**The IPPC in 20 Years**

It has been twenty years since the World Trade Organization agreements were signed recognizing the IPPC as one of the three international standard setting bodies under the SPS Agreement. The IPPC celebrated sixty years of existence and adopted a new Strategic Framework in 2012 with biodiversity and food security identified as legitimate components of the strategy. In keeping with the forward thinking of the Strategic Framework, in early September after a meeting between the two Secretariats, the CBD determined that the IPPC qualifies as a Biodiversity-related Convention, opening up new opportunities for resources.

At the same time, with new technologies and new trade pathways emerging daily in addition to new phytosanitary threats, the IPPC Secretariat staff considers that the Convention should now be seeking a longer term perspective by seeking to answer questions such as: How is the IPPC going to look in twenty years – is it going to be relevant? Can the IPPC justify its relevance? Is the IPPC even going to be around? What are the issues that are possible threats to plant health ten or fifteen years into the future? What threats and opportunities are on the horizon that we need to prepare for today? What would/should a long term IPPC strategic plan look like?

For any international organization and its Secretariat it is important to regularly scan its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in order to be able to answer questions like those above. The IPPC must be current, influential and competitive to be able to compete for the limited resources available to address the issues of plant health, biodiversity and food security.

While in some respects, the work of standard setting in the Convention may have its limitations as presently construed, the value of the IPPC and NPPOs in turn, is not open to question. New products are being traded, new pests haven’t stopped moving along existing pathways, and new pathways have not stopped cropping up. The need for the expertise of an NPPO has not gone away; it is needed more now than ever before. But, as global budgets shrink, and investment in plant health competes with animal health and customs organizations, the existence of NPPOs as a unique unit is threatened.

The IPPC Secretariat believes that now is the time to take the initiative to establish a longer term view and actively scan the horizon for those threats, gaps and opportunities that may be ten to fifteen years in the future. The Secretariat considers this undertaking to be of significant importance, and that it could be best accomplished through the creation of a small “think tank” of no more than four to five individuals. This group would scan the future for threats and opportunities and provide guidance to the IPPC Secretariat with a view ten to twenty years ahead.

The Secretariat considers that it is good administrative practice and in the best interest of the Convention that such an analysis and forecasting is carried out now in order to assist future adjustments of IPPC policies and strategies to changing international situations.

The SPG is invited

* to *note* the recommendation of the IPPC Secretariat and,
* to *suggest* possible topics and questions of a medium or longer term nature from both an issue and operational perspective