureau was therefore requested to approve the following plan:
- October 2025: Approve the ToRs for the new long-term Steering Group.
 - November 2025: The IPPC Secretariat issues a call for experts.
 - December 2025: The Bureau approves the membership of the new SG.
 - February 2026: A joint handover meeting is held between the outgoing and incoming SGs.
- [5] The SPG is invited to note this governance and transition plan, which is a critical step in securing the long-term sustainability of the POARS initiative. To ensure the success of this transition, the SPG's support is requested in promoting the upcoming call for experts within their respective regions and networks to attract a diverse pool of highly qualified candidates.

3. Outcomes of the Call for Nominations of potential Emerging Pests

- [6] In early 2025, the IPPC Secretariat launched a call for the nomination of potential emerging pests of global concern¹ to pilot the POARS framework. The call, which ran from January 31 to March 3, 2025, invited

¹ [Call for Nominations of Potential Emerging Pests of Global Concern - International Plant Protection Convention](#)

NPPOs and RPPOs to submit potential emerging pests for assessment. The response was highly successful, resulting in 27 submissions for the POARS SG to evaluate.

- [7] The POARS SG finalized the assessment of all nominated pests during its September 2025 meeting. Using the agreed-upon three-step criteria, which had been tested at the SPG in 2024, the results are as follows:

Emerging Pests of Global Concern:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Lycorma delicatula</i> (Spotted Lanternfly) - <i>Rhizoctonia theobromae</i> - <i>Orobanche cumana</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Bactrocera dorsalis</i> - <i>Xylella fastidiosa</i> - <i>Fusarium oxysporum</i> f. sp. <i>cubense</i> tropical race 4 (TR4) - <i>Rhynchophorus ferrugineus</i>
Pests placed on the Watch List:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus</i> - <i>Euwallacea fornicatus</i> (Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer) - <i>Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum</i> - Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) - Sri Lanka Cassava Mosaic Virus (SLCMV) - <i>Clavibacter nebraskensis</i>

- [8] For pests classified as "Emerging," the POARS framework initiates proactive and structured activities. The first step for all seven pests will be a comprehensive gap analysis to map existing international resources, including diagnostic protocols, surveillance guidance, contingency plans, and management tools.

- [9] However, the subsequent actions will be tailored based on the nature of the pest:

- For *Lycorma delicatula*, *Orobanche cumana*, and *Rhizoctonia theobromae* a gap analysis will guide the development of new IPPC technical resources. Where significant gaps are identified, the newly established Expert Working Groups (EWGs) will be tasked with creating harmonized global guidance to support country preparedness and response.
- *Bactrocera dorsalis*, *Xylella fastidiosa*, *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *cubense* TR4, and *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus* have been recognized as emerging threats for some time, in some cases well over a decade. Their inclusion is justified by recent outbreaks and their ongoing impact and risk. For these pests, numerous institutions are already delivering activities. POARS will serve as a central hub, gathering information and tools to create comprehensive toolboxes on the IPPC website.

- [10] Pests on the POARS Watch List are potential threats that warrant close observation but do not currently meet all criteria for global action. For these pests, the SG will encourage enhanced surveillance by countries, conduct provisional gap analyses, and gather technical information to ensure preparedness. While this constitutes proactive monitoring, the development of new tools is not prioritized for this category.

- [11] The Watch List is dynamic; a pest's category is reviewed if significant new information emerges. Following a reassessment, a pest may be upgraded to "Emerging Pest of Global Concern," activating POARS activities, or downgraded and removed from the list if the threat has diminished, ensuring the system remains focused on the most significant global risks.

- [12] The complete list of nominated pests and a summary of their assessments have been published on the IPPC website under the POARS section². The criteria and procedures for identifying these emerging pests are also accessible at the POARS section.

² [Pest Outbreak Alert and Response System \(POARS\) - International Plant Protection Convention](#)

- [13] The SPG is invited to note these results as a major achievement in the implementation of the POARS pilot phase. The full summary is available on the IPPC website.

4. Operationalizing the POARS Framework: From Assessment to Action

- [14] Translating assessments into tangible support for contracting parties is the core function of POARS. The SG has now moved from the pilot assessment phase to active implementation, initiating several key operational activities that represent the first concrete outputs of the system.
- **Global Pest Alerts:** The publication and dissemination of the first series of global pest alerts for *Lycorma delicatula*, *Orobanche cumana*, and *Rhizoctonia theobromae* mark a significant milestone. These alerts provide all IPPC contracting parties with information on pest distribution, hosts, potential impacts, and pathways of spread to enhance preparedness. Alerts for the remaining emerging pests and watch list pests are currently under development.
 - **Establishment of Expert Working Groups (EWGs):** EWGs are the primary mechanism through which POARS will develop harmonized global guidance and tools for emerging pests, particularly where significant technical gaps exist. The Bureau was asked to approve the establishment of the first three EWGs for the newly prioritized emerging pests: *Lycorma delicatula*, *Orobanche cumana*, and *Rhizoctonia theobromae*. This work is initially and partially funded through the EU project "Support to the IPPC Strategic Framework and Work Plan," which allocates USD 140,000 annually for POARS activities, including the management of these EWGs. The generic ToRs are provided for context (see Annex 2).
- [15] The SPG is invited to note this significant progress in moving from assessment to tangible action and provide strategic advice on the role of EWGs in the long-term POARS framework, particularly on how to ensure their outputs effectively support contracting parties and align with the IPPC Strategic Framework.

5. Strategic Collaboration and Outreach

- [16] To enhance the strategic alignment of POARS, two key initiatives were presented to the Bureau for approval and endorsement:
- [17] **Joint CPM-20 Side Session:** The POARS Steering Group proposed a joint side session at CPM-20 (2026) to showcase the linkages between the Climate Change Focus Group and the Smart Plant Health initiative, emphasizing their shared strategic objectives. In response, the IPPC Secretariat prepared a concept note for organizing a "Plant Health Innovation Fair", designed to highlight tangible, next-generation tools being deployed by the IPPC community and its partners, illustrating the shift from standards to solutions. The Bureau was requested to approve the organization of this session.
- [18] **Synergies with the Africa Phytosanitary Programme (APP):** Recognizing the strong synergies, the POARS Steering Group discussed opportunities for alignment and, on that basis, agreed upon the following formal recommendations to the APP to foster collaboration and enhance phytosanitary capacity in Africa:
- Include members of the POARS SG in the APP governance structure to ensure alignment.
 - Formally send the list of POARS emerging pests and the watch list to the countries participating in the APP for their consideration.

- Encourage APP target countries to include POARS-identified emerging pests in their national survey programs and pest lists. The POARS EWGs for the three specific pests will provide necessary technical guidance.
- Utilize APP communication channels to relay POARS alerts and related information to African NPPOs.
- Urge participating countries to meet their NROs when a POARS emerging pest is detected.
- Agree that the POARS pest-specific EWGs would have responsibility for producing surveillance protocol and other tools for emerging pests not currently included in the APP.
- Agree to provide a link to the POARS webpage on the APP webpage, and vice versa
- Actively promote IPPC core initiatives that support baseline capacity development, such as the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool and the IPPC Plant Health Campus.
- Provide detailed information on the APP-GIS platform to the POARS SG to explore opportunities for data sharing and visualization of emerging pest threats.

[19] The SPG is invited to provide strategic guidance on maximizing collaborations between the global POARS framework, as a Development Agenda Item, with other IPPC strategic initiatives and regional programmes such as the APP.

6. Next Steps for the POARS Steering Group

[20] The current SG will focus its remaining mandate on ensuring the system is fully operational and ready for a seamless handover. Key priorities include:

- Overseeing the newly established EWGs.
- Refining the core alert and assessment processes based on lessons learned.
- Conducting a stakeholder mapping exercise.
- Assessing long-term resource needs.
- Developing a detailed handover plan for the incoming long-term SG.

[21] The SPG is invited to:

- *Provide* strategic guidance on the long-term implementation of POARS and its role in achieving the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030.
- *Provide* advice to deepen the strategic alignment between POARS and regional implementation programs, such as the APP.
- *Support* the proposal for a joint side session at CPM-20 and provide input on its strategic direction.
- *Provide* feedback on the planned next steps for the current Steering Group to ensure a successful transition to the long-term governance structure.

Annex 1

Draft Terms of Reference for the long-term Steering Group of the Pest Outbreak Alert and Response System

Approved by the CPM Bureau during its XX meeting

1. Background

Strengthening Pest Outbreak Alert and Response Systems (POARS) is one of the eight development agenda items (DAIs) under the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030.

The POARS Steering Group established by CPM-17 in 2022 has outlined a process for identifying, nominating, and assessing potential emerging pests of IPPC global concern. Pests assessed as meeting the relevant criteria are designated as emerging pests of IPPC global concern (hereafter simply referred to as emerging pests), triggering alerts and targeted prediction, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery activities.

CPM 19 in 2025 approved the option of the POARS Steering Group as the long-term governance body for POARS activities, with the mandate to report directly to the Bureau and be managed by the Secretariat of the Implementation and Facilitation Unit (IFU).

2. Purpose

The POARS SG oversees the activities of the POARS, supporting NPPOs and RPPOs to prepare for and respond to emerging pests of a global concern, and provides advice to the CPM Bureau on POARS matters.

3. Duration and Review

The POARS SG will work on an ongoing basis, unless dissolved by CPM on the recommendation of the CPM Bureau. Its mandate will be reviewed every five years by the Bureau.

4. Composition of the Steering Group

The Steering Group is skills and knowledge-based, composed of the following eight to nine members:

- One expert from an RPPO
- Two to three experts from NPPOs
- One donor representative
- One representative from an international organization that deals with pest outbreaks and emergency response
- One representative from each of the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) and Standards Committee (SC)
- One representative from the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) Bureau.

The IPPC Secretariat supports equity, diversity, and inclusiveness and encourages all interested experts to submit their candidature to participate in the POARS SG. The SG members will be selected based on their technical and practical expertise in the subject matter. Geographical representation from both developing and developed countries and representation from all FAO regions will also be considered to ensure that the outputs are globally relevant, applicable, and reflect best practices from all over the world.

The following criteria should be used for selecting SG members:

- Actively engaged in existing global and/or regional pest alert and response frameworks,
- Experience in designing and managing pest alert and response systems,
- Experience in risk assessment and/or risk management.
- Proven experience in promoting and articulating public-private partnerships,
- Full understanding of international phytosanitary standards and legislation.

The Chair will be selected by the membership for a term of three years, which may be extended by the membership for an additional term.

The IPPC Secretariat will support, coordinate and facilitate the functions of the SG.

The SG could call on subject matter experts when necessary.

5. Reporting

The IPPC Secretariat or CPM Bureau member, on behalf of the POARS SG, reports to the CPM Bureau.

6. Process

The member selection for the POARS SG shall be carried out in accordance with the following guidelines:

- A call for nominations will be published on the IPPC website to allow contracting parties, RPPOs, and other organizations to nominate their representatives to be part of the POARS SG.
- The IPPC Secretariat will review the nominations and submit them to the CPM Bureau for selection, ensuring gender and geographical balance.
- The POARS SG will convene virtually for the first time to select its chairperson, discuss its functions, and plan the work described under “functions”.

7. Functions

The functions of the POARS Steering Group will be to:

- Oversee the implementation of the POARS for the early detection of and rapid response to emerging pests, specifically:
 - The call for nominations of potential emerging pests
 - Evaluation of potential emerging pests
 - Prioritisation of emerging pests
 - The establishment of expert working groups to undertake specific technical work as necessary
 - Prediction, preparedness, detection, response and recovery actions for emerging pests
 - Alerts and communications
 - Support resource mobilisation
- Suggest and implement improvements to the POARS as necessary
- Make recommendations to the CPM Bureau for the necessary POARS resources (staff and financial)
- Seek synergies with the Africa Phytosanitary Programme (APP), Implementation and Capacity Development Committee, FAO and other international and regional capacity development organisations
- Promote and articulate the establishment of a network of international organizations actively involved in prediction, preparedness, detection, response and recovery activities
- Consult subject matter experts as necessary, including experts on specific pest groups or those who nominated a potential emerging pest

8. Meetings

The POARS SG will meet at least every two months to perform the functions outlined above. The group will mainly meet virtually and will meet face to face once per year. In cases of emergency, the SG may need to meet more frequently.

9. Funding

The organization that employs an IPPC meeting participant is responsible for funding the travel and daily subsistence allowance for that person to attend. If the employer is unable to allocate sufficient funds,

participants are first encouraged to seek assistance from sources other than the IPPC Secretariat. Where such demonstrated efforts to secure assistance have been unsuccessful, requests for assistance (i.e. travel and subsistence costs) from the IPPC Secretariat may be made. However, any support is subject to available funds. The IPPC Secretariat will consider funding assistance for participants following IPPC criteria for funding. Full details on these criteria can be found on the IPP (<https://www.ippc.int/publications/criteria-used-prioritizing-participants-receive-travel-assistanceattend-meetings>).

Annex 2

Template to be adapted for each emerging pest requiring the creation of an Expert Working Group (EWG)

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EXPERT WORKING GROUP (EWG) ON [PLACE TO INSERT NAME OF THE EMERGING PEST]

1. Background

Strengthening Pest Outbreak Alert and Response Systems (POARS) is one of the eight development agenda items (DAIs) under the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030.

The POARS Steering Group (POARS SG) established by CPM-17 has outlined a process for identifying, nominating, and assessing potential emerging pests of IPPC global concern. Pests assessed as meeting the relevant criteria are designated as emerging pests of IPPC global concern (hereafter simply referred to as emerging pests), triggering alerts and targeted prediction, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery activities.

To coordinate these activities, a dedicated Expert Working Group (EWG) could be established for the identified emerging pest(s) of global concern. The EWG will operate under the guidance of the POARS Steering Group and under the coordination of the IPPC Secretariat.

2. Purpose

The EWG will support NPPOs and RPPOs to predict, prevent, prepare, respond, and recover through the development of tools, guidance documents, and training material for *[place to insert the pest identified as an emerging pest of global concern]*. EWGs could also be set up for groups of pests, such as those associated with a single commodity.

3. Duration and review

The EWG will remain active until the pest(s) is no longer considered as an emerging pest(s) or until all planned activities and objectives have been successfully completed. Periodic reviews will be conducted by the POARS SG to assess progress of the EWG and determine the need for continuation or adjustments.

4. Composition of the expert working group

The expert working group will consist of at least six members from NPPOs, RPPOs, research institutions, academia, international organizations and partner organizations, and at least one representative from the POARS SG.

The IPPC Secretariat supports equity, diversity, and inclusiveness and encourages all interested experts to submit their candidature to participate in the emerging pest specific expert working group. The EWG members 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 outputs are globally relevant, applicable, and reflect best practices from all over the world.

The following criteria should be used for selecting EWG members:

- Experience in risk management, including the provision of biosecurity advice and involvement in policy development.
- Knowledge of the specific emerging pest(s) and/or commodity.
- Familiarity with international and regional plant protection organisations and other government and private institutions engaged with plant protection affairs.
- Experience in the provision of technical assistance.
- Understanding of international phytosanitary standards and implementation resources.

The Chair may be selected by the membership and remain Chair for the duration of the EWG or be set in a rotational manner.

The IPPC Secretariat will support, coordinate and facilitate the functions of the EWG.

5. Reporting

The EWG reports directly to the POARS SG.

6. Process

The member selection for the EWG shall be carried out in accordance with the following guidelines:

- A call for experts will be issued, and the IPPC Secretariat will review the nominations before submitting them to the POARS SG for selection, ensuring both gender and geographical balance.
- The EWG will convene virtually for the first time at least to select its chairperson, discuss its functions, and plan the work described under “functions”.

7. Functions and scope

The EWG will focus on the following activities:

- Collate existing prediction, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery tools, guidance, training etc. (hereafter referred to simply as tools) from, for example NPPOs, RPPOs, or the IPPC Secretariat.
- Perform a gap analysis on the available tools, mapping those partially available/in progress or unavailable.
- Carry out a prioritisation exercise on the gaps.
- Provide recommendations to the POARS SG on implementation.
- Coordinate the development of new tools.
- Monitor new developments concerning the emerging pest(s) and provide technical advice as needed.
- Support technical communication activities for the emerging pest(s).
- Provide feedback to the POARS SG on the implementation of their activities.

8. Meetings

The EWG will meet at least monthly initially, and then as required, to perform the functions outlined above. The group will mainly meet virtually and will meet face to face under exceptional circumstances. In case of emergency, the EWG may meet more frequently.

9. Funding

The organization that employs an IPPC meeting participant is responsible for funding the travel and daily subsistence allowance for that person to attend. If the employer is unable to allocate sufficient funds, participants are first encouraged to seek assistance from sources other than the IPPC Secretariat. Where such demonstrated efforts to secure assistance have been unsuccessful, requests for assistance (i.e. travel and subsistence costs) from the IPPC Secretariat may be made. However, any support is subject to available funds. The IPPC Secretariat will consider funding assistance for participants following IPPC criteria for funding. Full details on these criteria can be found on the IPP (<https://www.ippc.int/publications/criteria-used-prioritizing-participants-receive-travelassistanceattend-meetings>).