

Secretariat of the International Plant Protection
Convention (IPPC)

Nyon, 13th September 2024

Discussion Document on the DRAFT ANNEX TO ISPM 38: Design and use of systems approaches for phytosanitary certification of seeds (2018-009)

Dear IPPC Secretariat,

In response to the IPPC's call for comments on the "2024 First Consultation: Draft Annex to ISPM 38 (International Movement of Seeds) on the Design and Use of Systems Approaches for the Phytosanitary Certification of Seeds (2018-009)," the International Seed Federation (ISF) is pleased to provide here this discussion document.

This document outlines the ISF's perspectives and recommendations, developed by our Systems Approach Expert Group, to support the ongoing consultation process. We strongly advocate for the inclusion of a systems approach within the annex to ISPM 38. Such an approach offers a harmonized framework for the development and implementation of phytosanitary certification systems for seeds intended for sowing, as well as guidance for NPPOs on the recognition and audit of these systems. Please find attached an Excel spreadsheet containing specific comments on the draft document.

We believe that global acceptance of a systems approach for seed as an alternative to the current consignment-by-consignment phytosanitary certification will significantly enhance the ability of NPPOs and the seed industry to prevent introduction and spread of pests while at the same time efficiently deliver seeds to farmers worldwide.

We kindly request that this document be considered in your review.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

DISCUSSION POINTS

GENERAL COMMENTS

- I. It is encouraging that the IPPC acknowledges the complexities of moving seeds internationally and is actively developing an Annex to ISPM 38. This annex as described in Specification 70, 3rd paragraph under Purpose, page 1, clearly states that *'it will provide standardized guidance for a harmonized alternative to consignment-by-consignment testing and inspection of seeds at export by multilaterally recognizing existing industry measures that minimize pest risks and incorporating them into system approaches*. NPPOs and the industry share a need for an effective phytosanitary system

that prevents the introduction and spread of plant pests while enabling global trade in a fast business model.

- II. ISPM38 recognizes the specific challenges associated with the international movement of seeds, such as re-export and long storage. The SA developed in the Annex should also take these challenges into consideration.
- III. The Draft Annex contains several positive statements that we would like to emphasize:
 - i) Recognition that existing pest management practices and quality systems can be a way to effectively reduce pest risks [Paragraph 33].
 - ii) Specific processes relevant for international movement of seeds are mentioned: re-export, storage of seeds [Paragraphs 37, 38, 55]
 - iii) Statement that management options may apply to groups of pests [Paragraph 42] and *'SA for seeds may be used to manage pest groups rather than individual pests'* [Paragraph 58]
 - iv) Statement that *'Systems approaches should be designed to ensure the health of seeds throughout the seed supply chain, integrating measures to reduce pest risk in a defined, clear and simple manner'* [Paragraph 62].

Systems Approach (SA) for Seed

- I. The main reason for the industry to strive for a systems approach for seed is the growing complexity of global seed trade. Seed trade is growing rapidly. At the same time many countries are defining new, not harmonized and more specific phytosanitary requirements for seeds. The increase in trade as well as in phytosanitary requirements results in a high degree of complexity to move seed around the globe. There is a need for simplification and harmonization of the current system to ship seed internationally.

It is important to note that the industry desire to develop a SA for Seeds is not connected to the circumstances that are mentioned in ISPM 14 (Chapter 5), such as that individual measures are not adequate to meet phytosanitary import requirements or are not available. The purpose of a Systems Approach for Seeds is not to solve specific high phytosanitary risks (as in ISPM36). Field inspections, 'country free from...'-declarations, seed treatments or seed health testing are frequently used, as individual and effective phytosanitary measures. Systems approach for seeds is seen as a possibility to provide standardized guidance for a harmonized alternative to consignment-by-consignment testing and inspection of seeds at export by multilaterally recognizing existing industry measures. It will lead to the development of a more efficient and predictable alternative to ship seeds internationally.

Elements in such a SA that can simplify and harmonize are:

- **Harmonization of pest lists.** Focus on those pests where seed has been identified to be a pathway for introduction and spread of the pest under natural field conditions (ISPM 38 Section 1.2).
- **Grouping of pests.** Measures in the systems approach could be based not on individual pests but on the pathways of introduction and spread of pests into a seed production site. Although there may be thousands of pests, there are relatively few pathways of introduction. Mitigation measures for a particular target pest also effectively protect against similar pests in each pathway category. Effective mitigation of these pathways will provide protection against

many pests with similar biology and epidemiology at a time. This will avoid the necessity to have specific measures in place for each individual pest.

- **Use of industry phytosanitary best practices as a basis.** Seed companies already have many procedures in place to prevent infection/ infestation of seeds with seed transmitted pests. Implementation of the Systems Approach can leverage these current industry practices.
- **A multilateral systems approach.** While we recognize that bilateral agreements are the current way of working in IPPC, with multilateral acceptance, pest risk management options applied in the country of export are recognized by NPPOs of multiple importing countries. A systems approach for seeds can be built up gradually and evolve from only a few participating countries in the beginning to global acceptance in time. Countries are free to recognize the systems approach for seed and join.
- **Simplification of the phytosanitary certificate:** the SA is a system in which seeds produced in a NPPO-approved supply chain can be imported and (re-)exported with a phytosanitary certificate, without the specification of individual pests.

These elements are mentioned in the draft Annex, but the guidance provided is very loosely described and leaves it up to countries to develop a framework. This does not provide an outlook on a 'clear and simple system' to move seed internationally. Implementation of this Annex will most likely lead to a much more complex system than we currently have. If a systems approach for seeds is not simple, it will not be used as an alternative to the current system.

SUBSTANTIVE COMMENTS

Industry best-management practices

- II. The Specification states, *“Relevant industry best-management practices and quality systems could serve as the basis for designing systems approaches as an alternative option for the phytosanitary certification of seeds”* (Spec.70, p.1). The intention appears to be to consider how existing practices can be utilized to simplify and harmonize international trade. The Annex could outline the process for recognizing existing practices, such as through an analysis of relevant pests, the pathways of introduction of pests in a seed production, and a description of the practices among others. However, the current draft Annex focuses on a systems approach developed by National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs), where industry practices may be used, but not as the basis.

Management of groups of pests [Paragraph 42]

- III. See explanation in 2nd bullet of the paragraph ‘Systems approach for seed’ above.

Pest Risk Analysis [Paragraph 66]

- IV. For commodities already approved by a NPPO for market access, Pest Risk Analysis (PRAs) for all regulated pests in question should have already been completed and phytosanitary measures approved. There may not be a need to redundantly conduct PRAs for these pests. In most cases the systems approach will be significantly adding

measures above and beyond what is currently required. Ideally, a globally accepted list of relevant seed transmitted pests and an analysis of the potential ways of introduction and spread of those pests in a seed production can be the basis for the risk evaluation.

Multilateral systems approaches [Paragraph 105]

- V. See comments in 4th bullet point in paragraph 'Systems approach for seed' above. The international seed industry strives for global harmonization via the implementation of a multilateral framework based on a sufficiently clear systems approach Annex to ISPM38.

Development of systems approaches

- VI. The description of the development of systems approaches for seeds in the draft Annex suggests that different systems approaches may be developed for the same crop in various groups of countries. Harmonizing these systems across different groups of countries is essential to facilitate international seed trade. Without harmonization, it will be very difficult for countries to fulfil the requirements. Companies will have to address the diverse requirements of multiple systems approaches to move seeds between countries that follow different systems. This proposed system is significantly more complex than the current one and, as such, would not be used by the seed industry.
- VII. Collaboration between NPPOs and industry is essential for the successful development and implementation of systems approaches for seeds.

Several tasks from the Specification have not been addressed in the draft Annex

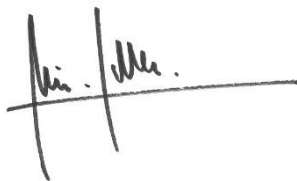
- VIII. It may be helpful to clarify more of the tasks outlined in the Specification, for example:
- i. *'Review examples of phytosanitary import requirements for seeds. Examine regional guidance for importation, if such is available, in relation to seed-borne or seed-transmitted pests. Identify potential pest risk management measures for categories of identified pests (e.g. viruses, fungi, bacteria).'* (2)
 - ii. *'Review existing:*
 - (a) management systems for seeds (e.g. Good Seed and Plant Practices (GSPP), the Regulatory Framework for Seed Health (ReFreSH) of the United States Department of Agriculture, the Disease Prevention Program (DPP));*
 - (b) relevant systems approaches in other industry and commodity sectors (e.g. the Biosecure Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) approach, the Systems Approach for Nursery Certification (SANC) of the National Plant Board (covering the 50 states of the United States of America, together with Puerto Rico and Guam) (3).*
 - iii. *'Examine how existing seed production practices contribute to the mitigation of pest risk and how they could be incorporated into a systems approach'* (4).
 - iv. *'Define the general requirements of a systems approach for seeds, ensuring that the phytosanitary measures included are technically justified.'* (5).

- v. *'Examine how existing management systems adopted by the seed industry (e.g. audits, verification processes) could be incorporated into a systems approach'* (6).
 - vi. *'Describe a procedure for potential multilateral recognition by NPPOs of quality systems used by seed companies and how such quality systems could be considered as elements of systems approaches'* (7).
 - vii. *'Develop criteria and requirements for multilateral systems approaches'* (8).
- IX. These tasks have not been or have been minimally addressed. There are no clear guidelines or framework for NPPOs regarding the development, recognition and auditing of a systems approach for seeds.

Additionally, detailed technical and substantive comments are provided paragraph by paragraph in the attached Excel document.

In case of further questions please don't hesitate to contact the ISF Phytosanitary Affairs Manager at the ISF Secretariat via email Rose Souza Richards R.SouzaRichards@worldseed.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Keller', written over a horizontal line.

Michael Keller, ISF Secretary General