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INTERIM COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

Second Session

Rome 4-8 October 1999

Standard Setting Priorities

Agenda Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

I. Survey of Priorities for Standard Setting

1. In 1997, the Ninth Technical Consultation among Regional Plant Protection Organizations (RPPO) considered the work programme for the establishment of international standards for phytosanitary measures (ISPMs) and provided recommendations to the Secretariat on future priorities for the work programme. These recommendations were considered by the Secretariat in establishing the near-term standard setting activities pursued by the Secretariat. The resulting work programme and its status were provided to the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (ICPM) at its first session in 1998. The ICPM took the opportunity to identify criteria for the establishment of standards and recommend priorities for the following year. The ICPM further recommended that the Secretariat undertake a survey to identify the priorities of Members and RPPOs for consideration at its present session.
2. A survey of all FAO Members and RPPOs was undertaken by the Secretariat beginning in March 1999. This resulted in twenty-nine responses from Members and one response from an RPPO by 31 May. Three of these responses did not indicate priorities but requested copies of available standards. The remaining responses ranged from simple agreement with the existing programme to detailed suggestions for topics and priorities. Many of the respondents proposed new topics for standards, or new concepts to introduce into standards. A few stated that there should be a clearer distinction between concept standards and operational standards.
3. In the category of completed standards, the revision of the *Guidelines for pest risk analysis* was considered to be a high priority by seven respondents. Revision of the *Glossary of phytosanitary terms* was identified as a high priority by six respondents. The revision of *Principles of plant quarantine as related to international trade* was also seen as important by six respondents.
4. Within the category for drafts being developed, eleven respondents considered *Guidelines for phytosanitary certificates* to be a priority, followed closely by *Pest risk analysis for*

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quarantine pests (eight respondents) and *General considerations and specific requirements for regulated non-quarantine pests* (seven respondents). *Requirements for the establishment of pest free places of production* and *Inspection methodology* were considered high priority by six and five respondents respectively. A few felt that both *Guidelines for Surveillance for specific pests: citrus canker* and *Guidelines for an import regulatory system* were significant, but of intermediate importance relative to other standards. Some respondents considered these two standards to be a low priority.

5. For standards planned in 1999, both *Guidelines for preparation of regulated pest lists* and *Guidelines for notification of interceptions and non-compliance* were ranked as medium to high priority by six respondents each. In the category of topics and priorities for future standards, there was a high degree of variability in which standards were considered to be of high, medium, or low importance. Both *Technical justification for regulating non-quarantine pests* and *Training and accreditation of inspectors* were considered medium to high priority by seven respondents. However, a few other respondents expressed the belief that these two standards were low priority.

6. *Pest control procedures*, *Guidelines for research requirements for treatment efficacy*, and *Systems approaches for risk management* were intermediate in the number of respondents which considered these topics to be high priority, although a few respondents also considered these to be low priority. The topic of *Low pest prevalence* was felt by four respondents to be of medium to high priority while four respondents specifically named it a low priority.

7. Both commodity- and pest-specific standards received significant commentary from many respondents. In a few cases, respondents expressed the opinion that specific standards (for either pests or commodities) were not as important as other standards. However, many respondents named either specific pests or commodities for which they would like to see standards. Most notably, four respondents stressed the importance of developing a standard on wood dunnage and other wood packing materials. Other specific pests mentioned include: fruit flies (*Bactrocera*, *Ceratitis capitata* spp.), citrus canker, bacterial diseases of potatoes, the weed *Chromolaena odorata*, as well as PRA for both genetically modified organisms and weeds. The European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) suggested several commodity or pest specific standards.

8. Finally, many of the respondents provided further suggestions for standards beyond what was listed by the Secretariat. Proposals from other respondents included suggestions for guidelines or standards on the following topics:

- assessment of pest incidence and severity;
- crop loss assessment due to quarantine pests;
- accreditation of laboratories for phytosanitary testing;
- code of conduct for safe handling of quarantine pests and/or material affected by quarantine pests;
- quantitative qualification of plant resistance to pests;
- methods for management of obsolete pesticides;
- ways to recover and destroy pesticide packaging material;
- reporting of the occurrence, outbreak and spread of pests;
- homologous procedures to the use of methyl bromide gas for phytosanitary treatments;
- country specific standards;
- equivalents of inspection/treatment;
- phytosanitary treatments (in general, standards needed for this);
- compliance systems.

9. The ICPM may identify further priorities in accordance with the practice of the previous session. The ICPM may also establish an informal working group to consider the status of the current work programme, the priorities identified by Members and RPPOs in the survey and the criteria for the establishment of priorities, to propose a work programme for review and approval

by the ICPM. In addition, the Secretariat suggests that the ICPM also consider additional information provided herein specifically related to biosafety and wood packing material.

II. Biosafety

10. The attention of the ICPM is drawn to the international negotiations on a Biosafety Protocol (now known as the Cartagena Protocol) in the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). These negotiations, which the CBD Secretariat had planned to conclude this year, have proven to be extremely difficult and are currently at an impasse. It is noted that certain aspects of the protocol under negotiation fall within the scope of the IPPC. In particular, the IPPC is concerned with:

- a) genetically modified organisms (GMOs) considered to pose a phytosanitary risk (i.e., may have the characteristics of plant pests);
- b) the principles and processes associated with risk analysis and the phytosanitary basis for the regulation of GMOs; and,
- c) procedures for the testing and release of genetically modified organisms regulated for phytosanitary reasons.

11. In addition, the ICPM may wish to consider that the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG), at its 15th Session in January 1999, considered the issue of biotechnology in developing recommendations to FAO Council for a strategic approach to be taken by the Organization. Paragraphs 49 and 50 from COAG's report to Council (CL 116/9) are particularly relevant to the IPPC:

"49. The Committee recommended that FAO monitor developments in the CBD negotiations, to help ensure that agricultural expertise is available to implement the biosafety Protocol, once finalized. In this context, several countries requested FAO's help in drafting national biosafety legislation and setting up their regulatory bodies. The Committee recommended that FAO help harmonize regulations at the regional and sub-regional levels. Therefore, FAO should continue and reinforce its normative and advisory work, in coordination with other agencies.

50. The Committee noted the difficulties that developing countries and countries in transition face in conducting risk analysis in relation to genetically modified organisms. This risk analysis may call for international standard setting and harmonization. Such harmonization is an integral part of existing pest and phytosanitary risk analysis programmes, and of risk analysis in relation to human health sanitary measures, as called for in the World Trade Organization Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. Expanded risk analysis harmonization may build on the existing programmes in Codex Alimentarius and the International Plant Protection Convention, within recognized frameworks. The Committee noted that the effort for harmonization should not duplicate the content of the Biosafety Protocol."

12. The ICPM may consider the role of the IPPC with respect to biosafety issues and to take account of the recommendations from COAG, particularly regarding initiatives for harmonization and risk analysis. To this end, the ICPM may wish to identify specific topics for standards related to biosafety and the priorities for these topics in the standard setting programme.

III. Wood Packing Material

13. Many Members have identified the need to establish a standard for wood packing material and suggested that a high priority be given to this work. The North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO) has completed such a standard and has submitted a draft to the Secretariat requesting that it be considered in the work programme of the IPPC. The ICPM may wish to consider the topic and priority for such a standard and to recommend further action for the Secretariat to take on NAPPO's submission.