

COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

TWENTIETH SESSION

**INTERVENTIONS ON IPPC EPHYTO SOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION, CHANGE MANGEMENT,
AND FUNDING (PAPERS CPM 2026/11, CPM2026/12, AND CPM 2026/13)**

AGENDA ITEM 13.1

(Prepared by New Zealand, supported by Australia)

New Zealand thanks the ePhyto Steering Group (ESG), the Bureau, and the IPPC Secretariat for the comprehensive papers presented under Agenda Item 13.1. We appreciate the clear updates on implementation progress, the proposals to strengthen change management, and the continued efforts to improve governance and transparency across the IPPC ePhyto Solution.

I. Agenda Item 13.1.1 – CPM paper 2026/11: Implementation and Governance

New Zealand welcomes the summary of governance and operational proposals provided in Table 1 (paragraph 6).

Revised ESG Terms of Reference

New Zealand agrees it is timely to review the Terms of Reference. However, we consider there is insufficient justification for significantly increasing the size of the ESG by adding expert members, introducing alternates, or allowing participation solely through review of minutes.

As drafted, the proposed structure could expand the ESG to approximately 27 individuals. This would increase costs, reduce efficiency, and create a heavy participation burden for contracting parties.

We note that the ESG already has the ability to invite experts when required. Therefore, permanent expert membership does not appear necessary.

If additional skills or improved participation are needed, New Zealand proposes that a new call for nominations be issued to refresh the ESG membership.

New Zealand also recalls that the CPM has previously confirmed that **governance of the IPPC ePhyto Solution rests with the Bureau**. The ESG is responsible for steering and managing implementation and maintaining and developing the IPPC ePhyto Solution. We therefore consider that this distinction should be made more explicit in the revised Terms of Reference in Appendix 1.

Below, New Zealand has provided proposed tracked changes to Appendix 1 of CPM 2026/11, including explanatory comments (*italicised*). We would be pleased to work with a small group during CPM-20 to help finalise a revised ToR.

Industry Advisory Group

On the third proposed action in Table 1, New Zealand is concerned that the Industry Advisory Group is presented as having a governance role. This group is an advisory mechanism and should not be framed as a decision-making/governance body. The Bureau or the CPM should review and approve the Industry Advisory Group Terms of Reference.

Recommendations in Paragraph 22

If Recommendation 2 (paragraph 22) is adopted, adjustments will be required to the second and third columns of Table 1 in paragraph 6 to ensure the proposals remain aligned and properly reflect the role of the ESG and the Industry Advisory Group.

II. Agenda Item 13.1.2 – CPM 2026/12: Change Management and Enhancement Proposals

New Zealand commends the Secretariat and ESG for the extensive work to increase transparency regarding proposed changes. The appendices and the prioritisation process are welcome additions.

New Zealand has proposed an expanded and more detailed table of delegated authority, clarifying which changes are decided by the ESG, the Bureau, or the CPM. We consider this is essential for supporting consistent decision-making-. We recommend that this delegation table is included in the ESG ToR, and that it replaces Table 1 in CPM 2026/12, and that paragraph 3 of the Change Lifecycle in Appendix 1 be modified to reflect a clearer role for the Bureau and CPM in approving relevant change types.

Regarding the proposal to proceed with a proof-of-concept phase for harmonisation of Additional Declarations, New Zealand supports the recommendation. Participation must remain voluntary for NPPOs, and importing NPPOs must retain responsibility for maintaining- their Additional Declarations within any resulting system.

III. Agenda Item 13.1.3 – CPM 2026/13: Funding Model

New Zealand supports the recommendations in CPM 2026/13.

For future sessions, New Zealand suggests including an appendix with a concise financial overview specific to the IPPC ePhyto Solution, including:

- **Revenue received in the previous year**, by source (regular programme budget, MDTF, contracting party contributions, project funds); and
- **Expenditure in the previous year**, by function (staffing, maintenance, development, promotion, implementation).

This would support contracting parties in understanding the financial status and resource needs of the programme.

IV. Comments on the Proposed Revised ESG Terms of Reference

New Zealand's tracked changes (below) aim to:

- reaffirm that the ESG reports to the Bureau, consistent with CPM-18 and CPM-19 decisions;
- support a manageable ESG structure that maintains effectiveness;
- clarify expectations for member participation;
- streamline membership criteria and remove unnecessary duplication;
- avoid introducing alternates, while allowing for replacement members as used in other CPM bodies;
- clarify the role and limits of invited experts and observers;
- remove overly prescriptive detail on capacity building- activities;
- include a clear table of decision-making- authority for changes to the IPPC ePhyto Solution—an essential governance element; and
- ensure the ToR reflects sound practice, transparency, and alignment with previous CPM decisions.

New Zealand would welcome the opportunity to work with interested contracting parties during CPM-20 to agree a consolidated and coherent revised Terms of Reference.

V. Revised terms of reference for the ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) to CPM 20 (2026), with tracked changes

Background and purpose

CPM 8 (2013) established the ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) to facilitate the implementation of electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhytos) and ~~act as the first governing board defining~~ define priorities and details of the ePhyto Solution development and implementation roadmap. The ESG ~~reports to the Bureau, and~~ provides coordination, guidance, and advice on IPPC actions to develop and facilitate the harmonized use of electronic phytosanitary certificates and their exchange among contracting parties.

Comment on proposed tracked changes in this section:

- *The changes make it clear the ESG is the steering group and reports to the Bureau (as it has always done). The Bureau is the governance body for ePhyto.*

- *While discussing the ePhyto funding model CPM 18 “agreed that the CPM Bureau would govern the funding model until an alternative governance mechanism is agreed by the CPM.”*
- *CPM 19 “discussed [the] need to establish a dedicated governance group ... The CPM chairperson confirmed that the bureau is acting as the temporary governance body, ahead of a review of an appropriate governance model for the IPPC ePhyto Solution.”*

Process

The IPPC Secretariat will issue a call for regional representatives and experts on the IPPC website to allow national and regional plant protection organizations to nominate their representatives and their alternates to be part of the steering group. Nominations will be presented to the CPM Bureau for their review and endorsement selection.

The ESG will normally meet virtually every two months, with additional or in-person meetings convened as required by the work program. It is expected that the majority of regions will be represented either through meeting attendance or through the review of meeting minutes and supporting documentation.

Comments on proposed tracked changes to this section:

- *There is already provision for the ESG to invite experts to assist them (see Membership section below).*
- *Alternates should not be allowed as it may result in reduced commitment of members, result in reduced continuity at meetings, and would double the size of the ESG membership. Other CPM bodies and groups do not have alternates. However, identifying Replacement members as is done in other CPM bodies would be acceptable.*
- *Members should be expected to attend all meetings not simply review minutes. A quorum would be a majority but this should be specified elsewhere.*

Membership

The membership should be both skills- and knowledge-based possess appropriate skills and knowledge as described below, with bB Broad geographical and gender representation should be achieved. The ESG is composed as follows:

- Seven members will be representatives of the seven FAO regions, with collective extensive knowledge of phytosanitary certification processes, ePhyto, and trade facilitation from each of the seven FAO regions.
- Up to Five members will be ePhyto and trade facilitation experts (ideally from different regions).

- A Bureau member, who is selected by the Bureau ~~(unless already present in the above members)~~.
- An Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) member, who is selected by the IC.
- IPPC Secretariat ePhyto Product Manager ~~(responsible for liaising with the technical providers and partners)~~.

The following criteria should be considered by the Bureau as they select SG members:

- Experience in phytosanitary certification and verification processes at export and/or import level.
- Expert knowledge of ISPMs 12 Phytosanitary certificates, 13 Guidelines for the notification of non-compliance and emergency action, and 7 Phytosanitary certification system.
- Expert knowledge of international standards related to phytosanitary certification and plant products trade regulations.
- Experience working with national phytosanitary certification systems.
Documented experience in ePhyto implementation and capacity building.
- Sound understanding of information technology systems, including web services and data communication.

Comments on proposed tracked changes to this section:

- *The criteria for selecting members have been moved up in this section, to provide a more logical flow. The wording “documented” and “proven” from the criteria have been removed. The nomination process requires documentation to be provided, and the Bureau can use that when evaluating candidates.*
- *There is no explanation in the cover paper for why five additional experts are needed. The members selected from regions should collectively be able to provide the breadth of knowledge necessary. Also, the current ESG ToR and this new draft already have the ability to call on experts for advice when needed. If a larger ESG is justified, the members (regional nominations and experts) should all come from NPPOs, with the regional members nominated through RPPOs and the expert members nominated by NPPOs.*
- *The member from the Bureau represents the Bureau so should not also represent a region.*
- *It is not necessary to specify the responsibility of the ePhyto Product Manager.*

ESG members serve for a three-year term and may be renominated when their term ends.

The Chair ~~shall~~will be an ESG member and will be elected by the ESG membership for a three-year term, which may be renewed once. ~~The same three-year term applies to ESG members.~~

All ESG members should have the time available and commitment to actively participate.

The ESG ~~can~~may invite ~~additional~~ experts to provide advice and conduct work on ~~deal with~~ specific topics or challenges under its oversight, as required, and within budget constraints.

The ESG may establish task specific support arrangements, as required, and within budget constraints.

The ESG ~~can~~may invite external observers, ~~as required.~~

Invited experts and observers are not members and do not have voting rights.

~~The ESG may engage expertise or establish task-specific support arrangements, under its oversight, as required.~~

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

Comments on proposed tracked changes to this section:

- *The changes provide more clarity to the 3-year term of the members and that they can be renominated without any limit on how many times they can be re-nominated and re-selected.*
- *Providing clarity on the status of invited experts and observers.*

~~The following criteria should be used for selecting SG members:~~

- ~~• Demonstrated engagement in phytosanitary certification and verification processes at export and/or import level.~~
- ~~• Proven expert knowledge of ISPMs 12 Phytosanitary certificates, 13 Guidelines for the notification of non-compliance and emergency action, and 7 Phytosanitary certification system.~~
- ~~• Proven expert knowledge of international standards related to phytosanitary certification and plant products trade regulations.~~
- ~~• Documented experience working with national phytosanitary certification systems.~~ ~~• Documented experience in ePhyto implementation and capacity building.~~

- ~~Desirable: Sound understanding of information technology systems, including web services and data communication.~~

Functions (tasks)

The ESG will:

- Identify governance issues and recommend solutions to the Bureau for decision.
- ~~Identify, prepare for, and support the implementation of technical changes to the IPPC ePhyto Solution, in line with approved change prioritisation criteria and ESG decision-making authority considering:~~
- ~~The governance structure model and decision-making framework~~
 - ~~Availability of funds~~
 - ~~Criticality of the changes, considering the quality of services and security main priorities~~
 - ~~Impact of the changes on the final users~~
- ~~Expected benefits of the changes~~
- Monitor ~~and report on~~ the execution of the ePhyto budget against the agreed ~~priorities work programme.~~
- Promote the multilateral vision ~~for~~ and use of ~~the IPPC ePhyto Solution, and actively support and collaborate in~~ maintaining a unified implementation approach, and coherent communication among all stakeholders.
- Identify implementation requirements of the ePhyto-related ISPM(s).
- Regularly review and confirm the official harmonized terms and codes to be used in ePhyto.
- ~~Contribute to building capacity amongst contracting parties to implement ePhyto, by:~~
- ~~Developing standard materials that could be used by contracting parties to support the implementation of ePhyto~~
- ~~Supporting and collaborating on organizing regular webinars and workshops, dedicated to ePhyto to improve the adoption, sharing of practices, and feedback collection in all the FAO regions~~
- Identify and develop initiatives for ePhyto Solution scaling and sustainability.
- Assist the Secretariat ~~in developing proposals to address funding and to identify~~ resource needs.
- Identify opportunities for communication, awareness raising and advocacy on ePhyto.
- Collaborate on electronic certification initiatives with other international or regional organizations and industry.
- Other related functions, as identified by the Bureau or CPM.

Comments on proposed tracked changes to this section:

- *The criteria for prioritising changes to the IPPC ePhyto Solution do not need to be included in the ToR. They should be clearly described and agreed by CPM in paper CPM 2026/12*
- *The list of ways the ESG can contribute to capacity building is unnecessarily limiting. Better to remove the detail and keep capacity building options open.*
- *Working with the Secretariat to address funding issues is a governance responsibility the Bureau should address.*
- *The ESG report to the Bureau so Bureau may from time to time request the ESG perform other relevant functions that may not be listed in this ToR.*

Change decision-making authority

The ESG's is delegated decision-making authority by CPM for some changes. The table below sets out the delegated authority for changes to the IPPC ePhyto Solution:

<u>Change Type</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>ESG</u>	<u>Bureau</u>	<u>CPM</u>
<u>Maintenance</u>	<u>Maintenance changes required for the correct functioning of the solution, such as:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Application defects</u> • <u>Security measures</u> • <u>Configuration changes supporting country implementation, interoperability, and adoption</u> 	<u>ESG approve within ePhyto work programme budget</u>	<u>Bureau approval required if ePhyto work programme budget may be exceeded</u>	<u>CPM approval needed if required maintenance cannot be achieved within total CPM approved annual work programme budget.</u>
<u>Improvement</u>	<u>Improvements of functionalities and technology that would not impact service delivery and usability of the solution, such as:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Application functionality enrichment</u> • <u>Data harmonization improvements</u> • <u>Other moderate improvement of existing functionality</u> 	<u>ESG approve within ePhyto work programme budget</u>	<u>Bureau approval required if ePhyto work programme budget may be exceeded</u>	<u>CPM approval needed if required maintenance cannot be achieved within total CPM approved annual work programme budget.</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Significant improvement or extension of existing functionality</u> 	<u>ESG recommends change to Bureau</u>	<u>Bureau may approve within ePhyto work programme budget, unless bureau consider contracting parties may not fully support the change.</u>	<u>CPM approval required when there is significant contracting party interest and discussion at CPM may be required.</u>

<u>Development</u>	<u>Enhancements to technology and functionalities with an impact on service delivery or usability of the solution that require countries to undertake implementation activities to adopt the changes, such as:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Change in technology affecting the use of the solution</u> <u>New features that would require adoption, and/or potentially impact the overall service cost or delivery</u> 	<u>ESG recommends change to Bureau</u>	<u>Bureau may endorse.</u>	<u>CPM approval needed.</u> <u>Implementation of change subject prioritisation process and budget being secured</u>
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Note: Any change that introduces, enables, or materially alters a channel, interface, data exchange mechanism, or directly links to systems operated by non-contracting parties—including but not limited to industry platforms, UNCTAD components, SPS standard setting bodies, or other external entities—must be submitted for review and approval by the CPM.

Comments on proposed tracked changes to this section:

- It is best practice to include decision-making authority within the Terms of Reference for a body when decision-making will have financial implications for the organisation.*
- The table above is modified from Table 1 in CPM2026/12.*
- This table more clearly proposes the decision-making authority of ESG, Bureau, and CPM for changes to the IPPC ePhyto Solution.*
- Changes that create or modify connectivity with external, non-contracting-party systems introduce elevated governance, security, interoperability, funding, and policy-alignment considerations. CPM or Bureau oversight ensures that such changes support the IPPC's mandate, and appropriately manage risks around data sharing, trust boundaries, and long-term system stewardship.*

Expected start date and duration

The ESG's program of work and Terms of Reference will be ~~established~~ reviewed by CPM everyfor three years.

Expected outputs

As identified by the above functions.

Reportings

~~The IPPC Secretariat, on behalf of t~~The ESG, reports to the CPM Bureau and CPM.

The IPPC Secretariat will support the ESG to prepare reports.

Funding

To ~~undertake this work~~ participate in the ESG, participants will be self-funded. Where extra-budgetary resources are identified and allocated to ePhyto, the IPPC Secretariat can consider funding assistance for participants who meet specific criteria established by the IPPC for assisting developing countries.