Engaging Experts in the standard setting process

(Prepared by IPPC Secretariat)

At the October 2012 Strategic Planning Group (SPG) meeting[[1]](#footnote-1), the IPPC Secretariat initiated a discussion on engaging members because of the recent lack of response to calls for treatments and experts and the lack of availability of nominated experts and stewards to participate in the activities that they had been selected for, even though they had signed a statement of commitment. The SPG discussed the paper and proposed that a questionnaire be sent to National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) and relevant experts to identify their constraints.

At its 2012 November meeting[[2]](#footnote-2), the Standards Committee (SC) requested the Secretariat to add an agenda point on “engaging experts” to Technical Panel (TP) meeting agendas and, based on the input from these meetings, to develop a questionnaire with the participation of the Chair, TP stewards and the Secretariat. In accordance with the SC request, the Technical Panel on Phytosanitary Treatments (TPPT), the Technical Panel on Diagnostic Protocols (TPDP) and the Technical Panel for the Glossary (TPG) discussed some challenges in engaging experts in the standard setting process and forwarded these items to the Secretariat. See Annex 1 to this paper for the detailed TP meeting discussions.

At its May 2013 meeting the SC noted the inputs from the TPDP, TPPT and TPG and modifiedthe draft questionnaire prepared by the Secretariat. The SC requestedthe Secretariat to revise the questionnaire based on additional comments from the SC members and send it to the TC-RPPOs for further discussion, prior to using it.

Draft questionnaire to be sent to National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) and Regional Plant Protection Organizations (RPPOs)

For each question, please identify your constraints and possible solutions, including necessary changes on the side of the IPPC and its bodies.

Participation of experts in the standard setting process

1. How do you support the participation of your experts in the standard setting process? Which constraints do you face? How do you ensure that your experts have ample time allocated to this work throughout their normal mandate (3 year terms for the Standards Committee (SC), 5 year terms for the Technical Panels (TPs), 1 time meeting for Expert Working Groups (EWGs) or approximately 5 years development time for experts working on Diagnostic Protocols (DPs))?
2. What are the benefits for your country or organization of having experts participating in the different stages of the standard setting process? Do you agree with following statements (if you do not agree, please specify):

* *Influence*: an NPPO staff member being involved in the standard setting process as a member of an EWG, SC or TP may be able to influence the form or content of a document that is useful for its NPPO.
* *Training*: an NPPO staff member could receive training of different sorts directly or indirectly. Participation in discussions of EWGs, TPs or in other meetings with expert colleagues can be educationally beneficial.
* *Contacts*: work in standard setting bodies of the IPPC provides the opportunity to meet and work with a variety of colleagues from many countries, which is extremely valuable and can help later the NPPO in its work and negotiations.
* *Experience*: valuable experience is gained from having an NPPO staff member participating in the different stages of the standard setting process.
* *Effectiveness in the IPPC*: the IPPC standard setting procedures work well with NPPOs staff assistance. The IPPC standard setting process is complex and transparent; and leads to the development and adoption of sound and useful international standards. It should be supported.

1. In which stage of the standards setting process do experts from your country participate most effectively?

* Call for topics
* Nominations of experts
* Member consultation on draft specifications
* Participation by experts as: author for a diagnostic protocol, SC member, TP member or EWG member
* Expert consultation on diagnostic protocols
* Member consultation on draft standards
* Substantial concerns commenting period
* Formal objections or notification periods

1. Which other processes have your experts indirectly participated in, which is related to the IPPC (e.g translation of standards into your own languages, regional activities, etc.)?
2. Do you think your participation is sufficient, should be diminished or improved? Why?

Nominating experts to expert drafting groups

1. What are your three main constraints in answering calls for experts? If you do not submit any nomination, why do you not submit any? If you rarely submit nominations, why do you not submit more?
2. How could the Secretariat help in securing the participation of experts (e.g. support letters, direct contacts, etc.)?
3. Do you have a regional approach to submitting nominations to expert drafting groups? If so, do you prefer the regional approach?
4. Do you have close contacts or have made an effort to gain close contacts with other institutes that are not part of the NPPO or RPPO and may have suitable experts?
5. Do you set aside a fixed time for your expert or do they have to rearrange their tasks to fit IPPC activities? In regards to an expert from another institute, do you negotiate with that institute the time needed for this activity? Do experts find these timing arrangements onerous?
6. As an RPPO, is it possible to explore funding the participation in EWGs and TPs for experts from your region?

Providing experts to SC and TPs

TP members have a 5-year mandate, which can be renewed, and SC members have a 3-year mandate, which may be renewed.

1. SC members need some time to enter into their role, and sometimes it is beneficial that some stay for more than 1 term. Are there constraints to this?
2. For continuity, the participation of some experts should even extend beyond the maximum mandates, in order to maintain experience on these groups. Would you consider providing an expert for longer duration? Would it require some particular justification, explanation from the side of the IPPC? What would be the constraints?

Annex 1: Extracts from Technical Panels reports

2012 November TPDP meeting report[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Secretariat has developed a document questionnaire on how to improve the development of Diagnostic Protocols (DPs), subject that has been raised by TPDP members at many occasions. The document presented issues regarding the standard setting process itself, but focused more on the operation and work of the TPDP and drafting teams.

At the moment, all authors and co-authors of the DP drafting groups are indicated on the cover page during development of a draft (this is not part of the published DP), and substantial contributions (including authors and co-authors who wrote the first draft and any others who made major contributions) can be indicated in the acknowledgement section.

Regarding the participation of experts in the DP drafting group, the TPDP raised the following issues:

Participations of experts

1. The TPDP recognized that everyone is busy and that for the first year the work is more intensive and then subsequently more sporadic. Once the authors and co-authors are part of the DP drafting group, they are responsible as a team for the development of the protocol according to the proposed schedule and proper time for this work must be allocated;
2. The fact that there may be an existing regional protocols for the same pest that the IPPC is developing a DP for was raised. It was necessary to make sure that experts that have already been involved in the development of a regional protocol are also involved in the DP drafting group or at least have input, where possible;
3. Even though this type of expert work is on a volunteer basis, there is still an expectation that the authors and co-authors are able to allocate the appropriate amount of time, as this is specifically highlighted in the call letter. In addition, the author’s employer should be aware of the commitment and even consider including this work in the author’s performance review. In addition, it is important to keep volunteers motivated, e.g. a letter from the IPPC Secretariat thanking volunteers could be a good motivator. This could also be done for experts solicited to send comments (a letter to invite them to participate, if requested from the discipline lead – see agenda item 5.1), and to authors and co-authors in a DP drafting group with a copy to their NPPOs (e.g. when the draft is ready for member consultation (new), and after adoption (as currently done)). Other methods for motivating authors and co-authors could include an acknowledgement letter or the creation of an IPPC database of diagnostic experts which would include author’s names and a description of their expertise. The Secretariat noted this could be a lot of additional work and resources to do this may be limited;
4. A statement of commitment, including the supervisor’s signature, although requested in the call for authors, the Secretariat should insist it be submitted by each member of the DP drafting group. This was added to the working procedures;
5. Authors and co-authors of the DP drafting group could be invited to help train laboratory staff and participate in inter-laboratory testing of methods after each DP has been adopted;
6. A flow chart should be developed to illustrate the development process and expected development time to authors and co-authors;
7. A summarized status of the protocol should be publicly available on the IPP, indicating the names and contact information for discipline leads, referees and DP drafting group members. The provisional adoption date could be indicated on the IPPC List of topics for IPPC standards

2012 December TPPT meeting report[[4]](#footnote-4)

Based the request from the SPG the Secretariat has developed questionnaire and TPPT response is provided below.

1) Please identify key IPPC internal and external stakeholders

TPPT: Exporting, Importing commodities

2) What are internal stakeholders seeking from IPPC? What are their main needs?

TPPT:

* Protection from unreasonable rejection of commodities
* Technical Guidance
* Science-based standards

3) Do you think that external stakeholders should participate in the standard setting process?

TPPT: Yes, member consultation, etc. However, should have NPPO reps that are linked with industry. Depending on topic, industry may be invited to EDGs (Sea containers, grain).

What are the mutual benefits resulting from their involvement?

TPPT:

* Assists with implementation
* Operational data
* Is it economic and practical?

4) What are the stages of the standard setting process in which (internal and external) stakeholders should participate?

TPPT:

* Should have information gathering session, early involvement, scoping session (Similar to Workshop on grain Dec 2011) inviting internal and external stakeholders
* Member consultation (both internal and external)
* SC members work with external throughout SSP to engage, receive feedback

5) Please mention five standards (current or draft) which the IPPC should use to promote its activities, listed in order of priority.

TPPT

* Commodity specific
* ISPM 15 (including impacts on reducing use of MeBr)
* Sea Con
* Grain
* ISPM 28 (Treatments)
* ISPM 11 (PRA, identifying the risk)
* ISPM 6 (Surveillance)

6) Further comments

TPPT:

* Receiving more nominations of experts
* Lack of resources from countries to send experts, need more resources from IPPC to send experts, additional budget, need more planning time to organize, request travel (issues for developing and developed)
* Rely too much on in-kind contributions (OIE model)
* Receiving more, better quality Treatment submissions
* Review treatment manuals from NPPOs and see if any can be made into IPPC PTs.
* Older treatments, not so much scientific data

2013 February TPG meeting report[[5]](#footnote-5)

At its 2013 February meeting the TPG identified the following points:

1. Regarding skills, TPG members need a mix of skills that are not so easy to find. Firstly they should have experience of phytosanitary systems and be involved in phytosanitary matters, and be either working with definitions or have a great experience of the whole standard development. This point towards experts who are already involved in IPPC standard setting activities, but as these experts already have a heavy workload, they may not be able to join TPG.
2. Secondly, while TPG members need to have phytosanitary expertise to make sure that the terms are used correctly, they also need to have a specific interest in working with terminology and language. They also need to ensure that the terms will be correct once translated, and this requires good language skills. However, experts with the double skills and interests in phytosanitary matters and in terminology and language are not so frequent. Finally a large part of the work needs to be carried out in English, and this adds another constraint to finding suitable candidates.
3. Suggestion was made that people involved in phytosanitary matters and showing interest for terminology and languages should be identified at any type of meetings, including EWG and CPM, by the Secretariat or others involved in standard setting activities.
4. Nominees should understand the work to be done, engage into it and be reactive. They should be willing to follow the group in the long term.
5. Regarding the Secretariat’s question on whether TPG members had sufficient time to dedicate to this task and the support of their hierarchy, several members noted it was important that their superior understood the importance of the task in order to have the available time to allocate to the work. When an expert was nominated with the support of a superior, and that person was replaced, the time spent on the tasks may be put in question by the new superior. The Secretariat noted that it could provide a letter, or contact relevant persons, in order to support the work done by TP members.
6. Governments may not be aware of the benefits of having members in specific groups, and may focus rather on the cost of having an expert participating in a group. The benefits should be explained.
7. The need for continuity was raised. As the skills needed for the TPG are specialized, and some continuity should be maintained in the group, it may be necessary that a member continues beyond her/his first 5-year term. However, NPPOs after 5 years may conclude that they have provided sufficient support by providing their experts for 5 years, and may withdraw them. When continuation of a TP member is necessary, the Secretariat could assist by providing a letter to present to the member’s hierarchy, explaining the importance of the work being done and the need for continuity (possibly beyond the 5-year term).
8. One member noted that some RPPOs have been greatly involved in the development of the glossary since this activity started, and still provided heavy support (for example two TPG members are currently directly funded by an RPPO). It was noted that where the situation arises that an RPPO can propose and fund a nominee who is then selected as a member, this could be encouraged and supported.

1. 2012 October SPG meeting report, section 6.1, <https://www.ippc.int/index.php?id=125447> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2012 November SC meeting report, section 3.2.1, <https://www.ippc.int/index.php?id=13355> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 2012 November TPDP Meeting Report (section 11): <https://www.ippc.int/core-activities/standards-setting/expert-drafting-groups/technical-panels/technical-panel-diagnostic-protocols> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 2012 December TPPT Meeting report: <https://www.ippc.int/index.php?id=1110739&no_cache=1&L=0> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 2013 February TPG Meeting report: <https://www.ippc.int/index.php?id=1110712> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)