INTERNATIONAL STANDARD FOR PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES 3

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

International Plant Protection Convention
Protecting the world's plant resources from pests

ISPM 3

ENG

Guidelines for the export, shipment, import and release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms

Produced by the Secretariat of the
International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

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INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR
PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

ISPM 3

Guidelines for the export, shipment, import and release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms

Produced by the Secretariat of the
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This is not an official part of the standard

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2010-07 IPPC Secretariat applied ink amendments as noted by CPM-5 (2010).

2015-06 IPPC Secretariat incorporated ink amendments and reformatted standards following revoking of standards procedure from CPM-10 (2015).

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Adoption

This standard was first adopted by the Twenty-eighth Session of the FAO Conference in November 1995 as *Code of conduct for the import and release of exotic biological control agents*. The first revision was adopted by the Seventh Session of the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures in April 2005 as the present standard.

INTRODUCTION

Scope

This standard[1] provides guidelines for risk management related to the export, shipment, import and release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms. It lists the related responsibilities of contracting parties to the IPPC, national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) or other responsible authorities, importers and exporters (as described in the standard). The standard addresses biological control agents capable of self-replication (including parasitoids, predators, parasites, nematodes, phytophagous organisms, and pathogens such as fungi, bacteria and viruses), as well as sterile insects and other beneficial organisms (such as mycorrhizae and pollinators), and includes those packaged or formulated as commercial products. Provisions are also included for the export for research in quarantine facilities of non-indigenous biological control agents and other beneficial organisms.

The scope of this standard does not include living modified organisms, issues related to registration of biopesticides, or microbial agents intended for vertebrate pest control.

References

The present standard refers to International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs). ISPMs are available on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) at https://www.ippc.int/core-activities/standards-setting/ispms.

CBD. 1992. *Convention on Biological Diversity*. Montreal, CBD.

IPPC. 1997. *International Plant Protection Convention*. Rome, IPPC, FAO.

Definitions

Definitions of phytosanitary terms used in the present standard can be found in ISPM 5 (*Glossary of phytosanitary terms*).

Outline of Requirements

This standard is intended to facilitate the safe export, shipment, import and release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms. Responsibilities relating to this are held by contracting parties, NPPOs or other responsible authorities, and by importers and exporters.

Contracting parties, or their designated authorities, should consider and implement appropriate phytosanitary measures related to the export, shipment, import and release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms and, when necessary, issue related import permits.

As described in this standard, NPPOs or other responsible authorities should:

- carry out pest risk analysis of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms prior to import or prior to release
- ensure, when certifying exports, that the phytosanitary import requirements of importing contracting parties are complied with

[1] Nothing in this standard shall affect the rights or obligations of contracting parties under other international agreements. Provisions of other international agreements may be applicable, for example the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

- obtain, provide and assess documentation as appropriate, relevant to the export, shipment, import or release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms
- ensure that biological control agents and other beneficial organisms are taken either directly to designated quarantine facilities or mass-rearing facilities or, if appropriate, passed directly for release into the environment
- encourage monitoring of release of biological control agents or beneficial organisms in order to assess impact on target and non target organisms.

Responsibilities of, and recommendations for, exporters include ensuring that consignments of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms comply with phytosanitary import requirements of importing countries and relevant international agreements, packaging consignments securely, and providing appropriate documentation relating to biological control agents or other beneficial organisms.

Responsibilities of, and recommendations for, importers include providing appropriate documentation relating to the target pest(s) and biological control agent or other beneficial organisms to the NPPO or other responsible authority of the importing country.

BACKGROUND

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is based on securing common and effective action to prevent the spread and introduction of pests of plants and plant products, and the promotion of appropriate measures for their control (Article I of the IPPC). In this context, the provisions of the IPPC extend to any organism capable of harbouring or spreading plant pests, particularly where international transportation is involved (Article I of the IPPC).

The IPPC contains the following provision in relation to the regulation of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms. Article VII.1 states:

> With the aim of preventing the introduction and/or spread of regulated pests into their territories, contracting parties shall have sovereign authority to regulate, in accordance with applicable international agreements, the entry of plants and plant products and other regulated articles and, to this end, may: ...
>
> (c) prohibit or restrict the movement of regulated pests into their territories;
>
> (d) prohibit or restrict the movement of biological control agents and other organisms of phytosanitary concern claimed to be beneficial into their territories.

Section 4.1 of ISPM 20 (*Guidelines for a phytosanitary import regulatory system*) contains a reference to the regulation of biological control agents; it states:

> Imported commodities that may be regulated include articles that may be infested or contaminated with regulated pests. ... The following are examples of regulated articles:
>
> - pests and biological control agents.

This revision of ISPM 3 provides guidelines related to phytosanitary measures, as well as recommended guidelines for safe usage of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms. In some cases, the scope of these guidelines may be deemed to extend beyond the scope and provisions of the IPPC as described above. For example, although the primary context of this standard relates to phytosanitary concerns, "safe" usage as mentioned in this standard is intended to be interpreted in a broader sense, i.e. minimizing other non-phytosanitary negative effects. Phytosanitary concerns may include the possibility that newly introduced biological control agents may primarily affect other non-target organisms, but thereby result in harmful effects on plant species, or plant health in habitats or ecosystems. However, it is not intended that any aspects of this standard alter in any way the scope or obligations of the IPPC or its ISPMs.

The structure of this revised standard broadly follows the same structure as the original ISPM 3 (*Code of conduct for the import and release of exotic biological control agents*), and its content is based primarily on risk management relating to the use of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms. It is recognized that the existing standards on pest risk analysis (ISPM 2 (*Framework for pest risk analysis*) and ISPM 11 (*Pest risk analysis for quarantine pests*)) provide the appropriate fundamental processes for carrying out pest risk assessments for biological control agents and other beneficial organisms. In particular, ISPM 11 includes provisions for pest risk assessment in relation to environmental risks, and this aspect covers environmental concerns related to the use of biological control agents.

The IPPC takes into account internationally approved principles governing the protection of the environment (Preamble). Its purpose includes promoting appropriate phytosanitary measures (Article I.1). When carrying out pest risk analysis in accordance with this and other appropriate ISPMs, and in developing and applying related phytosanitary measures, contracting parties should also consider the potential for broader environmental impacts resulting from releasing biological control agents and other beneficial organisms[2] (for example, impacts on non-target invertebrates).

[2] Available expertise, instruments and work in international fora with competence in the area of risks to the environment should be taken into account as appropriate.

Most of this standard is based on the premise that a biological control agent or other beneficial organism may be a potential pest itself, and in this sense Article VII.1(c) of the IPPC applies because contracting parties may prohibit or restrict the movement of regulated pests into their territories. In some situations, biological control agents and other beneficial organisms may act as a carrier or pathway for plant pests, hyperparasitoids, hyperparasites and entomopathogens. In this sense, biological control agents and other beneficial organisms may be considered to be regulated articles as described in Article VII.1 of the IPPC and ISPM 20.

Purpose of the standard

The objectives of the standard are to:

- facilitate the safe export, shipment, import and release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms by providing guidelines for all public and private bodies involved, particularly through the development of national legislation where it does not exist.
- describe the need for cooperation between importing and exporting countries so that:
  - benefits to be derived from using biological control agents or other beneficial organisms are achieved with minimal adverse effects
  - practices which ensure efficient and safe use while minimizing environmental risks due to improper handling or use are promoted.

Guidelines in support of these objectives are described that:

- encourage responsible trade practices
- assist countries to design regulations to address the safe handling, assessment and use of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms
- provide risk management recommendations for the safe export, shipment, import and release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms
- promote the safe use of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Designation of Responsible Authority and Description of General Responsibilities

1.1 Contracting Parties

Contracting parties should designate an authority with appropriate competencies (usually their NPPO) to be responsible for export certification and to regulate the import or release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms, subject to relevant phytosanitary measures and procedures.

Contracting parties should have provisions for implementing appropriate phytosanitary measures for the export, shipment, import or release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms.

1.2 General Responsibilities

The NPPO or other responsible authority should establish procedures for the implementation of this standard, including for the assessment of relevant documentation specified in section 4.

The NPPO or other responsible authority should:

- carry out pest risk analysis prior to import or release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms
- ensure, when certifying exports, that the regulations of importing countries are complied with
- provide and assess documentation as appropriate, relevant to the export, shipment, import or release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms

- ensure that biological control agents and other beneficial organisms are taken either directly to designated quarantine facilities or, if appropriate, passed to mass rearing facilities or directly for release into the environment
- ensure that importers and, where appropriate, exporters meet their responsibilities
- consider possible impacts on the environment, such as impacts on non-target invertebrates.

The NPPO or other responsible authority should maintain communication and, where appropriate, coordinate with relevant parties including other NPPOs or relevant authorities on:

- characteristics of biological control agent and other beneficial organisms
- assessment of risks including environmental risks
- labelling, packaging and storage during shipment
- dispatch and handling procedures
- distribution and trade
- release
- evaluation of performance
- information exchange
- occurrence of unexpected and/or harmful incidents, including remedial action taken.

2. Pest Risk Analysis

The NPPO of the importing country should determine whether an organism is required to be subjected to pest risk analysis (PRA). The NPPO or other responsible authority may also be responsible for ensuring that other national legislative requirements are met; however, these may not be IPPC obligations.

Pest risk assessment should be conducted in accordance with ISPM 2 and/or Stage 2 of ISPM 11 as appropriate, taking into account uncertainties and potential environmental consequences, as provided for in those standards. In addition to conducting pest risk assessment, contracting parties should also consider possible impacts on the environment, such as impacts on non-target invertebrates.

Most contracting parties require PRA to be completed prior to import and technical justification, as described in ISPM 20, such as through PRA, is required to determine if pests should be regulated and the strength of phytosanitary measures to be taken against them. Where applicable, if pest risk assessment of the proposed organism has not been undertaken or completed prior to import, it should be completed prior to release (see section 7). However, it is recognized that biological control agents and other beneficial organisms may need to be imported for research and evaluation in secure facilities prior to release. ISPM 20 also states that contracting parties may make special provision for the import of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms for scientific research, and that such imports may be authorized subject to the provision of adequate safeguards. The NPPO should be prepared for such imports with the expectation that, where necessary, a full PRA in accordance with ISPM 11 will be completed prior to release. When non-phytosanitary risks are identified, these may need to be referred to other appropriate authorities for possible action.

It may be important that further scientific investigations are carried out in the exporting country prior to importing the biological control agents or other beneficial organisms in order to verify the accuracy and reliability of the risk assessment. Among other options, and where appropriate, NPPOs or other responsible authorities may consider possibilities for such scientific investigations, in cooperation with the authorities of the exporting country and in accordance with relevant procedures and regulations.

3. Responsibilities of Contracting Parties prior to Import

3.1 Responsibilities of the importing contracting party

The importing contracting party or its NPPO or other responsible authority should:

3.1.1 Promote awareness of, and compliance with this standard and introduce necessary phytosanitary measures to regulate the import, shipment or release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms in its country, and make provision for effective enforcement.

3.1.2 Evaluate the documentation on the target pest and on the biological control agent and beneficial organisms supplied by the importer (see section 4) in relation to the acceptable level of risk. The contracting party should establish appropriate phytosanitary measures for import, shipment, quarantine facilities (including approval of research facilities, and phytosanitary measures for confinement and disposal) or release of biological control agents appropriate to the assessed risk. If the biological control agent or other beneficial organism is already present in the country, regulation may only be needed to ensure there is no contamination or infestation of this organism, or that interbreeding with local genotypes of the same species does not result in new phytosanitary risks. Inundative release may be restricted for these reasons.

3.1.3 Issue regulations stating requirements to be fulfilled by the exporting country, the exporter and the importer[3]. Where appropriate, these may include:

- the issuing of an accompanying authorizing document (import permit or licence)
- phytosanitary certification, in accordance with ISPM 12 (*Phytosanitary certificates*)
- a specific certification document
- authoritative identification of organisms during quarantine and provision of a reference specimen
- specification of the source of the biological control agent or other beneficial organism(s), including origin and/or point of production, the host
- precautions to be taken against inclusion of natural enemies of the biological control agent or other beneficial organism and of contamination or infestation
- requirements regarding packaging for shipment during transport and storage
- procedures for the disposal of packaging
- means to validate documentation
- means to validate the contents of consignments
- conditions under which the package may be opened
- designation of point(s) of entry
- identification of the person or organization to receive the consignment
- requirements for the facilities in which the biological control agent or other beneficial organisms may be held.

3.1.4 Ensure that procedures are in place for the documentation of:

- pest risk analysis
- the import (identity, origins, dates)
- nurturing, rearing or multiplication
- release (quantities released, dates, locations)
- any other relevant data.

Such records may be made available to the scientific community and the public, as may be appropriate, while protecting any proprietary rights to the data.

3.1.5 If appropriate, ensure entry of consignments, and processing where required, through quarantine facilities. Where a country does not have secure quarantine facilities, import through a

[3] Provisions of other international agreements may address the import of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms (for example the Convention on Biological Diversity).

quarantine station in a third country, recognized by the importing contracting party, may be considered.

3.1.6 Consider, through pest risk analysis, the risk of introducing other organisms associated with the biological control agent or beneficial organism. Considerations (keeping in mind the principles of necessity and minimal impact) should include phytosanitary measures requiring the culturing of imported biological control agents and other beneficial organisms in quarantine before release. Culturing for at least one generation can help in ensuring purity of the culture and freedom from hyperparasites and pathogens or associated pests, as well as facilitating authoritative identification. This is particularly advisable when biological control agents and other beneficial organisms are collected from the wild.

3.1.7 Where possible, ensure the deposition in collections of authoritatively identified reference specimens of the imported biological control agent or other beneficial organism (and host(s) where appropriate). It is preferable to deposit a series of specimens, where available, to accommodate natural variation.

3.1.8 In the case of sterile insect technique (SIT), the sterile insect may be marked to differentiate it from the wild insect.

3.1.9 Consider, through pest risk analysis (consistent with the principles of necessity and minimal impact), if, after a first import or release, further imports of the same biological control agent or other beneficial organism may be exempted from some or all of the requirements for import. The publication of lists of approved and prohibited biological control agents and other beneficial organisms may also be considered. If appropriate, biological control agents that are prohibited should be included in lists of regulated pests (established and updated by contracting parties in accordance with the IPPC and ISPM 19 (*Guidelines on lists of regulated pests*).

3.2 Responsibilities of the NPPO of an exporting country

The NPPO of an exporting country should ensure that the phytosanitary import requirements of the importing country are satisfied and that phytosanitary certificates are issued in accordance with ISPM 12 where required by the importing country for consignments of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms if these are considered as potential pests or pathways for plant pests.

The NPPO is also encouraged to follow the appropriate elements of this standard where the importing country has no legislation concerning the import of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms.

4. Documentary Responsibilities of Importer prior to Import

4.1 Documentary requirements related to the target organism

Prior to the first importation, the importer of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms should provide information as required by the NPPO or other responsible authority of the importing contracting party. For all biological control agents or other beneficial organisms, this information includes accurate identification of the target organism(s), generally at the species level. Where a biological control agent intended to control a pest is being imported, the information on the target pest may also include:

- its world distribution and probable origin
- its known biology and ecology
- available information on its economic importance and environmental impact
- possible benefits and any conflicting interests surrounding its use
- known natural enemies, antagonists and other biological control agents or competitors of the target pest already present or used in the proposed release area or in other parts of the world.

For all biological control agents or other beneficial organisms, other information relevant to a PRA may also be requested by the NPPO or other responsible authority of the importing contracting party.

4.2 Documentary requirements related to the biological control agent or other beneficial organism

Prior to first import, the importer of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms should coordinate with the exporter to provide documentation, accompanied by appropriate scientific references, to the NPPO or other responsible authority of the importing contracting party with information on the biological control agent or beneficial organism including:

- sufficient characterization of the biological control agent or other beneficial organism to allow for its accurate identification, in general to the species level at minimum
- a summary of all available information on its origin, world distribution, biology, natural enemies, hyperparasites, and impact in its area of distribution
- available information on host specificity (in particular, a list of confirmed hosts) of the biological control agent or beneficial organism and any potential hazards posed to non-target hosts
- description of natural enemies and contaminants of the agent and procedures required for their elimination from laboratory colonies. This includes, where appropriate, procedures to identify accurately and, if necessary, eliminate from the culture the host upon which the biological control agent or beneficial organism was cultured. Information on any phytosanitary measures taken prior to shipment should also be provided.

4.3 Documentary requirements related to potential hazards and contingency plans

Prior to first importation, the importer of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms is encouraged to provide documentation to the NPPO or other responsible authority that:

- identifies potential health hazards and analyzes the risks[4] posed to staff operatives exposed when handling biological control agents or other beneficial organisms under laboratory, production and application conditions.
- details contingency plans or procedures already in existence, should the biological control agent or beneficial organism display unexpected adverse properties.

4.4 Documentary requirements related to research in quarantine

An importer of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms proposed for research in quarantine should provide as much information as possible as described in points 4.1–4.3. However, it is recognized that field collected organisms imported by researchers in initial shipments of potential biological control agents may not be described with regard to their exact taxonomic identity, host range, impact on non-target organisms, distribution, biology, impact in an area of distribution etc. This information will be determined after candidate biological control agents are studied in quarantine.

The researcher, in conjunction with the quarantine facility to be used, should also provide the following information:

- the nature of the material proposed for importation
- the type of the research to be carried out
- detailed description of the quarantine facility (including security and the competency and qualifications of the staff)
- an emergency plan that will be implemented in the case of an escape from the quarantine facility.

[4] Available expertise, instruments and work in international fora with competence in the area of risks to human health should be taken into account as appropriate.

This information may be required by the NPPO or other responsible authority prior to approval of the research to be conducted. The NPPO or other responsible authority may verify the accuracy of the documentation provided and examine the facilities, and may require modifications as necessary.

5. Responsibilities of Exporter

The exporter of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms is encouraged to ensure that:

- all phytosanitary import requirements specified in the regulations of the importing country or on an import permit are complied with (see also section 3.2, which describes the related responsibilities of the NPPO)
- all appropriate documentation accompanies the consignment
- packaging is secure in order to prevent escape of the contents
- organisms for SIT have been treated to achieve the required sterility for SIT purposes (e.g. using irradiation with the required minimum absorbed dose). The treatment(s) used and an indication of the effectiveness of sterilization should also be provided.

5.1 Specific responsibilities regarding organisms intended for inundative release

Exporters of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms for inundative release should provide documentation on measures undertaken to ensure that levels of contamination acceptable to the importing NPPO or other responsible authority are not exceeded.

6. Responsibilities of the NPPO or Other Responsible Authority of the Importing Contracting Party upon Import

6.1 Inspection

Where required (see section 3.1.5) after checking the documentation, inspection should take place at an officially nominated quarantine facility.

6.2 Quarantine

The NPPO should ensure that biological control agents or other beneficial organisms are cultured or reared in quarantine, if appropriate (see section 3.1.6), for as long as considered necessary.

6.3 Release

The NPPO or other responsible authority may allow biological control agents or other beneficial organisms to be released directly for release, provided that all conditions have been complied with (particularly as described in section 3) and required documentary evidence is made available (see section 4).

7. Responsibilities of the NPPO or Other Responsible Authority before, upon and following Release

Prior to release, NPPOs or other responsible authorities are encouraged to communicate details of the intended release that may affect neighbouring countries. To facilitate information sharing in this manner, details of intended releases may also be communicated to relevant RPPOs prior to release.

If pest risk analysis was not undertaken prior to import in accordance with ISPM 2 and/or ISPM 11, it should be undertaken prior to release, taking into account uncertainties, as provided for in those standards. In addition to conducting pest risk assessment, contracting parties should also consider possible impacts on the environment, such as impacts on non-target invertebrates.

The NPPO or other responsible authority may verify the effectiveness of sterilization treatment(s) prior to release of sterile insects.

7.1 Release

The NPPO or other responsible authority should authorize and audit official requirements related to the release of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms, e.g. requirements related to release only in specific areas. This audit may be used to alter the requirements related to import or release of the organism.

7.2 Documentation

Documentation sufficient to allow trace-back of released biological control agents or other beneficial organisms should be maintained by the NPPO or other responsible authority.

7.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The NPPO or other responsible authority may monitor the release of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms in order to evaluate and, as necessary, respond to the impact on the target and non-target organisms. Where appropriate, it should include a marking system to facilitate recognition of the biological control agent (e.g. sterile insects) or other beneficial organisms in comparison with the organism in its natural state and environment.

7.4 Contingency plans

The NPPO or other responsible authority of the importing contracting party is responsible for developing or adopting contingency plans or procedures, as appropriate, for use within the importing country.

Where problems are identified (i.e. unexpected harmful incidents), the NPPO or other responsible authority should consider possible emergency actions and, where appropriate, ensure that they are implemented and that all relevant parties are informed.

7.5 Communication

It is recommended that the NPPO or other responsible authority ensures that local users and suppliers of biological control agents or other beneficial organisms, and farmers, farmer organizations and other stakeholders, are kept sufficiently informed and educated on the appropriate measures for their use.

7.6 Reporting

The contracting party should abide by any reporting obligations under the IPPC, e.g. where an organism used as a biological control agent or beneficial organism has shown pest characteristics.

IPPC

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is an international plant health agreement that aims to protect cultivated and wild plants by preventing the introduction and spread of pests. International travel and trade are greater than ever before. As people and commodities move around the world, organisms that present risks to plants travel with them.

Organization

- There are over 180 contracting parties to the IPPC.
- Each contracting party has a national plant protection organization (NPPO) and an Official IPPC contact point.
- Nine regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs) work to facilitate the implementation of the IPPC in countries.
- IPPC liaises with relevant international organizations to help build regional and national capacities.
- The Secretariat is provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

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