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The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and its standards on pest surveillance and diagnostics to prevent the entry of *Xylella fastidiosa*

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1. International travel and trade are greater than ever before – and as people and commodities move around the world, organisms that present risks to plants travel with them. Pest introductions and outbreaks cost governments, farmers, consumers and the environment billions every year. The global community has responded to these challenges through international agreements and other mechanisms.
 2. The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) established in 1952¹ is an international plant health agreement that aims to protect cultivated, wild plants and plant products by preventing the introduction and spread of pests. As of March 2017, the IPPC has grown into a body that encompasses a worldwide membership of 183 contracting parties.
 3. The implementation of the Convention involves collaboration by the IPPC contracting parties, which have the obligation to set up a national plant protection organization (NPPO), the official services established by governments to discharge the functions specified by the IPPC, and regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs), which can act as coordinating bodies at a regional level to achieve the objectives of the IPPC. Suggestions for international standards can be made by national or regional plant protection organizations. They are developed by expert drafting groups and reviewed by technical committees, NPPOs and RPPOs and adopted by the CPM. The Secretariat of the IPPC is provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
 4. In agreeing to the rights and obligations of the Convention, contracting parties shall make provision, to the best of their abilities, for an official NPPO with the following responsibilities: (a) the issuance of Phytosanitary certificates; (b) the surveillance of growing and wild plants and of plant products; (c) the inspection of consignments of plants and plant products moving in international traffic; (d) the disinfection or disinfection of consignments of plants, plant products and other regulated articles moving in international traffic, etc.
 5. To implement these responsibilities, the IPPC provides an international framework for plant protection that includes developing International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) for safeguarding plant resources.
 6. International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) are internationally agreed upon phytosanitary measures that have been adopted by the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM), which is the governing body of the IPPC. ISPMs cover invasive pests of plants, including invasive alien species that cause damage to plants both directly and indirectly. In order to help manage these pests, they must be regulated within the territory of the importing contracting party, and these are defined as “regulated pests”. ISPMs extend beyond the protection of cultivated plants to the protection of wild flora. The standards cover the movement of traded goods such as plants and plant products and also apply to vehicles, ships, aircraft, containers, storage places, soil, wood packaging and other objects

that could harbour plant pests. ISPMs facilitate safe trade by providing general and specific guidance on procedures, regulations and treatments that can be used to manage pest risks associated with the international movement of goods and conveyances.

7. The IPPC is the only standard setting organization for plant health recognized by the members of the World Trade Organization under the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS Agreement).
8. There are 80 ISPMs² as of March 2017, including 22 diagnostic protocols for regulated pests as Annexes to ISPM 27 (*Diagnostic protocols for regulated pests*) and 21 phytosanitary treatments as Annexes to ISPM 28 (*Phytosanitary treatments for regulated pests*). All ISPMs, including those in draft and consultation stages, are freely available through the IPPC Web site (www.ippc.int) or from the IPPC Secretariat.
9. The ISPM 6 (*Guidelines for surveillance*) was adopted in 1997 and describes the components of survey and monitoring systems for the purpose of pest detection and the supply of information for use in pest risk analyses, the establishment of pest free areas and, where appropriate, the preparation of pest lists. Surveillance is an obligation of NPPO and underpins other obligations and phytosanitary decision-making. It is a critical part of the national phytosanitary system. Plant pest surveillance thus plays a key role in the overall mandate of the NPPO.
10. A national plant pest surveillance programme should be conducted in such a way that its results are accurate, credible and contribute to national goals and priorities. Management support is critical to a strong, sustainable programme. Surveillance activities can be expensive. However, as activities that support national phytosanitary policy, the benefits will invariably outweigh the costs. This guidance on surveillance are of uttermost relevance for the early detection of *Xylella fastidiosa*.
11. Diagnostic protocols are crucial for an accurate pest diagnosis, as pest diagnosis is the basis of an effective pest surveillance. Thus, diagnostic services are fundamental to the success of a national plant pest surveillance system. The ISPM 27 (*Diagnostic protocols for regulated pests*³) and its annexes contain the minimum requirements for reliable diagnosis of a specified regulated pest, and provide flexibility to developing and developed countries to ensure that methods are appropriate for use in the full range of circumstances for which a diagnostic protocol may be used (e.g. from detection of a pest in a consignment, to surveillance, to routine diagnosis). The methods included in diagnostic protocols are selected on the basis of their sensitivity, specificity, and reproducibility. Only methods of relevance for diagnostics are given in the protocol. Information on record keeping and contact points are provided to help laboratories and NPPOs in the implementation of the methods described in the protocols. The IPPC has in its work programme the development of a diagnostic protocol for *Xylella fastidiosa*, which is expected to be submitted for adoption in 2018.
12. The IPPC provides a framework and forum for international cooperation, harmonization and technical exchange between contracting parties, which are crucial for the prevention of *Xylella fastidiosa*. Organizations can share and consult contributed resources on this pest, as well as other phytosanitary material freely at <http://www.phytosanitary.info>.

Notes

¹ The IPPC convention text was adopted by the 6th Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), superseding previous international plant protection agreements.

² Adopted ISPMs: <https://www.ippc.int/core-activities/standards-setting/ispms>

³ ISPM 27. Diagnostic protocols for regulated pests: <https://www.ippc.int/publications/diagnostic-protocols-regulated-pests>