



Report of the IPP Support Group Meeting

**05-08 September 2006
Wageningen, Netherlands**

1. Opening of session

The session was opened by Mr J. Schans (Netherlands) and participants were welcomed by Mr R.J.T. van Lint (Director of the Netherlands Plant Protection Service). Mr van Lint outlined the importance of the IPP particularly for trading countries as it provides a good basis for the exchange of information. He highlighted the need to exchange dynamic information on a routine basis, and the challenge that the design of such system represented. He concluded in wishing the participants a successful week of discussions and recommendations. Mr J. Schans (Netherlands) was maintained as Chairman of the meeting. Ms L. Spo (Denmark) and L. Korodrau (PPPO) were appointed as rapporteurs for the first day and Ms Roy (EPPO) for the rest of the meeting.

2. Adoption of Agenda

The Support Group (Appendix 3) adopted the agenda of the present session (Appendix 2).

3. Matters arising from the previous report

Mr Nowell (IPPC Secretariat) presented the report of the e-certification working group that was presented to the First Session of the Commission for Phytosanitary Measures (CPM). Concerning e-certification, the Support Group asked whether the IPP web-site could be used as a hub for gathering secure information. This was considered technically feasible but difficult in practice due to severe budget and staff reductions at FAO.

At the end of 2006, it is expected that only one person will be working on the IPP. In addition, no webmaster could be recruited although this was previously agreed as highly desirable.

It is planned that NAPPO will host a working group on standardization of metadata for pest reporting in early 2007.

4. Report from IPPC Secretariat on use of the IPP

4.1. Statistics

The Secretariat presented to the Support Group recent statistics on the use of the IPP. All information presented is to be found under the IPP Support Group area. The Support Group felt that these statistics were highly needed as these would help to identify the type of information which is used. IPP usage is variable and there appears to be a user base of 30,000 to 40,000 users per month – and 25% of users appear to return more than once a month. Further analysis and development is needed to better understand the usage of the IPP.

4.2. Feedback

Recent feedback on general use about navigation, lay-out and access has been positive and improvement acknowledged.

5. Report from IPPC Secretariat on IPP / Information Exchange workshops

Nine workshops were conducted in total for the IPP Information Exchange in the Pacific, Asia, Western Europe, Central Europe, Africa (Anglo & Francophone), Latin America & the Caribbean regions. The main outcomes of the various workshops conducted were presented. The benefits and challenges of the regional workshops were discussed. Since November 2005, 175 out of presently 205 editors from 135 countries and 9 RPPOs were trained. This has resulted in a significant increase in the official phytosanitary information available through the IPP. A break-down of information was presented to better understand what kind of data was made available and which countries and regions have been most active.

The meeting recommended that data statistics should be made available regularly because it is a valuable tool to monitor participation in the IPP and identify areas which needs further attention.

All information presented is to be found under the IPP Support Group and IPP Workshops areas on the IPP.

6. New functionalities introduced

The Secretariat presented an overview of the changes made since the last Support Group meeting and indicated the existing options that could be “switched on” with minimal input or cost.

6.1. IPP Update (newsletter)

A Newsletter or IPP update has been developed and should be released with a 2 week frequency. However, translation into other languages was problematic due to the lack of resources and funds. Other options allowing users to receive notifications about changes made to the IPP have to be investigated.

6.2. RSS feeds

Participants discussed the possible benefits that RSS feed will have to countries in order to monitor changes made to the IPP and agreed that this feature should be developed in the IPP.

6.3. NPPO information

It was noted that SPS notifications have been removed from the IPP and will be re-established once it is possible to present better differentiated information uploaded directly from the WTO.

6.4. IPP editors

IPP editors are able to access each others contact information to facilitate communication with regards to data entry into the IPP. The IPP editor(s) of each NPPO are more clearly indicated but their contact details are not available to general users.

6.5. Low band width version

The Support Group browsed through the IPP using the low band width facility and agreed that it is a useful feature. It was agreed that the tabular lay-out would be set by default but that the possibility for an even simpler display (unformatted list) would still be kept.

6.6. “IPP wiki”

It was decided that the IPP wiki would be useful in specific circumstances and that the IPP Support Group will test it to develop a “Frequently Asked Questions” area and study whether it could be extended to other areas of work.

6.7 Key word picker

IPP Support Group noted that the new key word picker is more user-friendly and efficient.

6.8 Bulk download feature

This allows the rapid download of more than one file at a time. Feedback is that it is a large improvement, but file names need to be those of the original file and not the IPP code. This improvement will be made before the end of 2007.

7. New IPP functions and lay-out

7.1. Secretariat "work flow"

Mr Nowell explained that the Secretariat urgently needs to developed tools within the IPP to facilitate its daily tasks (managing the composition of working groups, sending e-mail to selected groups or experts, generating reports for the CPM on time and costs of ISPM development etc). The Support Group considered that these were useful tools but did not see the need for them to be made available to general users of the IPP at present. The Secretariat also intends to develop new features in order to better manage experts CVs and their participation in various FAO bodies or working groups.

7.2. Logout

At several Workshops, participants have expressed the wish that logging out of the IPP should not be undertaken by closing the Internet browser. Mr Nowell explained that this was feasible but technically more difficult, and therefore cannot be a major priority at present.

7.3. Search

The Support Group spent some time on testing the simple and advanced search tools included into the IPP. The conclusion was that both tools needed extensive revision as they did not give consistent results. The revision should include functionality, query forms and output forms. A prototype will have to be developed by end of 2006, and will be tested by the Support Group before it is included in the production site. It was also found during the testing that certain searches with refining options resulted in access to secured documents, and this needs to be corrected urgently. The Support Group also made recommendations about the lay-out and functionality of search forms and search results (Appendix 1).

7.4. Permission / security at file level

The Support Group agreed that the current security arrangements are adequate. At present IPP editors are given permission to add any type of information for their country. However, some countries have requested the possibility to have several editors who would be responsible for different types of information without being able to change each others information and to prevent duplication of data or inadvertent data corruption. Mr Nowell noted that this would represent a major modification for the IPP. Ms Pacheco felt that this should be solved at national level, data entry could be prepared by several people but there should be only one who validates the information (i.e. the IPP editor on behalf of the Contact Point). The Support Group recommended that there should be only one IPP editor per country. It was also recommended that the possibility of having subtopics in the IPP could also help countries to separate the different types of information. Mr Nowell pointed out that IPP editors are officially designated by the IPPC official contact points who are ultimately responsible for the information uploaded onto the IPP.

7.5. Send e-mail to IPP groups

The Support Group considered that this was a useful Secretariat tool but did not see the need to make it available to general users of the IPP in the near future.

7.6. IPP user management tools

The Support Group agreed that user management tools such as managing permission to groups should be developed.

7.7. Keyword picker

Each time new keywords are established, it is important for the Secretariat to include their translations in French and Spanish into the IPP.

7.8. Up-date of the pdf version of the NPPO contact points

An annual pdf version of the directory of NPPO contact points is generated manually. However, it is time-consuming to update details of addresses in such a format. The Secretariat is exploring ways of automating this process in order to produce monthly updates of the pdf version.

It should also be noted that the IPP (<https://www.ippc.int/nppo.jsp>) now makes a clear separation between contracting and non-contracting parties.

7.9. Revision of web page code

Throughout the years, the coding system used to generate the IPP web pages has not been consistent or optimized. The Secretariat will hire a web designer for 6-8 weeks in order to harmonize the coding of the pages. Possibilities to view pages onto Blackberry systems and even mobile phones will also be explored. It is intended to revise the existing layout of some pages or forms. In some pages (for example in the 'National' section, countries such as France includes territories other than the mainland), drop-down menus had previously been excluded to reduce the loading time. The Secretariat will ask the web designer to explore the possibilities of introducing more efficient drop-down menus.

7.10. News

Mr Nowell pointed out that news items appearing on the home page were all IPPC news entered by the Secretariat. News entered by the NPPOs and RPPOs were only accessible on the more detailed news page. The Support Group suggested revising the layout of the news page so that all items would appear and could then be sorted according to their source (IPPC, NPPO, RPPO).

Mr Nowell also noted the re-introduction of expiry dates into the news and calendar section (old news and calendar events will be archived and not lost altogether), as some countries stressed that it may be misleading to keep old news listed under countries (e.g. situation of outbreaks may change over time and only the latest information should be displayed).

7.11. Pest reports

The Support Group felt that the present lay-out of the summary report should be redesigned so that it would be possible to search by country, region and commodity. In addition, all columns should be "orderable". The SG reported a sort bug when sorting pest records by dates and noted that there was no difference between the dates shown in the first and last column of the table (namely 'date of entry' and 'date added'). It was agreed that the IPP SG will assist with the revision of the search tools i.e. testing of the prototypes.

7.12. Information about projects

This kind of data could easily be downloaded from the FAO website and summary data will appear in the IPP under each country where technical assistance has been provided. It is intended that only summary information will be made available and that financial data relating to the FAO projects will not appear.

7.13. Glossary terms and links to their definitions

It has been requested by some countries and RPPOs that links to definitions could be added to all glossary terms appearing in the IPP. Mr Nowell stressed that this was a major function

to develop. The Support Group agreed that this would be an interesting feature but that there were other higher priorities.

7.14. Possible new features

Mr Schans suggested that more emphasis should be given to PRAs in the future.

Mr Saccardi felt that direct access to phytosanitary regulations should be given in the IPP and not via other websites. Mr Nowell explained that some countries have explicitly required that access to their phytosanitary regulations should only take place via their own national websites and not uploaded into the IPP i.e. links would be provided through the IPP and not actual data uploaded. It was agreed that the access and lay-out of phytosanitary regulations via the IPP needed revision e.g. first select by country and then by type of regulations.

8. Support documents (editorial guidelines and information exchange manual)

It has been agreed that more guidance on how to enter data and use the IPP (editorial guidelines), as well as general guidance on information exchange under the IPPC, should be provided to countries. Preparing guidance on information exchange might include interpretation of ISPMs and for this reason the manual will be developed through the IPP Support Group. In particular, it would be necessary to provide clear guidance on how countries should communicate between each other and the Secretariat, and how the Secretariat should provide information to contracting parties etc.

Mr Schans noted that it was important that the existing draft information exchange manual should be developed further and the meeting agreed it would be highly desirable to develop this prior to the next CPM. He suggested that the Secretary write to countries requesting their assistance by officially allocating staff time to assist the Secretariat with such work. The Support Group could then review the document and make comments.

9. IPP Capacity building / toolbox

Mr Nowell stressed that a number of countries have strongly expressed the wish to have more technical or unofficial information, during IPP workshops, included in the IPP (e.g. technical data necessary for conducting PRAs, information in the support of implementation of specific ISPMs) in addition to the official data. In addition, it was agreed by the Third Session of the ICPM that such an area (referred to as the “toolbox”) that also contained unofficial information should be developed, but ONLY after the IPP had been developed for official information and countries were providing significant input. This data would also be supplemented by other CPM initiatives, including the Research and Teaching initiative and the public data accumulated when implementing the PCE. Although still too early to publicly launch this project, the Secretariat needs to begin planning for this eventuality and develop the necessary tools.

After some discussion, the SG considered that such unofficial data would be better placed in a separate but related website (although it would utilize the same database e.g. editors and permissions structure), so that there was no confusion between official data and non-official data. The SG also discussed the type of information that could be provided, how it could be structured and who would be entitled to provide such. There was also consensus that commercial organizations should not be allowed to provide data. Useful plant protection information sources such as CABI Crop Protection Compendium and EcoPort would be considered for reference within the system, and complementary to, and not to host this information. It was agreed that data related to ISPMs, phytosanitary measures, diagnostics, treatments, inspection protocols/procedures, and technical assistance for quarantine pests and RNQPs would be considered as the first priority.

Mr Saccardi raised the problem of data validation. As data would not be officially checked he wondered what would happen if errors were being introduced into the system. Ms Roy added that mechanisms allowing for corrections should be included. The Support Group suggested the following data which could be entered into a prototype for testing:

- ❖ Standards: Technical information related to ISPM 15, the Support Group gave this item the highest priority because it covers many aspects and a significant amount of information already exists,
- ❖ Diagnostics: e.g. Tephritidae and fire-blight,
- ❖ Treatments: methyl bromide and alternative treatments to MeBr, irradiation, cold/heat treatments,
- ❖ Inspection protocols/procedures: e.g. potato,
- ❖ Technical assistance: list of donors, funding procedures, national programs, with the possibility for countries to post their specific needs.

As resources become available, the Secretariat will work on a prototype with the aim of having the SG test the prototype and provide input before general release. The Secretariat stressed this work is not as high a priority as the IPP.

10. Future training

10.1. Future regional IPP workshops

Mr Breithaupt informed the Support Group that future workshops are indicated in the IPPC calendar. It is planned to organize a training workshop for Russian speaking-countries of Central Asia at the end of October 2006 in Prague. This workshop will differ from earlier ones as most invited countries are not IPPC contracting parties. He hoped that EPPO could help the Secretariat in finding contacts so that more countries could be invited to participate. Countries which are non-contracting parties will be trained on how to use the IPP but will only be given access to the training IPP website.

Another workshop is also planned in Asia (hosted by the Malaysian NPPO in Kuala Lumpur), as some Asian countries had not managed to participate to the previous workshop held in this region. For the Near East region, no workshop could be organized because of several difficulties: the lack of funding, the finding of a host country and the necessity to translate the IPP and supporting documents into Arabic.

It was also noted that several countries in the EPPO and COSAVE regions still have not participated to any training workshop. Mr Nowell noted this would be addressed if and when resources became available. Mr Nowell explained that a summary of IPP editors per country will soon be available that this will provide a clear picture about the current participation of countries to the IPP. This would also help to identify the need for further follow-up workshops.

Mr Breithaupt noted that certain countries are eligible for FAO assistance and could receive technical assistance/ training within the phytosanitary information exchange framework.

Mr Nowell raised the question of the amount and type of involvement of RPPOs in the IPP. It was agreed that RPPOs should be encouraged to get more involved in promoting national and regional participation in the IPP.

In particular, on the issue of pest reporting it would be desirable that more countries to provide pest reports and more consistently. For the EPPO region, only a few countries have started to do so. Ms Roy answered that EPPO will continue to encourage its member countries to provide data to the IPP and the issue will continue to be discussed within EPPO. However, Ms Roy noted the final decision as to whom the information will be reported to and when will remain the decision of each country. Mr Akbas explained that in the Near East

region, it is difficult for countries to find the time to provide information to international organizations and that clear guidance about pest reporting was lacking.

Mr Breithaupt noted that good collaboration has been achieved with IASPC and that training has been provided to 53 countries in the framework a FAO TCP project and he presented the major achievements of this project to the SG. Although the TCP project will end in 2006, staff of the regional FAO Office will be able to continue to provide training and assistance to African countries. This project has been successful, and African countries have added a significant amount of data into the IPP.

Finally, it should be noted that almost all RPPOs have now been trained to upload data into the IPP. The next Technical Consultation between RPPOs will also address the future role of RPPOs in information exchange through the IPP.

The Support Group discussed how training could continue in the future. Ms Roy suggested that EPPO could explore the possibility of organizing further training sessions for its member countries, in particular for those which have not attended earlier workshops. Mr Nowell noted that there is a lack of funds for FAO regions not yet trained in information exchange and this may prevent the organization of further workshops. He invited the Support Group members to contact their funding agencies to seek / encourage financial support for such workshops.

10.2. Is the IPP training server necessary?

Mr Nowell noted that the maintenance of the IPP training server was labour intensive and was causing technical problems such as lack of disk space. In addition, the training server has sometimes been indexed by search engines which is undesirable as data retrieved may not be valid. Mr Breithaupt noted that in some African countries editors were still using the training server before entering data to the production site. The SG felt that it might be premature to stop the training server now but that this may take place at a later date.

11. Budget / work programme

Mr Nowell explained that the budget will drastically be reduced by a third in 2007, therefore external funding will have to be found to continue the work. Currently planned developments of the IPP would imply that four persons work on it. For example, navigation in Russian might be required for 2007 but both, finances and staff are lacking. As in its previous meeting, the SG agreed again that the highest priority is to appoint a webmaster. Another high priority is to develop further the user manual and the information exchange manual.

12. Other business

12.1. FAO meetings - "Declaration of Interests for FAO Experts"

Mr Nowell explained that the United Nations were concerned about the possibility that experts participating to its meetings may not express independent views. In order to avoid any conflict of interest, members of the SG will be requested to complete a form prior to attending future meetings.

12.2. General phytosanitary information systems e.g. surveillance

The Secretariat has been repeatedly requested consider developing general phytosanitary information systems in open-source software that could be utilized by NPPOs in countries without such systems. This could be developed in modular format. The SG had difficulties to identify the possible consequences of such a decision, although it could perceive some benefit for example in harmonizing information systems used in surveillance or facilitating data exchange. Additional information would be necessary before this be considered objectively.

12.3. Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) integration into the IPP?

The Support Group felt that it has no sufficient expertise to decide whether the Capacity Evaluation system should be included into the IPP.

13. Closure

Mr Schans thanked the participants and closed the meeting.

List of Suggested Search-related Actions

Query forms:

1. there should be only 1 query form that searches across all types-of information;
2. tabs for categories of information in the IPP should be eliminated;
3. need to be able to select type of information e.g. pest reports or ISPMs;
4. essential to include options to search by country or region;
5. only one date option i.e. last updated;
6. not necessary to search metadata language;
7. choice of output option not necessary until search results have been refined – move to output form so that CSV files can be generated once the user is happy with the results provided;
8. tick boxes for keywords – as per keyword picker;
9. function needs to make use of an acronym and synonym table for most keywords – this must be available across languages

Output form:

1. First column = country name
2. Second column = type/category of data
3. Third column = language if selected
4. Fourth column = title
5. Secretariat to tested and establish columns in a practical order
6. only one date option i.e. last updated
7. include CSV option at the bottom of page.
8. all columns should be sortable
9. add “All”
10. results currently too general and inconsistent – need to be more targeted in nature
11. develop ability to save searches for future repeated use.

AGENDA

International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) Support Group

Wageningen
The Netherlands

05-08 September 2006

IPP SG: 5 – 7 September. 09:00 – 17:00, with an hour for lunch. Tour of
6 September 09:00 – 17:00
7 September 09:00 – 15:30

Field visit: 7 September 16:45 – 17:30: Visit to the brand new quarantine laboratories of the Netherlands Plant Protection Service.
8 September (until 14:00): The Netherlands Plant Protection Service will host an excursion to the Aalsmeer area, including a demonstration of the CLIENT system for import (electronic data interchange), and its application in import inspections.

1. Opening; welcome by the Director of the Netherlands Plant Protection Service

Election of a Chairperson
Election of a Rapporteur

2. Adoption of Agenda

3. Matters arising from the previous report

3.1. Update on e-certification

4. Report from IPPC Secretariat on use of the IPP

4.1. Statistics
4.2. Feedback

5. Report from IPPC Secretariat on IPP / Information Exchange workshops

5.1. Pacific
5.2. Asia
5.3. Western Europe
5.4. Central Europe
5.5. Africa (Anglo and francophone)
5.6. Latin America
5.7. Caribbean
5.8. NPPO data input
5.9. RPPOs

6. New functionalities introduced

Changes since last meeting or existing options that could be “switched on” with minimal input / cost.

6.1. IPP Update (newsletter)
6.2. NPPO information
6.3. IPP editors
6.4. Lowband width version
6.5. “IPP wiki”
6.6. RSS feeds

7. New IPP requests

7.1. Functions
7.1.1. Secretariat “work flow”
7.1.2. Logout
7.1.3. Search

- 7.1.4. Permission / security at file level
- 7.1.5. Send e-mail to IPP groups
- 7.1.6. IPP user management tools
- 7.2. Layout
 - 7.2.1. Related reporting
 - 7.2.2. Home page

8. Support documents

- 8.1. Editorial guidelines
- 8.2. Information exchange manual

9. IPP Capacity building / toolbox

- 9.1. Scope
- 9.2. Priorities
 - 9.2.1. *Technical assistance*
 - 9.2.1.1. *Projects*
 - ❖ how to apply
 - ❖ summary of projects
 - ❖ donor contacts
 - ❖ national “calls” for assistance
 - 9.2.1.2. *International standards*
 - ❖ ISPMs
 - Wood packaging e.g. International Forestry Quarantine Research Group (<http://www.forestry-quarantine.org/>); FAQs
 - ❖ explanatory documents
 - ❖ RSPMs
 - 9.2.1.3. *Treatments*
 - 9.2.1.4. *Data sheets*
 - 9.2.1.5. *Diagnostics*
 - 9.2.2. Information exchange
 - 9.2.3. Standard setting
 - 9.2.4. FAQs
 - 9.2.5. Other

10. Future training

- 10.1. Complete regional IPP workshops
- 10.2. National projects
- 10.3. What next?
- 10.4. IPP training server necessary?

11. Budget / work programme

- 11.1. What budget?
- 11.2. Webmaster
- 11.3. Capacity building support
- 11.4. IPP standards
- 11.5. Documentation
 - ❖ IPP Editorial Guidelines
 - ❖ IPPC Information Exchange Manual
- 11.6. Navigation languages
- 11.7. Future funding

12. Other business

- 12.1. FAO “Conflict of Interest” Disclosure
- 12.2. General phytosanitary information systems e.g. surveillance
- 12.3. PCE integration into the IPP?

13. Closure

List of IPP Support Group Participants

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