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Report of the activities of the IPPC Secretariat: 2014 Highlights

Agenda item 6

Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat

1. 2014 was a pivotal year for the International Plant Protection Convention and the IPPC Secretariat. Much of the information below will be covered in significantly more detail in other documents prepared by the Secretariat under other agenda points as well as in the 2014 IPPC Secretariat annual report. The following is a brief overview of some of the key highlights for 2014.
2. Significant personnel changes took place in the Secretariat in 2014. First, our Secretary, Yukio Yokoi, resigned his position and returned to Japan at the end of the year. Yukio served in the Secretariat from 2010 and oversaw the development of the current IPPC Strategic Framework, the establishment of the Capacity Development Committee, as well as the transition of the Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance informal working group into the Strategic Planning Group. He played the lead role in ensuring the registration of the ISPM15 symbol around the world, and helped to ensure that the IPPC Financial Committee got up and running.
3. A lot of effort has gone into evaluating the Secretariat in general and in particular, the IPPC Capacity Development Committee was also evaluated. A Secretariat enhancement evaluation has been underway since late summer 2014, the results of which have been presented to the Bureau. The intent of the evaluation is to show the way forward for the Secretariat so that it will be appropriately configured and staffed for the challenges that lie ahead. The oversight of capacity development in the IPPC is also being addressed in the context of the Capacity Development Committee review. The Secretariat's efforts in this area continue to be viewed positively around the globe.
4. The Capacity Development group lost two staff members who have been or are in process of being replaced, and the Standard Setting team also saw staff turnover. The National Reporting Obligations function, by contrast, has been bolstered with the addition of a new staff member. This transition of personnel seems to be a regular occurrence for the IPPC Secretariat due in part to the FAO personnel policy, which is a matter of ongoing discussion internally within the IPPC Secretariat. Seeking solutions to the personnel questions within the context of being an FAO Article XIV body has been a constant activity.

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5. 2014 was also a year of focus on National Reporting Obligations (NROs). Renewed emphasis on NROs saw a marked improvement in contact point information as part of the “IPPC Year of the Official Contact Point”, and there has been a strong focus on improving this critical area of IPPC activity. There is still more work to be done, but the reinvigoration of this important area has been a visible part of the Secretariat’s activities. The additional staff member has been a vital component of this reinvigoration. The NRO programme will be discussed further during CPM 10 (2015).
6. The Secretariat has transformed the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP). The primary focus has been to make it more intuitive for users searching for information, while at the same time giving it a cleaner and fresher look. This is another area in which personnel attrition has taken place however, but the Secretariat is seeking ways to ensure sustainable support for IPPC IT needs.
7. The work on ePhyto continues with a significant effort made to obtain resources to move forward with an ePhyto hub that can be used by all contracting parties. This effort is the product of the ePhyto steering group with input from the Secretariat. The hope is that in 2015 a true ePhyto system, including a hub and web-based application, will start to be developed.
8. In 2014, the IPPC Secretariat began to consider implementation and began to focus on surveillance at the request of the CPM. An outline for a work plan, covering a five year period was developed by an open ended working group meeting that took place in August 2014 in Rome. The report¹ of the meeting is available on the IPP and the results and proposed workplan will be discussed during CPM 10 (2015).
9. A key highlight in 2014 was getting the IPPC recognized as a biodiversity convention. While most would consider it a given that the IPPC is a biodiversity convention, this formal recognition does provide an opportunity for our contracting party NPPOs to work toward the elimination of duplicative efforts by their colleagues in environmental ministries and departments with regard to phytosanitary regulations and activities. In addition, this recognition also opens the door for NPPOs to seek support for implementation of the Convention by having direct access to resources available from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).
10. Standard setting saw a lot of work take place in 2014. In the final meeting of the SC for 2014, the group approved the draft cold treatments for *Bactrocera tryoni* on *Citrus sinensis*, *Citrus reticulata* x *C. sinensis*, and *C. limon* for submission to CPM-10 (2015) for adoption by a vote with no option for formal objection. The SC also agreed that the SC-7 group should review and discuss the IPPC Standard Setting Procedure including how the SC should proceed when no consensus can be reached within the SC.
11. In addition, a lot of effort has gone into developing a framework for standards and considerations were given to expand this framework to include implementation. This topic has been discussed at length in two separate working group meetings, as well as a meetings of the Bureau, the SPG in October 2014 and the Standards Committee. In particular, the SC reviewed and identified specific gaps and proposed priorities at the Framework meeting. The SC also agreed with the SPG in not delaying the call for topics, but recommended SC members consider the discussions in relation to the draft Framework during the meeting of the SC, especially those topics related to contingency planning and emergency response, and elements of an effective national plant protection organization. The SC also recommended members consider encouraging their respective contracting parties in their regions to submit suggestions relative to the preceding. The framework is not yet complete as the Strategic Planning Group strongly felt that it warranted additional review and consideration. Additionally the input from other IPPC bodies will be sought and it is hoped that a revised Framework for Standards and Implementation could be presented to the SPG in 2015 and consequently presented to CPM 11 (2016). This important piece of work will help to set the future direction of standard setting in the IPPC for some years to come.

¹ Report: Open ended working group on Implementation (2014): <https://www.ippc.int/publications/report-open-ended-working-group-implementation-2014>

Finally, this note is not intended to provide a comprehensive report on the activities of the IPPC Secretariat, but rather to provide a view of some of the key developments in 2014, which you should note. There remains the need to gain an equivalent level of prominence to that of Codex and the OIE, there is a continued need to establish sustained funding (voluntary assessed contributions are one way), and there is always a need for experts to work on topics, and a sustained staff with growth opportunities. The Secretariat is moving forward, but there is still much to be done.

12. The Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to thank NPPOs, RPPOs, partners and collaborators for all of their efforts to protect plant health.