**COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE IPPC**

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*Development of a university course on international regulatory phytosanitary matters*

1. **Background**

At CPM 7 (2012) a draft IPPC communication strategy was made available (as CPM document 2012/CRP/10) and discussed. It was thought that the communication strategy would complement the other CPM strategies, particularly the Resource Mobilization and Capacity Development Strategies. In order to improve the draft communication strategy the IPPC Secretariat requested contracting parties to provide comments.

In April 2012, the European Union and its Member States submitted comments to the draft IPPC Communications strategy and specified that as one specific element of a future IPPC Communication Strategy it would suggest the IPPC, as part of that strategy, considers developing a standardised dedicated university or diploma course regarding the IPPC and its many activities, to be made available for interested universities and educational institutions worldwide as well as for NPPOs and RPPOs.

The following chapters aim to build on the suggestions by the EU and its Member States and identify possible components of such a course as well as its potential benefits and disadvantages.

1. **Structure and Development of an University Course**

A university course on the IPPC and its activities would ideally address “international regulatory phytosanitary matters” and as such cover the IPPC, RPPOs and their relationship with the WTO/SPS Agreement and other international organizations such as the CBD. A course would probably be designed in a number of modules, such as pest risk analysis, survey and monitoring as well as other major focal points of the IPPC activities. It would aim to provide students and interested agricultural generalists with the basic principles, policies and techniques of international regulatory phytosanitary concepts and as such raising awareness on a broad scale. The course and its modules may need to be designed in an online accessible way.

The development of a university course is an extensive activity and would probably need a special structural set-up to realize by the IPPC. The possible set-up may consist of a coordinator and a special advisory expert group whose members may be responsible for developing individual course modules. The development of a textbook may be an integral part of the course development. The time necessary for realizing such a project should be estimated at approximately two/three years. Combinations with planned activities on the development of manuals and SOPs may well be desirable and create synergies. In order to offer an attractive and up-to-date university course, regular revisions of the course should be necessary.

A university course may be predominantly taught at universities in traditional ways (seminar & classroom) and possibly through the internet. The course would be offered free of charge to all universities and higher educational institutions. University staff would, however, need training in order to effectively supervise and mentor students. Such training could be provided by the IPPC, possibly through workshops operating on a cost recovery principle.

Financing this activity may be challenging! Coordinator and the advisory/author group would need to be reimbursed (paid royalties) for their activities. Estimating that a coordinator would be employed for two years at USD 150 000 per year and estimating approximately USD 300 000 for author fees and meeting costs one could roughly estimate that the activity would cost USD 600 000 over a two year period. Considering the tight financial situation of the IPPC, this activity could only be realized through extra-budgetary resources.

1. **Potential Benefits**

The potential benefits for the IPPC and national phytosanitary authorities in general can be wide-ranging:

1. *Improving awareness of the IPPC and its Objectives and Activities:* A university course on regulatory phytosanitary matters would ingrain plant health concepts into the basic education of agricultural and horticultural professions and consequently raise their application. Consequently the phytosanitary security of countries may be improved and the understanding of phytosanitary regulations (and their application) enhanced.
2. *Liaison with Research and Training Organizations:* For many years the IPPC, notably the ICPM and SPTA had discussed that it would be beneficial to have strong links between the IPPC and research and educational institutions. ICPM-7 made a decision to that effect. Developing a university course would strengthen the cooperation between the IPPC, national phytosanitary authorities and research and educational institutions and may contribute to a better understanding of the IPPC and phytosanitary matters in the research community. More research in phytosanitary subjects maybe the result.
3. *Supporting the IPPC Capacity Building Activities:* National phytosanitary capacity building activities of the IPPC have considerably increased over recent years. A university course could improve the curricula in developing countries with regard to plant health and substantially contribute to a better understanding of the subject. In addition training offered by international organizations is effective but high staff fluctuations in developing countries make IPPC training activities a regular undertaking. University courses may make such regular repetitions unnecessary.
4. *Synergy with other IPPC Capacity Building Activities:* The planned development manuals, SOPs and other training kits under a STDF project is an important activity of the IPPC Secretariat. The development of a university course would be contributing to this activity and would also benefit from it.
5. **Potential Disadvantages**

The potential disadvantages of developing such a university course are primarily related to the financial and resource repercussions of undertaking such an activity:

1. *Financial implications:* As outlined before the financial implications for the IPPC would amount to a minimum of USD 300 000 annually for a 2-3 year period. These resources cannot be provided by the IPPC Secretariat. Extra-budgetary resources would have to be solicited.
2. *Sustainability requires regular updates and consequently resources:* The development of a university course is not a one time activity which after its completion is forgotten. The IPPC as a dynamic organization is constantly developing standards and guidance. As a consequence a university course would have to reflect these changes, amendments and additions. This would require that a university course is regularly up-dated.
3. *Controversial interpretation and teaching of IPPC subjects in universities:* One development which could evolve over time is the different interpretation and subsequent teaching of IPPC subjects by different universities.
4. **Discussion**

The SPG is invited to:

1. *discuss* the subject and
2. *recommend* on how to proceed with this suggestion by the EU and its Member States. The SPG may wish to recommend to the CPM-8 to include this activity on the work-programme of the organization and that the IPPC Secretariat may develop a preliminary detailed work programmed and investigate possibilities to solicit extra-budgetary resources for this matter.