



## COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

### TWENTIETH SESSION

#### RETHINKING ISPMs: THE IC PERSPECTIVE

##### AGENDA ITEM 6.1

*(Prepared by Thorwald Geuze (IC Vice-Chair), Dominique Pelletier (IC Chair))*

- [1] This paper has been prepared by the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) in response to Paper CPM\_47, titled 'Is it time to rethink ISPMs?', presented by New Zealand at CPM-19 (2025).
- [2] The IC, as a subsidiary body of the CPM, contributes to the IPPC's mission by facilitating the practical implementation of International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs). This includes supporting contracting parties through tools, guides, training, and collaborative initiatives.
- [3] The IC appreciates the invitation to contribute to the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) 2025 discussion on this matter and offers the following reflections and recommendations, drawing from its operational experience and the outcomes of its recent meeting (May 2025).
- [4] The IC welcomes the discussion on ISPMs and shares the view that ISPMs should be written in clear and easy to understand language for any plant health specialist or professional user. There are, however, some aspects of the discussion that prompt us to give our view and mention some aspects that have come up in discussions within the IC.

#### **1. Development of guides in conjunction with or during the development of an ISPM**

- [5] This point has been discussed during the IC May 2025 meeting, along with members from the SC-7, and the IC's overall opinion is that not every ISPM needs a guide.
- [6] An ISPM should be written as clearly as possible, and its implementation should be as straightforward as possible. Another principle that the IC would like to put forward is that, in order to develop guidance material with a significant added value, there should be some experience with the implementation of the ISPM, as not all implementation issues can be identified until an ISPM is put into practice by the community.
- [7] Chronic funding issues within the Secretariat also represent an impediment for the development of guidance material, or for the concurrent development of ISPMs and guidance material. Currently the IFU is mainly funded through sunseting project funds and there is no regular staff (from the regular budget) assigned to developing guides. This would mean that, if the development of guides alongside ISPMs becomes the new norm, funding for the guide would imperatively need to be secured before the development of an ISPM can commence. In addition, the workplans of the SSU and IFU (and the workplans of the SC and IC) would require coordination and alignment to ensure strong cohesion in the concurrent development of both types of products.

## 2. Less guidance in ISPMs; more implementation materials

- [8] It has been suggested that ISPMs contain too much guidance text and that this is undesirable. Along the same logic, ISPMs should only contain core requirements and everything else should be contained in guidance materials that should be developed in conjunction with the ISPM.
- [9] In addition to the opinions already provided under section 1 of this document, and which partially address this issue, the following aspects should be taken into consideration.
- [10] Currently in most ISPMs, there is some information that helps Contracting Parties implement the ISPM. ISPMs are always translated in all FAO languages. They also are subjected to country consultation twice. Guidance material, on the other hand, are peer-reviewed and are only translated if dedicated funding is available. If no funds for the translation of guidance materials is secured and the guidance information is removed from a ISPM (or not taken up in case of a new ISPM) and moved to guidance materials, Contracting Parties depending on another FAO language, are seriously disadvantaged. This is something that should carefully be considered.

## 3. Proposed path forward

- [11] If the concurrent development of ISPMs and guidance material remains a priority to the community, the IC would recommend a structured pilot involving one or two upcoming draft ISPMs. The pilot would:
- 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
- [12] The IC also encourages the Bureau to consider seeking donor support for this pilot, following successful models used in Codex.
- [13] The IC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the SPG 2025 discussions and stands ready to collaborate with the SC, SSU, and IFU to test and refine new approaches to ISPM development and implementation support. Enhancing clarity, usability, and equitable access to ISPMs is key to ensuring meaningful phytosanitary protection worldwide.