



COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

TWENTIETH SESSION

RETHINKING ISPMs – WHAT COMES NEXT

AGENDA ITEM 6.1

(Prepared by the CPM chairperson)

- [1] The 2024 meeting of the Strategic Planning Group considered the question ‘is it time to rethink ISPMs?’. This was stimulated by a paper¹ submitted to the SPG by New Zealand which highlighted some concerns regarding the readability, clarity and usability of ISPMs.
- [2] The 19th Session of the Commission discussed the outcome of the 2024 SPG meeting and made several recommendations, including to have a more detailed discussion at SPG in 2025 and requested the Standards and Implementation Committees prepare papers setting out their respective views. All contracting parties were also invited to submit papers.
- [3] Fourteen papers, a record for a single topic, were submitted by SC, IC, NPPOs and RPPOs for discussion by the 2025 SPG. The SPG agreed that work on improving the readability and accessibility of the ISPMs could be initiated as there is consensus of views on this issue but that the process should not be rushed and there should be no erosion of the scientific or technical basis of ISPMs.
- [4] The outcomes of the SPG discussions can be found in the report² of the meeting but for ease of reference the key ones are included in Annex 1. Although the SPG did not agree to any specific recommendations for CPM, it did make suggestions for next steps.

Recommendations

- [5] The CPM is invited to:
 - (1) *Agree* to conduct a survey, using the Observatory including targeted interviews, to gather further quantitative and qualitative data on the topic of rethinking ISPMs
 - (2) *Agree* to invite a plain English specialist to participate in the next two draft ISPM Expert Working Groups (EWGs) or *invite* a scientific copy editor to review the drafts produced by the next two ISPM EWGs before they are presented to the Standards Committee.
 - (3) *Agree* that the next 2 EWGs take into consideration the suggestions from the 2025 SPG meeting including from the papers submitted by the Standards and Implementation Committees.
 - (4) *Agree* that the IPPC Secretariat, working with the Standards and Implementation Committees, develops plain language guidelines for use by the Standards Committees, Implementation Committees and EWG. If necessary, a plain language expert could be engaged to assist with this process.

¹ 05_SPG_2024_Oct: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/93862/>

² SPG webpage: <https://www.ippc.int/en/commission/strategic-planning-group/>

Annex 1: Outcome of the discussion at SPG 2025

Agreed that work on the readability and accessibility of the ISPMs can be initiated as there is consensus of views on this issue. Consider adapting simple practices and engaging a scientific editor to contribute on the drafting stage.

Agreed with the need to for additional research, via an Observatory study (survey and targeted interviews) to gain a better understanding of the underlying problems of understanding the current ISPMs, whether many NPPO's experience these problems and whether there are any ISPMs where these problems are especially prone.

Agreed the importance of enabling the ISPMs and supporting guidance material to be developed concurrently. Review how it was envisaged the SC and IC would work together when the IC was established to ensure that standards and supporting guidance material were developed together. One of the main barriers to this has been the lack of regular program budget available to the IC and a solution to this, as raised at SPG 2024³ could be to reduce the size of the standards committee to its previous size (15) and making the money saved available to the IC.

Agreed that a structured pilot involving the next two draft ISPMs could be undertaken. The pilot should:

- Apply plain language and visual formatting to the ISPM
- Develop and test associated guide content concurrently
- Use the IPPC Observatory and Regional Workshops to gather feedback
- Include a post-implementation review by CPs and RPPOs

Proposed that the IPPC Secretariat, working with the SC and IC, develops plain language guideline document.

Proposed that a Development Agenda Item on this topic could be included in the next Strategic Framework to give the IPPC community appropriate time and the forum to 1. Seek consensus on conceptual issues 2. Identify future implications on suggested changes 3. Create an appropriate mechanism to align development of guidance material and ISPMs.

Discussed and identified actions which could be taken immediately to improve understanding of ISPMs, including:

- Not having appendices in ISPMs
- Not having examples in parentheses (e.g. something, another thing)
- As an interim measure, any guidance removed from ISPMs could be saved as a pdf document on the IPP with a link to the ISPM and vice versa

Agreed the importance of ensuring that scientific and technical accuracy of ISPMs is maintained.

³ [06_SPG_2024_Oct_ISPMs_and_Guidance_UK_paper_2024-10-10.docx](#)