



Plant health and trade facilitation

In today's globalized world, trade is a driver for economic development. Many countries depend on trading large quantities of plants and plant products, such as grain, fruit and vegetables or timber to sustain their economies. Yet trade could introduce and spread plant pests and threaten natural plant resources, managed crops, biodiversity and forest production. Therefore, it is important to facilitate safe trade preventing the spread of plant pests avoiding unjustifiable barriers.

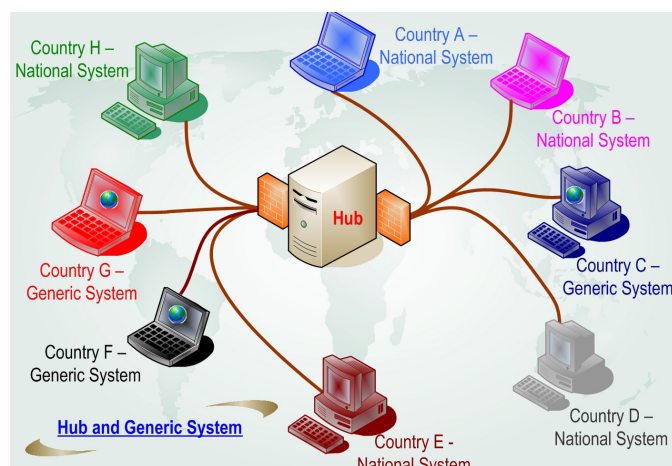
Core to the facilitation of safe trade is the implementation of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and its International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) that provide globally harmonized guidance for countries to manage pest risks thus effectively ensuring safe and efficient trade of plants and agricultural products, and supporting developing and developed countries in accessing new markets.

For plant health, the international standards developed under the auspices of the International Plant Protection Convention are recognized by the World Trade Organization's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement). The SPS Agreement aims to protect human, animal or plant life or health through the application of necessary measures subject to the requirement that these measures are technically justified and do not pose a disguised restriction on international trade.

In order to reduce the risk of spreading pests, plants are often required to be accompanied by printed phytosanitary certificates, issued by the national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) of the exporting country, to attest that the commodity meets the requirements of the importing country. However, trade is evolving and the IPPC should also be evolving with it.

ePhyto

In 2014, the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) adopted Appendix 1 to ISPM 12 (*Electronic phytosanitary certificates, information on standard XML schemes and exchange mechanisms*), a crucial step towards the global harmonization of electronic certification schemes. An ePhyto solution developed by the IPPC Secretariat serves the same purpose as the old-fashioned paper equivalent. Moving towards electronic-based, paper-free technology for the exchange of certificate information will facilitate trade even more. Trade using ePhyto will become much quicker, allowing the exporting country to insert and share information almost in real time. It should also help reduce fraudulent certificates by using secure, direct exchanges between national plant protection organizations. Indeed, the development of an ePhyto system will help give developing countries a fair chance to join in the electronic exchange of data at reduced costs.



ISPM 15

Another example of IPPC helping to facilitate trade is ISPM 15: *Regulation of wood packaging material in international trade*. ISPM 15 provides internationally agreed phytosanitary treatments that are applied to wood packaging material, which is then marked with an IPPC symbol to provide proof to importing countries that the wood has been treated appropriately, minimizing the likelihood of pest introduction.



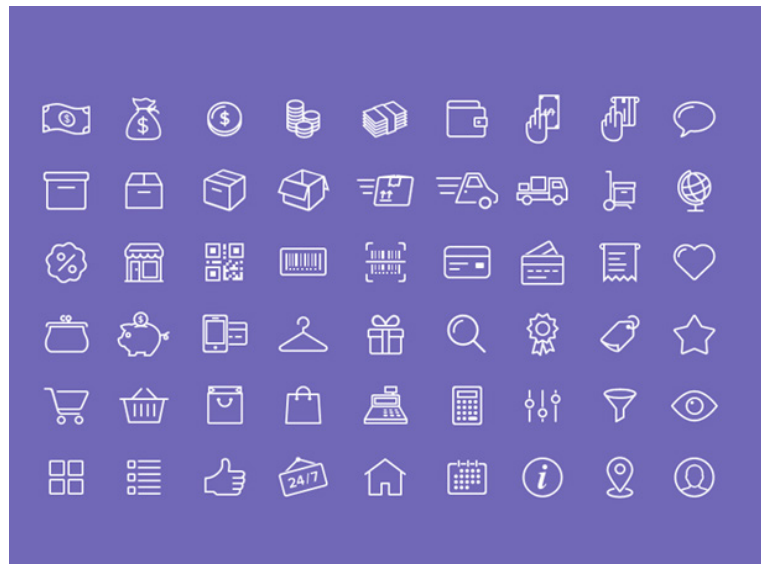
Sea containers

Sea containers are a significant pathway for the potential entry of plant pests, as they move large volumes of internationally traded goods and personal effects. To that end several activities were undertaken under the IPPC framework, including attempting to develop an ISPM, approving a relevant CPM recommendation, developing a complementary action plan for assessing and managing the pest threats associated with sea containers, and creating a sea containers task force. Entry and spread of pests to new areas via sea containers could result in important control and eradication costs, losses in yields and access to export markets, and threaten food security, agriculture, as well as the environment.



E-commerce

Who has never bought an item on the internet? Electronic commerce, commonly known as e-commerce involves the digital transfer of goods and services across borders. Nowadays, even plants and plant products are purchased on line, but as this pathway is new, phytosanitary controls are not always undertaken. The IPPC is developing a work plan on e-commerce and is closely collaborating with the World Customs Organization to develop tools and partnerships with e-traders and carriers. The status of initiatives on plant health and e-commerce was presented during a dedicated CPM side session in 2017 and more initiatives are planned in the near future.



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