



International Plant Protection Convention
Protecting the world's plant resources from pests

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

12
2015

ENG

Import Verification

A guide to import verification for
national plant protection organizations



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Publication notes:

Version 1.1 published December 2015

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This paper presents a guide to import verification as an aspect of the broader subject of import regulation created as a component of the IPPC National Phytosanitary Capacity Building Strategy, which was adopted by the fifth session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (2010) of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). This work has been developed by selected experts and reviewed by the IPPC Capacity Development Committee (including phytosanitary experts from the seven FAO regions), the Technical Consultation among regional plant protection organizations and the IPPC Secretariat. The elaboration of this manual was possible thanks to the financial contribution of the Standard and Trade Development Facility (Project STDF 350).

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Definitions Used

Area of low pest prevalence

An area, whether all of a country, part of a country, or all or parts of several countries, as identified by the competent authorities, in which a specific pest is present at low levels and which is subject to effective surveillance or control measures [IPPC, 1997; revised CPM, 2015]

Clearance (of a consignment)

Verification of compliance with phytosanitary regulations [FAO, 1995]

Emergency action

A prompt phytosanitary action undertaken in a new or unexpected phytosanitary situation [ICPM, 2001]

Emergency measure

A phytosanitary measure established as a matter of urgency in a new or unexpected phytosanitary situation. An emergency measure may or may not be a provisional measure [ICPM, 2001; revised ICPM, 2005]

Harmonized phytosanitary measures

Phytosanitary measures established by contracting parties to the IPPC, based on international standards [IPPC, 1997]

Inspector

Person authorized by a national plant protection organization to discharge its functions [FAO, 1990]

Integrity (of a consignment)

Composition of a consignment as described by its phytosanitary certificate or other officially acceptable document, maintained without loss, addition or substitution [CPM, 2007]

National plant protection organization

Official service established by a government to discharge the functions specified by the IPPC [FAO,

1990; formerly “plant protection organization (national)”]

Pest

Any species, strain or biotype of plant, animal or pathogenic agent injurious to plants or plant products [FAO, 1990; revised FAO, 1995; IPPC, 1997; revised CPM, 2012]

Pest free area

An area in which a specific pest is absent as demonstrated by scientific evidence and in which, where appropriate, this condition is being officially maintained [FAO, 1995; revised CPM, 2015]

Pest free place of production

Place of production in which a specific pest is absent as demonstrated by scientific evidence and in which, where appropriate, this condition is being officially maintained for a defined period [ISPM 10, 1999; revised CPM, 2015]

Pest free production site

A production site in which a specific pest is absent, as demonstrated by scientific evidence, and in which, where appropriate, this condition is being officially maintained for a defined period [ISPM 10, 1999; revised CPM, 2015]

Pest risk analysis

The process of evaluating biological or other scientific and economic evidence to determine whether an organism is a pest, whether it should be regulated, and the strength of any phytosanitary measures to be taken against it [FAO, 1995; revised IPPC, 1997; ISPM 2, 2007]

Phytosanitary legislation

Basic laws granting legal authority to a national plant protection organization from which phytosanitary

regulations may be drafted [FAO, 1990; revised FAO, 1995]

Phytosanitary measure

Any legislation, regulation or official procedure having the purpose to prevent the introduction or spread of quarantine pests, or to limit the economic impact of regulated non-quarantine pests [FAO, 1995; revised IPPC, 1997; ICPM, 2002; revised CPM, 2013]

Plant quarantine

All activities designed to prevent the introduction or spread of quarantine pests or to ensure their official control [FAO, 1990; revised FAO, 1995; revised CPM, 2013]

Point of entry

Airport, seaport, land border point or any other location officially designated for the importation of consignments, or the entrance of persons [FAO, 1995; revised CPM, 2015]

Post-entry quarantine

Quarantine applied to a consignment after entry [FAO, 1995]

Quarantine pest

A pest of potential economic importance to the area endangered thereby and not yet present there,

or present but not widely distributed and being officially controlled [FAO, 1990; revised FAO, 1995; IPPC, 1997]

Regulated pest

A quarantine pest or a regulated non-quarantine pest [IPPC, 1997]

Regulated non-quarantine pest

A non-quarantine pest whose presence in plants for planting affects the intended use of those plants with an economically unacceptable impact and which is therefore regulated within the territory of the importing contracting party [IPPC, 1997; revised CPM, 2013]

Release (of a consignment)

Authorization for entry after clearance [FAO, 1995]

Standard operating procedures

Detailed, written instructions to achieve uniformity of the performance of a specific function [ICH]*

Treatment

Official procedure for the killing, inactivation or removal of pests, or for rendering pests infertile or for devitalization [FAO, 1990, revised FAO, 1995; ISPM 15, 2002; ISPM 18, 2003; ICPM, 2005]

Note: IPPC definitions are sourced from the IPPC *Glossary of phytosanitary terms* (ISPM 5). The glossary is updated annually based on decisions taken by the IPPC Commission on Phytosanitary Measures. The complete and updated glossary is maintained at: <http://www.ippc.int/publications/glossary-phytosanitary-terms>. The definitions are accurate as of November 2015.

* This term is defined by the International Conference on Harmonization (ICH) (USFDA, 2014).

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALPP	Area of low pest prevalence
CPM	Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (of the IPPC)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICH	International Conference on Harmonization
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
ISPM	International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures
NPPO	National plant protection organization
NRP	Non-regulated pest
PEQ	Post-entry quarantine
PFA	Pest free area
PFPP	Pest free place of production
PFPS	Pest free production site
PRA	Pest risk analysis
RNQP	Regulated non-quarantine pest
SPS	Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the WTO
WTO	World Trade Organization



Preface – Purpose of a Guide to Import Verification for National Plant Protection Organizations

This manual addresses import verification as an aspect of the broader subject of import regulation. It draws extensively on requirements specified in several International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). It sets the stage or basis for import verification and provides guidance to national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) on the operation of an import verification system, the process of import verification, the requirements for import verification and pathways that should be considered. All plants, plant products and other regulated articles need import verification as they are a potential pathway for movement of plant pests.

Seven key areas are discussed in the manual. The first is import requirements, including such topics as pest risk analysis (PRA) and its importance in establishing import requirements, the role of transparency and communication in promoting compliance; the manual defines “regulated articles” and outlines the organizational requirements for effective verification of imports by the NPPO.

The second area is the import verification framework. The legal basis for the operation of the NPPO and its responsibilities as described in the IPPC are highlighted. The principles of import regulation are also discussed. NPPO import verification procedures should be guided by the principles outlined in the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the World Trade Organization (SPS Agreement) and the IPPC.

The third area is phytosanitary measures for imported consignments. The verification procedures should address the import requirements set for the specific commodity, taking into account that these requirements may be applicable in the country of origin, in transit or on arrival as may be determined

by the outcomes of the PRA. Several measures are highlighted, namely, phytosanitary measures that might be applied in the exporting country, those that may be required during transport, measures that may be applied on arrival at the point of entry or after entry, and other measures such as requirements for import permits and audit of procedures in the exporting country or preclearance.

The fourth area is audit and compliance procedures. This section of the manual takes an extensive look at several audit and compliance procedural practices and their justification. These include audit and verification actions (e.g. of production systems, treatments, inspection procedure, phytosanitary management and surveillance) in the exporting country; verification procedures during transport; verification procedures in the importing country; and post-entry quarantine.

The fifth area is regarding outdated national legislation and its implications for import verification. National legislation that is outdated restricts the NPPO from implementing phytosanitary measures that are technically justified. Essentially, any legislation that has not been modernized since 1997 will most likely be inconsistent with the IPPC and ISPMs, and therefore not reflect the principles that should be observed in the application of phytosanitary measures. Several examples of inconsistencies resulting from the use of outdated legislation are cited.

The sixth area is import pathways and their unique and emerging challenges. Traditional pathways of formal trade are recognized as sea freight, air freight and overland transport of various kinds. Other pathways for regulation include passenger baggage, international mail and e-commerce in plants, plant products and other regulated articles that require diligence in coordination and regulation.

Non-compliance and emergency action is the seventh and final area. Detailed information about non-compliance and emergency action is contained in ISPM 13 (*Guidelines for the notification of non-compliance and emergency action*). Guidance is provided for the type of action that should be taken in cases of non-compliance and specific examples are given where phytosanitary action may be justified regarding non-compliance with phytosanitary import regulations.

The manual draws heavily on the ISPMs listed in the references section. Additional supplementary

information is available on the [Phytosanitary Resources website](#), which also provides access to additional resources.

Users of the manual are encouraged to contribute any relevant resource materials that are available to them which could improve the package for all users, and to provide feedback on this manual through <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/IPPCimport>.



1. Introduction

In order to safeguard their national plant resources, food security and the environment, contracting parties of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) establish a national plant protection organization (NPPO) whose core functions include import verification of plants, plant products and other regulated articles. The objective of a phytosanitary import regulatory system is to prevent the introduction of quarantine pests or limit the entry of regulated non-quarantine pests (RNQPs) with imported commodities.

International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) no. 20 (*Guidelines for a phytosanitary import regulatory system*) describes the structure and operation of a phytosanitary import regulatory system and the rights, obligations and responsibilities which should be considered in establishing, operating and revising the system.

The import regulatory system should consist of two components: a regulatory framework of phytosanitary legislation, regulations and procedures; and an official service, the NPPO, responsible for the operation or oversight of the system. In operating an import regulatory system, the NPPO has a number of responsibilities. These include the responsibilities identified in Article

IV.2 of the IPPC relating to import, including surveillance, inspection, disinfestation or disinfection, the conduct of pest risk analysis (PRA), and training and development of staff.

However, contracting parties sometimes find it challenging, or lack the capacity, to either establish or implement an import regulatory system and therefore fail to implement import verification procedures in accordance with the relevant IPPC articles on import verification. This gap may allow the introduction of quarantine pests into the contracting party's territory or lead to undue delay in trade facilitation.

This manual addresses import verification as an aspect of the broader subject of import regulation. It draws extensively on requirements specified in several ISPMs and the IPPC.

This manual is not a guide on import inspection procedures, rather it describes a systematic approach to the verification of imported consignments of plants, plant products and other regulated articles, identifying the key areas that must be taken into consideration when determining compliance with the phytosanitary requirements of the importing country.

2. Import Requirements – Setting the Stage for Import Verification

2.1 Pest risk analysis (PRA) and import requirements

The NPPO should, through a process of PRA or available ISPMs, set technically justifiable requirements for all imported plants, plant products and other regulated articles (IPPC Article VII.2(c) and VII.2(g)). It is against these requirements that import verification procedures are applied and the degree of compliance established.

Specific commodities from different countries of origin may have different levels of risk determined largely by the phytosanitary status in these countries, so that import requirements for the same commodity may differ depending on the country of origin. In this regard, the NPPO at the level of management/policy should ensure that personnel or a unit exists to, for example:

- ◆ conduct PRAs (ISPM 1, ISPM 11 and ISPM 21)
- ◆ determine which pests are to be regulated from each country of origin
- ◆ establish regulated pest lists
- ◆ establish requirements for the import of regulated articles
- ◆ based on the level of identified risk, specify the appropriate point of entry for consignments for the purpose of document verification and the required degree/level of inspection that may be necessary (ISPM 20, sections 4.2.1 and 4.5).

The capabilities at the point of entry should be such that they facilitate inspection and verification based on the level of risk of the consignment.

ISPM 32 (*Categorization of commodities according to their pest risk*) provides further guidance to the importing country on how to categorize commodities according to their pest risk when considering import requirements. This categorization helps the NPPO to determine whether further PRA is required and if phytosanitary certification is needed. Here, categorization is based on:

- ◆ whether the commodity has been processed

- ◆ the method and degree of processing to which the commodity has been subjected before export
- ◆ intended use of the commodity after importation.

2.2 Communication and transparency

To promote compliance with import requirements, trading partners must be aware of these requirements. The NPPO or contracting party should therefore make relevant information available to its trading partners as set out Article VII.2(b) of the IPPC. Such information may also be posted on the [International Phytosanitary Portal \(IPP\)](#) and through regional plant protection organizations. The NPPO is encouraged to:

- ◆ immediately upon their adoption, publish and transmit phytosanitary requirements, restrictions and prohibitions to any contracting party or parties that they believe may be directly affected by such measures (Article VII.2(b))
- ◆ on request, make available to any contracting party the rationale for phytosanitary requirements, restrictions and prohibitions (Article VII.2(c))
- ◆ specify points of entry for consignments of particular plants, plant products and other regulated articles selected so as not to unnecessarily impede international trade; a list of these points of entry should be published, along with lists of the plants, plant products and other regulated articles that require phytosanitary certificates or to be submitted for inspection or treatment (Article VII.2(d); ISPM 20, section 5.1.8)
- ◆ cooperate in the exchange of information on plant pests (Article VIII.1 and VIII.1(a))
- ◆ to the best of their ability, establish and update lists of regulated pests ... and make such lists available (Article VII.2(i))

- ◆ to the best of their ability, conduct surveillance for pests and develop and maintain adequate information on pest status ... this information shall be made available to contracting parties, on request (Article VII.2(j)).

2.3 Regulated articles

Imported commodities that may be regulated include articles that may be infested or contaminated with regulated pests. Regulated pests are either quarantine pests or RNQPs. Commodities for consumption or processing cannot be regulated for RNQPs.

RNQPs can only be regulated with respect to plants for planting.

Regulated articles may include:

- ◆ plants and plant products used for planting, consumption, processing or any other purpose
- ◆ storage facilities
- ◆ packaging materials including dunnage
- ◆ conveyances and transport facilities
- ◆ soil, organic fertilizers and related materials
- ◆ organisms capable of harbouring or spreading pests
- ◆ potentially contaminated equipment and materials (e.g. used agricultural equipment, used vehicles, military and earthmoving equipment, tyres and construction products)
- ◆ research and other scientific materials
- ◆ travellers' personal effects moving internationally, including plants and plant products in e-commerce
- ◆ international mail including international courier services

Regulated non-quarantine pests can only be regulated with respect to plants for planting

- ◆ pests and biological control agents (where applicable) (ISPM 20, section 4.1).

2.4 Organizational requirements

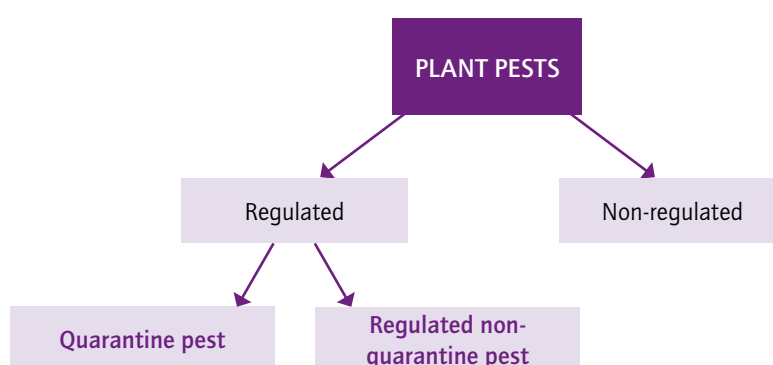
At the operational level, the NPPO should ensure that all necessary legal and operational tools have been provided for inspectors of the NPPO and authorized public officers to conduct the verification process for imported regulated articles. These may include:

- ◆ phytosanitary importation regulations and requirements as they are issued
- ◆ guidance documents, clearance procedures and work instructions as appropriate, covering relevant aspects of the operation of import verification to be followed by inspectors
- ◆ inspection, sampling, testing, surveillance and consignment verification procedures
- ◆ communication and access to information (by electronic means as far as possible).

For effective import verification, the NPPO may:

- ◆ establish a network for communication and information sharing to aid decision-making at points of entry and at headquarters
- ◆ provide information by using databases and datasheets on pests to be regulated, including their biology, host range, pathways, global distribution, detection, identification and treatment methods

Figure 1: The IPPC categorization of pests



- ◆ employ or authorize personnel who have the appropriate qualifications and skills
- ◆ ensure that adequate and sustained training is provided to all personnel to ensure competence in the areas for which they have responsibility
- ◆ ensure adequate facilities, equipment, tools and procedures are in place for import verification, inspection, sampling, testing and surveillance
- ◆ establish necessary collaboration with agencies at points of entry for effective import regulation (e.g. customs in the regulation of wood packaging materials associated with commodities other than those of phytosanitary concern)
- ◆ promptly process consignments that are perishable (Article VII.2(e)).
Inspectors should be authorized to:
- ◆ enter premises, conveyances and other places where imported plants, plant products or other regulated articles may be present for the purpose of verification
- ◆ inspect or test imported plants, plant products and other regulated articles
- ◆ take samples from imported plants, plant products or other regulated articles
- ◆ detain imported consignments or other regulated articles when they are found to be non-compliant to import conditions
- ◆ treat or require treatment of imported consignments, other regulated articles (including conveyances), plants or plant products in which a regulated pest may be present
- ◆ refuse entry of consignments and order their reshipment or destruction.

3. Import Verification Framework

3.1 Legal basis

3.1.1 Requirements in relation to imports

With the aim of preventing the introduction or spread of regulated pests into their territories, contracting parties shall have sovereign authority to regulate, in accordance with applicable international agreements, the entry of plants, plant products and other regulated articles (Article VII.1).

Article VII of the IPPC establishes the rights and obligations of contracting parties in relation to the requirements for importation. In addition, Article IV.2(c), IV.2(d) and IV.2(f) highlights the relevant responsibilities of the NPPO of the importing country (see Box).

The responsibilities of an official national plant protection organization shall include the following:

[...]

(c) the inspection of consignments of plants and plant products moving in international traffic and, where appropriate, the inspection of other regulated articles, particularly with the object of preventing the introduction and/or spread of pests;

(d) the disinfestation or disinfection of consignments of plants, plant products and other regulated articles moving in international traffic, to meet phytosanitary requirements;

[...]

(f) the conduct of pest risk analyses [as the basis for setting import requirements]

Article IV.2 of the IPPC

3.2 Principles of import regulation

Although contracting parties have sovereign authority to regulate, in accordance with applicable international agreements, the entry of plants, plant products and other regulated articles, these rights are tempered by important principles described in the SPS Agreement and the IPPC. NPPO import verification procedures should therefore be guided by these principles and be technically justifiable. These principles include the following.

- ◆ Import requirements for regulated articles should be consistent with the model phytosanitary certificates set out in the Annex to the IPPC. Any requirements for additional declarations shall be limited to those technically justified (Article V.3).
- ◆ Phytosanitary measures for regulated pests should be:
 - no more stringent than measures applied to the same pests, if present within the territory of the importing contracting party *and*
 - limited to what is necessary to protect plant health or safeguard the intended use and can be technically justified by the contracting party concerned (Article VI).
- ◆ Not require phytosanitary measures for non-regulated pests (Article VI).
- ◆ Recognize effective alternative phytosanitary measures proposed by exporting contracting parties when those measures are equivalent (ISPM 1, section 1.10; ISPM 24).
- ◆ Integrated measures for pest risk management, applied in a defined manner, may provide an alternative to single measures (ISPM 1, section 2.5; ISPM 14).

Contracting parties shall not require phytosanitary measures for non-regulated pests (Article VI.2)

4. Phytosanitary Measures for Imported Consignments

The phytosanitary import regulations should specify the phytosanitary measures with which consignments of plants, plant products and other regulated articles should comply. These phytosanitary measures may be general (applying to all types of commodities) or specific (applying to specified commodities from a particular origin). Systems approaches may also be used when appropriate (see ISPM 14). In all cases, the NPPO of the importing country determines the requirements to be met.

The NPPO verification procedures should address the import requirements set for the specific commodity, taking into account that these requirements may be applicable in the country of origin, in transit or on arrival as may be determined by the outcomes of the PRA.

4.1 Phytosanitary measures that may be applied in the exporting country

As a general rule, management measures for regulated pests associated with the commodity to be imported should be done in the exporting country by the exporting NPPO, so that the risk to the importing country is minimized.

The NPPO of the importing country may require the NPPO of the exporting country, prior to export, to apply phytosanitary measures and to certify (ISPM 7), for example:

- ◆ inspection
- ◆ testing
- ◆ disinfestation or disinfection treatments
- ◆ production from plants of specified phytosanitary status (e.g. grown from virus-tested plants or under specified conditions)
- ◆ inspection or testing in the growing season
- ◆ verify the phytosanitary status of the commodity as coming from a pest free place of production (PFPP), pest free production site (PFPS), area of low pest prevalence (ALPP) or pest free area (PFA)

- ◆ authorization procedures
- ◆ verify through appropriate procedures that the phytosanitary security of consignments has been maintained regarding composition, substitution and reinfestation (maintenance of consignment integrity)
- ◆ maintain records of phytosanitary measures applied.

Additional declaration should be included on the phytosanitary certificate (where applicable) that accompanies the consignment attesting to compliance with the requirements of the importing country.

The NPPO of the importing country may also have an offshore clearance mechanism in place or undertake inspections and conduct audits in the country of origin.

4.2 Phytosanitary measures that may be required during shipment

Depending on the nature of the consignment and the types of pests to be controlled, transport conditions may be set with the purpose of preventing survival of the pest while ensuring that these conditions do not negatively affect the commodity. Most common phytosanitary measures used during transit involve appropriate physical or chemical treatment (e.g. cold treatment or fumigation).

4.3 Measures that may be applied on arrival at point of entry

At this point, the focus is on verification that the consignment meets the phytosanitary requirements of the country of import (ISPM 23). (See Annex 1 for work flow.)

Procedures that may be applied at the point of entry include:

- ◆ examination of documents associated with a consignment
- ◆ verification of consignment identity and integrity

- ◆ visual examination (physical inspection) for pests and other prohibited contaminants such as soil
- ◆ verification of treatment during transit (where required)
- ◆ sampling and testing
- ◆ disinfestations or disinfection treatments
- ◆ detention of consignments pending the results of testing or verification of the efficacy of treatment
- ◆ re-export of the consignment to the country of origin
- ◆ other mitigation treatments
- ◆ consignment destruction.

4.4 Phytosanitary measures that may be required after entry include:

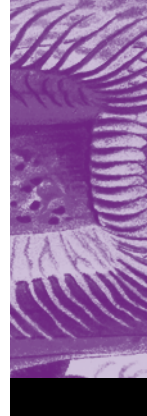
- ◆ detention in quarantine (such as in a post-entry quarantine (PEQ) station) for inspection, testing or treatment
- ◆ detention at a designated place pending specified measures

- ◆ restrictions on the distribution or use of the consignment (e.g. for specified processing).

4.5 Other measures that may be required

The results of the PRA may conclude that measures beyond those taken at the point of entry are necessary on the basis of the level of risk involved. These include but are not limited to:

- ◆ requirements for permits
- ◆ limitations on the points of entry
- ◆ the time of year for specified commodities, when technically justified
- ◆ officially approved routes through transit countries
- ◆ the requirement that importers notify the NPPO in advance of the arrival of specified consignments
- ◆ audit of procedures in the exporting country
- ◆ offshore import clearance procedures
- ◆ validity of the phytosanitary certificate issued by the NPPO of the exporting country.



5. Audit and Compliance Procedures

5.1 Audit and verification procedures in the exporting country

Phytosanitary import regulations often include specific requirements that should be done in the country of export as outlined in section 4.1. A history of compliance by exporting countries gives some degree of confidence to the NPPO of the importing country so that import verification is confined largely to compliance checks.

In some circumstances, such as in the development of new trade, the NPPO of the importing country may need to conduct an audit of the exporting country's production and certification capabilities in collaboration with the NPPO of the exporting country. Elements to be examined in such an audit may include the following.

◆ Production system

Does the production system facilitate phytosanitary security or compliance with import requirements, such as:

- virus-free production
- growing plants under specially protected conditions (glasshouse, isolation)
- harvesting of plants at a certain age or a specified time of year
- production in a certification scheme
- PFAs and ALPPs
- pest management practices
- use of resistant or less susceptible species.

◆ Treatments:

- types of treatment
- treatment schedules
- efficacy of treatment.

◆ Inspection procedures:

- how effective is inspection as a phytosanitary measure against specific target pests
- staff capabilities and facilities
- inspection procedures for specific pests.

◆ Phytosanitary management:

- reliability and credibility of phytosanitary management systems
- staffing and supervision, documentation and traceability issues.

◆ Authorization procedures:

- third-party authorization procedures
- monitoring and audit procedures of service providers
- reliability and capability of service providers.

◆ Testing procedures:

- operational instructions of procedures
- reliability.

◆ Surveillance:

- surveillance programmes to support phytosanitary declarations
- adequate staffing, equipment and supplies to conduct surveillance
- implementation of surveillance programmes in accordance with relevant standards (e.g. ISPM 6, ISPM 10, ISPM 29, ISPM 30 and ISPM 34)
- documented procedures on aspects of surveillance for consistency and reliability, records accessibility, accurateness and retrievability
- accessibility of surveillance records for specific target pests prior to import, when necessary.

Where the NPPO of the importing country determines that an audit should be conducted, it should discuss and agree with the NPPO of the exporting country:

- ◆ the scope of the audit
- ◆ a work programme for the audit activities and, if necessary, a written bilateral agreement
- ◆ the timing and facilitation of the audit
- ◆ a time frame for communicating the results.

Arrangements for offshore inspection and clearance:

- ◆ may extend to clearance of consignments in the exporting country (which usually results in minimum inspection in the importing country)
- ◆ should be considered satisfied as soon as the procedures in the exporting country have been validated.

Reliance on offshore clearance should be discouraged where capabilities in the country of origin can ensure the same level of credibility and reliability of its phytosanitary certification procedures

5.2 Verification procedures during transport

Transport conditions for regulated articles should aim to prevent the survival, escape and re-infestation of regulated pests, and ensure that such conditions are maintained throughout the journey. These conditions may be agreed to by the NPPOs of both the importing and exporting countries. Verification procedures may involve:

- ◆ checking temperature and humidity records (thermograph, computer readings, etc.) for maintenance of specified refrigeration conditions
- ◆ ensuring that the physical integrity of the commodity was maintained (seals, wrappings, etc., are in place and not tampered with)
- ◆ tracking transit of consignments where appropriate.

5.3 Verification procedures in importing country

ISPM 20 (*Guidelines for a phytosanitary import regulatory system*, section 5.1.5.2) provides NPPOs with clear guidelines that should be applied when undertaking compliance checks.

- ◆ Phytosanitary inspections should be carried out by, or under the authority of the NPPO.
- ◆ Compliance procedures should be undertaken promptly (Article VII.2(d) and VII.2(h) of the IPPC).

- ◆ Where possible, compliance procedures should be carried out in collaboration with other agencies involved in the regulation of imports, such as customs, so as to minimize interference with the flow of trade and the impact on perishable products.

Verification of compliance for imported consignments and other regulated articles may be required upon import to:

- ◆ determine their compliance with phytosanitary regulations
- ◆ check that phytosanitary measures are effective in preventing the introduction of quarantine pests and limiting the entry of RNQPs
- ◆ detect potential quarantine pests.

The NPPO should recognize the basic elements for verification of compliance as outlined below.

5.3.1 Document checks

- ◆ Check that the phytosanitary certificate is authentic (phytosanitary certificates are not valid until all requirements have been met and they are dated, signed and stamped, sealed, marked or completed electronically by the NPPO of the exporting or re-exporting country (see ISPM 12 for details)).
- ◆ Check that the phytosanitary certificate attests to conformity with import requirements.
- ◆ Check that a copy of the import permit is appended, where applicable.
- ◆ Check that other documents related to the certification process (e.g. trace-back documents, treatments performed by third-party providers, surveillance data for specific pest levels) are present/available, if required in the import regulation.

5.3.2 Verification of consignment identity and integrity

- ◆ Verify that the seals on containerized commodities are unbroken.
- ◆ Verify that packaging, wrapping, boxing, etc., is secure.
- ◆ Verify that the regulated article is identified.
- ◆ Verify that the consignment composition is as declared on the phytosanitary certificate.

5.3.3 Phytosanitary inspection

The NPPO may carry out phytosanitary inspections that are technically justified; these may be applied:

- ◆ to all regulated articles as a condition of entry
- ◆ as part of an import monitoring programme where the level of monitoring (i.e. the number of consignments inspected) is established on the basis of predicted risk where appropriate.

Consignments are normally inspected at the port of arrival. The NPPO may make exceptions or special provisions for inspections to be done at the point of destination or at other places where imported consignments can be identified, such as major markets, warehouses and quarantine facilities, provided that the integrity of the consignments is maintained and that appropriate phytosanitary procedures can be carried out by the NPPO.

5.3.4 Sampling

The NPPO may take samples from consignments for the purposes of inspection, for subsequent laboratory testing or for reference purposes (see ISPM 31).

The NPPO should provide clear written guidelines to be followed by inspectors regarding specific commodities such as plants, seeds, grain and other regulated articles that may pose phytosanitary risk. In particular, where inspection and sampling are the primary phytosanitary measures for gauging compliance, inspection and sampling procedures should be consistent and reliable.

5.3.5 Testing

Testing may be required for:

- ◆ identification of a visually detected pest
- ◆ confirmation of a visually identified pest
- ◆ checking compliance with requirements concerning infestations not detectable by visual inspection
- ◆ checking for latent infections
- ◆ audit
- ◆ monitoring
- ◆ checking efficacy of treatment
- ◆ reference purposes, particularly in cases of non-compliance
- ◆ verification of the declared product.

Testing should be performed by persons experienced in the appropriate procedures and, where available, internationally agreed protocols. Cooperation with appropriate academic and international experts or institutions is recommended when validation of test results is needed.

The NPPO should release the imported consignment once import requirements have been met.

5.3.6 Clearance of biological control agents and pests for research

Contracting parties may make special provision for the importation of pests for research and biological control agents or other regulated articles for scientific research, education or other purposes. Such imports may be authorized subject to the provision of adequate safeguards, including management of environmental risks. The contracting party should establish appropriate phytosanitary measures for importation, shipment and quarantine facilities (including approval of research facilities, and measures for confinement and disposal).

5.3.6.1 Biological control agents

ISPM 3 (*Guidelines for the export, shipment, import and release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms*) provides guidelines for the export, shipment, import and release of biological control agents and other beneficial organisms.

For import verification of biological control agents, whether for direct release, research or for quarantine observation, the NPPO should:

- ◆ check documents for conformity with import requirements as stated in the import authorization
- ◆ check documentation relating to the target pest(s) and biological control agent or other beneficial organisms
- ◆ verify the integrity of the consignment.

For those consignments that need phytosanitary measures, the NPPO should, after document verification:

- ◆ ensure that biological control agents and other beneficial organisms are taken directly to either designated quarantine facilities or mass-rearing facilities

- ◆ arrange with the importing institution to conduct inspection at the quarantine facility so that it is done under safe conditions
- ◆ ensure, in collaboration with the importing entity, that the biological control organism is not contaminated or infested with hyperparasites or other organisms
- ◆ not open any package except in an authorized facility with the required expertise.

5.3.6.2. *Pests for scientific purposes*

The NPPO requirements for importation of regulated pests for scientific research may require more stringent measures than for biological control agents. Viruses and other pathogens might pose a serious threat if they were to escape. Specific regulations for the authorization of import, use and destruction should be in place. An import authorization mechanism, such as an import permit, is an effective tool to control the importation and use of such organisms. The NPPO should inspect the research facility and agree on conditions, time period and monitoring before import. For importation of such material, the NPPO should:

- ◆ contact the importing scientific institution immediately on arrival, where necessary
- ◆ verify documents related to the consignment to ensure documentary compliance
- ◆ verify the integrity of the consignment, ensuring that the consignment is well contained and intact
- ◆ carry out import inspection at the scientific institution in a secure area.

5.4. Post-entry quarantine (PEQ)

ISPM 34 (*Design and operation of post-entry quarantine stations for plants*) provides guidance on PEQ. For high risk commodities, the NPPO of the importing country may determine that PEQ is required to manage pest risks identified by PRA.

Confinement of a consignment of plants in a PEQ station may be an appropriate phytosanitary measure in cases where:

- ◆ a quarantine pest is difficult to detect
- ◆ it takes time for signs or symptoms to be expressed, or
- ◆ where testing or treatment is required.

Inspection and testing of high risk planting material may not be sufficient to verify freedom from pests and imported consignments of plants. Plants for planting may need to be held under PEQ conditions in order to verify whether or not they are infested with quarantine pests.

The PEQ station should ensure that consignments of plants are held in a secure manner that best facilitates observation, research, further inspection, testing or treatment of the plants.

PEQ stations may consist of:

- ◆ a field site
- ◆ screen house
- ◆ glasshouse
- ◆ laboratory.

The type of facility to be used should be determined by the type of plants imported and the quarantine pests that may be associated with them. On completion of the PEQ period, the NPPO should:

- ◆ release consignments of plants from the PEQ station only if they are found to be free from quarantine pests
- ◆ treat to remove infestation or destroy plants found to be infested with quarantine pests
- ◆ destroy plants, where necessary, in a manner that removes any possibility of escape of the pest from the PEQ station (e.g. chemical destruction, incineration or autoclaving)
- ◆ keep samples as evidence – photographs of tests or biological reference specimens
- ◆ fully document the PEQ process for the specific commodity.

6. Outdated National Legislation and Import Verification

NPPOs are often in a position where they operate under national legislation that is inconsistent with international agreements (e.g. SPS Agreement and the IPPC) to which their contracting party is a signatory. National legislation that is outdated may restrict an NPPO from implementing phytosanitary measures that are technically justified. Essentially, any legislation that has not been modernized since 1997 will most likely be inconsistent with the IPPC and ISPMs, and therefore not reflective of the principles that should be observed in the application of phytosanitary measures.

Such inconsistencies should be addressed with urgency since the NPPO is bound by its national law (law of the land) in addressing phytosanitary issues.

Examples of common inconsistencies in outdated national legislation are given below.

6.1 Mandatory fumigation of grain

Where NPPOs undertake mandatory fumigation of grain, the following should be noted:

- ◆ it may not be technically justified
- ◆ target pest(s) may already exist in the importing country and are not being officially controlled
- ◆ the grain may contain only non-regulated pests
- ◆ it does not take into consideration equivalent phytosanitary measures that exist in the exporting country.

6.2 Use of optional clause by importing country

Some NPPOs of importing countries use the optional clause of the phytosanitary certificate to include a requirement that *the consignment be practically free from other pests*.

The NPPO of the importing country cannot use the optional clause to require that measures be taken against non-regulated pests

This is inconsistent with ISPM 12 (*Phytosanitary certificates*), which states that:

- ◆ NPPOs of importing countries cannot include this as requirement for import
- ◆ NPPOs of exporting countries may make such a declaration if they so choose.

Use of this optional clause by the importing country implies the need for action against non-regulated pests, which is contrary to ISPM 11 (*Pest risk analysis for quarantine pests*) and Article IV.2 of the IPPC.

6.3 Pest free areas, pest free production sites and pest free places of production

NPPOs should recognize PFAs, PFPSs and PFPPs as sufficient phytosanitary measures and should not require additional phytosanitary treatment for commodities taken and certified from these areas.

NPPOs should recognize pest free areas, pest free production sites and pest free places of production as sufficient phytosanitary measures and should not require additional phytosanitary measures for commodities taken and certified from these areas

Clearance of such commodities should be clearly outlined in written procedures or clearance manuals and depend on:

- ◆ certification of the phytosanitary status of these areas (accepted by the NPPO of the importing country)
- ◆ traceability of the commodity from these areas
- ◆ consignment integrity that ensures that the consignment was not exposed to phytosanitary risks after certification

- ◆ additional documents where required, e.g. surveillance data from these areas at the time of harvest of the commodity.

6.4 Action against non-regulated pests (NRPs) at point of entry

Article VI of the IPPC specifically makes provision against regulatory action for this class of pests found on consignments. However, guidance here extends to clearance of the consignment on arrival.

- ◆ The presence of NRPs in a commodity does not constitute a case of non-compliance since these pests were not declared as regulated pests in the importing country.
- ◆ The consignment in which an NRP is found should not be held or treated by the NPPO. (The NPPO may choose to let the importer know of the presence of such pests so that they may take timely action to prevent pest damage.)
- ◆ Neither the importer nor the exporting country should be penalized for this and no phytosanitary action should be taken by the NPPO.

6.5 Other measures not based on phytosanitary risk

Some national phytosanitary legislation refers to specific regulated pests and requires that consignments be free from these pests. However,

where the national phytosanitary regulations require that the consignment be destroyed or returned to the country of origin if the particular pest (e.g. Kaphra beetle) is found *dead or alive*, this is not consistent with the IPPC or relevant ISPMs.

The same is true for dead non-viable weed seeds and sterile insects:

- ◆ only live regulated pests require phytosanitary measures
- ◆ dead regulated pests by themselves carry no phytosanitary risk (however, consignments that contain a commodity originating from a PFA, PFPP or PFPS for a specific regulated pest indicate pest freedom of the area is compromised)
- ◆ dead regulated pests associated with a commodity may help to confirm that an effective treatment has been carried out.

6.6 Designation of powers

In national legislation, it is important that powers be delegated in a manner that allows for and respects technically justified decisions to be applied to imports. Where the final decision to release imported consignments may be a political one rather than a scientific risk-based one, the danger always exists that regulated pests may be introduced into the country.

7. Import Pathways – Unique and Emerging Challenges

Traditional pathways of formal trade are recognized as sea freight, air freight or overland transport of various kinds. These transportation pathways have frameworks for regulation by customs authorities for revenue collection and NPPOs for phytosanitary risks. The frameworks are primarily designed to manage bulk shipment of consignments of commodities moving through these traditional transportation pathways. Other pathways for regulation are considered below and require diligence in coordination and regulation.

7.1 Passenger baggage

Many pests have been introduced to countries through this pathway. Travellers and tourists sometimes unwittingly take uncertified fruits, seeds and exotic plant cuttings with them.

Although in general these are carried in small quantities, the phytosanitary importation requirements that are applied to commercial consignments in general also apply to non-commercial quantities. Clearance procedures should also be risk based and consistently applied. The NPPO needs to consider possible risks associated with regulated articles moved in this way and may be guided by:

- ◆ the country or region in which travellers have embarked
- ◆ phytosanitary threats associated with the region or country of embarkation
- ◆ whether the identified threats could be realized through this pathway
- ◆ history of interceptions from passenger luggage
- ◆ whether or not the country of embarkation has systems in place to regulate plants and plant products before leaving the country.

NPPOs dealing with this situation should ensure collaboration with other border agencies to facilitate declaration and verification of all plants and plant products. The NPPO may:

- ◆ ensure adequate signs are appropriately placed to inform travellers of the need to declare all regulated articles in their possession

- ◆ communicate risks associated with this pathway to other border agencies
- ◆ establish an effective level of cooperation and procedures to deal with these risks
- ◆ encourage passenger declaration of plants, plant products and other regulated articles (e.g. footwear that may be contaminated with soil) on customs or immigration forms as appropriate
- ◆ ensure compliance checking is provided for at the port of arrival and carried out by the NPPO
- ◆ require that, where plants, plant products and other regulated articles are declared on customs or immigration forms, these passengers are directed to the NPPO inspector for appropriate clearance
- ◆ where an inspector is not present at time of arrival, customs should detain all plants, plant products and other regulated articles and notify the NPPO as soon as possible.

7.2 E-commerce in regulated articles

E-commerce is becoming increasingly common and presents another pathway by which many small and often not easily recognizable consignments of plants, plant products and other regulated articles move across international borders into countries and across continents. The internet has become a convenient means of product promotion, sale and distribution for a range of products, including those for which phytosanitary measures should be applied or, at the minimum, be scrutinized using PRA (IRSS, IPPC, 2012).

These consignments include seeds, bulbs, corms, tubers, cuttings and rootstocks in the case of plants for planting; novelty items and ecological products with seeds, plants or plant products; handicrafts such as wood carvings and woven products; insects as pets, which may be potential plant pests; and aquatic plants that may also be pests (IRSS, IPPC, 2012; IPPC, 2014).

The NPPO in this situation should:

- ◆ establish mechanisms/procedures to monitor the Internet in particular within the context of conducting PRAs, as well as for general surveillance, to identify potential products of concern that may be imported via this pathway
- ◆ enhance import verification systems for closer scrutiny of packages entering the country (international mail), for example:
 - using X-ray where possible
 - establishing specific fines and penalties in cases of non-compliance
 - cooperating with customs and courier-service providers
 - restricting the points of entry of the traded products to facilitate inspection
- ◆ work closely with in-country e-commerce vendors to ensure adequate information and warnings are provided to both the vendors and their customers – this could involve:
 - standardization of labelling
 - development of standard written warnings
 - the provision of links to the relevant NPPO contact point
 - seeking vendors' cooperation to reduce risks (e.g. removal of the products from websites)
- ◆ contact Internet trade groups and online fora in order to raise awareness of phytosanitary requirements and risks and to seek their cooperation.

7.3 Institutional issues

The NPPO is the official service responsible for the operation or oversight (organization and management) of the phytosanitary import regulatory system. This responsibility arises in particular from Articles IV.2 and VII of the IPPC.

The administration of the phytosanitary import regulatory system by the NPPO should ensure the effective and consistent application of phytosanitary legislation and regulations, and compliance with international obligations. Administration of the phytosanitary import regulatory system should be coordinated at national level, but may be organized on a functional, regional or other structural basis.

The NPPO has to be diligent with respect to institutional issues that may impact on the

import verification process or procedures, and take appropriate and timely action to ensure that the scope and integrity of its work is not compromised. Examples of these may include:

1. Single window arrangement (one stop shop) – this concept is being implemented in many countries for efficiency in clearing produce by having all border agencies at a single location. The NPPO has the responsibility to ensure that adequate provisions are made within this framework for effective regulation of plants, plant products and other regulated articles.
2. International agreements such as the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement by which proposed procedures are intended to ease border controls for businesses. *Trade facilitation aims at simplifying not only the documentation required to clear goods, but also the procedures used by border agencies. Here the NPPO has to ensure that its responsibilities for import regulation and export certification are not compromised.*
3. Commercial free zones and free market agreements may pose specific problems that may threaten the scope of the NPPO's authority.
4. Creation of biosecurity structures or reorganization of authority within an institution may impact the way an NPPO performs its functions and should be clearly understood to ensure that there are no negative consequences from these arrangements.
5. Reorganization of existing facilities or establishment of new facilities at border points requires due diligence of the NPPO to ensure that its requirements in terms of adequacy and location of space as well as work flow are considered during the planning phase.

Trade facilitation aims at simplifying not only the documentation required to clear goods, but also the procedures used by border agencies. Here the NPPO has to ensure that its responsibilities for import regulation and export certification are not compromised

8. Non-compliance and Emergency Action

Detailed information about non-compliance and emergency action is contained in ISPM 13 (*Guidelines for the notification of non-compliance and emergency action*). The NPPO may notify the NPPO of the exporting country of significant cases of non-compliance that put the importing country at risk, such as:

- ◆ a significant instance of failure of an imported consignment to comply with specified phytosanitary requirements
- ◆ a significant instance of failure of an imported consignment to comply with documentary requirements for phytosanitary certification.

8.1 Actions in cases of non-compliance

Examples where phytosanitary action may be justified regarding non-compliance with phytosanitary import regulations include the following.

- ◆ The detection of a listed quarantine pest, or the detection of a listed RNQP in an imported consignment of plants for planting at a level which exceeds the required tolerance level of the RNQP for those plants.
- ◆ Evidence of failure to meet prescribed requirements, such as field inspection, laboratory tests, registration of producers or facilities, lack of pest monitoring or surveillance.
- ◆ The interception of a consignment which does not otherwise comply with the import regulations, such as compromised integrity or the detected presence of undeclared commodities, soil or some other prohibited article or evidence of failure of specified treatments.
- ◆ Phytosanitary certificate or other required documentation invalid or missing.
- ◆ Prohibited consignments or articles.

The type of phytosanitary action will depend on the circumstances and should be

the minimum necessary to counter the pest risk identified. Administrative errors such as incomplete phytosanitary certificates may be resolved through liaison with the NPPO of the exporting country. Other infringements may require action at the point of entry, such as the following.

- ◆ *Detention*: this may be used if further information is required, taking into account the need to avoid consignment damage as far as possible.
- ◆ *Sorting and reconfiguring*: the affected products may be removed by sorting and reconfiguring the consignment, including repackaging if appropriate.
- ◆ *Treatment*: used by the NPPO when an efficacious treatment is available.

Non-compliance:

- *a significant instance of failure of an imported consignment to comply with specified phytosanitary requirements*
- *a significant instance of failure of an imported consignment to comply with documentary requirements for phytosanitary certification*

-
- ◆ *Destruction*: the consignment may be destroyed in cases where the NPPO considers the consignment cannot be otherwise handled.
 - ◆ *Reshipment*: the non-complying consignment may be removed from the country by reshipping.

8.2 Emergency action

The NPPO in the importing country may be required to take emergency action in a new or unexpected

phytosanitary situation, such as the detection of quarantine pests or potential quarantine pests:

- ◆ in consignments for which phytosanitary measures are not specified
- ◆ in consignments in which their presence is not anticipated and for which no phytosanitary measures have been specified
- ◆ as contaminants of conveyances, packaging material, storage places or other places involved with imported commodities.

Phytosanitary measures similar to those required in cases of non-compliance may be appropriate. Such actions may lead to the modification of existing phytosanitary measures, or the adoption of provisional measures pending review and full technical justification.

Commonly encountered situations requiring emergency action include:

- ◆ *Pests not previously assessed.* Non-listed organisms may require emergency phytosanitary actions because they may not have been previously assessed. At the time of interception, the NPPO may:
 - categorize such pests as regulated pests on a preliminary basis (because the NPPO has cause to believe they pose a pest risk)
 - provide a sound technical basis for such categorization
 - if provisional measures are applied, actively pursue additional information, with the participation of the NPPO of the exporting country, in order to facilitate appropriate categorization of the pest.
- ◆ *Pests not regulated for a particular pathway.* The NPPO may:
 - take emergency phytosanitary actions for pests that are not on the regulated list for that particular pathway or origin
 - include such pests on the appropriate list if it is determined that the occurrence of the pest

in the same or similar circumstances may be anticipated in the future.

- ◆ *Lack of adequate identification.* In some instances, a pest may justify phytosanitary action because the pest cannot be adequately identified or is inadequately described taxonomically. The NPPO may:
 - take emergency phytosanitary action since the pest may be deemed temporarily to require such measures
 - collect or, where necessary, rear enough specimens to allow for identification
 - try to get the pest identified and add the pest to the relevant list of regulated pests if, after identification, the pest is found to be such through PRA
 - inform trading partners of the status of the pest and of any new requirements to be met.

8.3 Reporting of non-compliance

The reporting of significant instances of non-compliance is very important for the exporting country to enable its NPPO to take necessary corrective action and to minimize the risk posed by non-compliant commodities entering the importing country. Addressing such problems should be done in a spirit of cooperation.

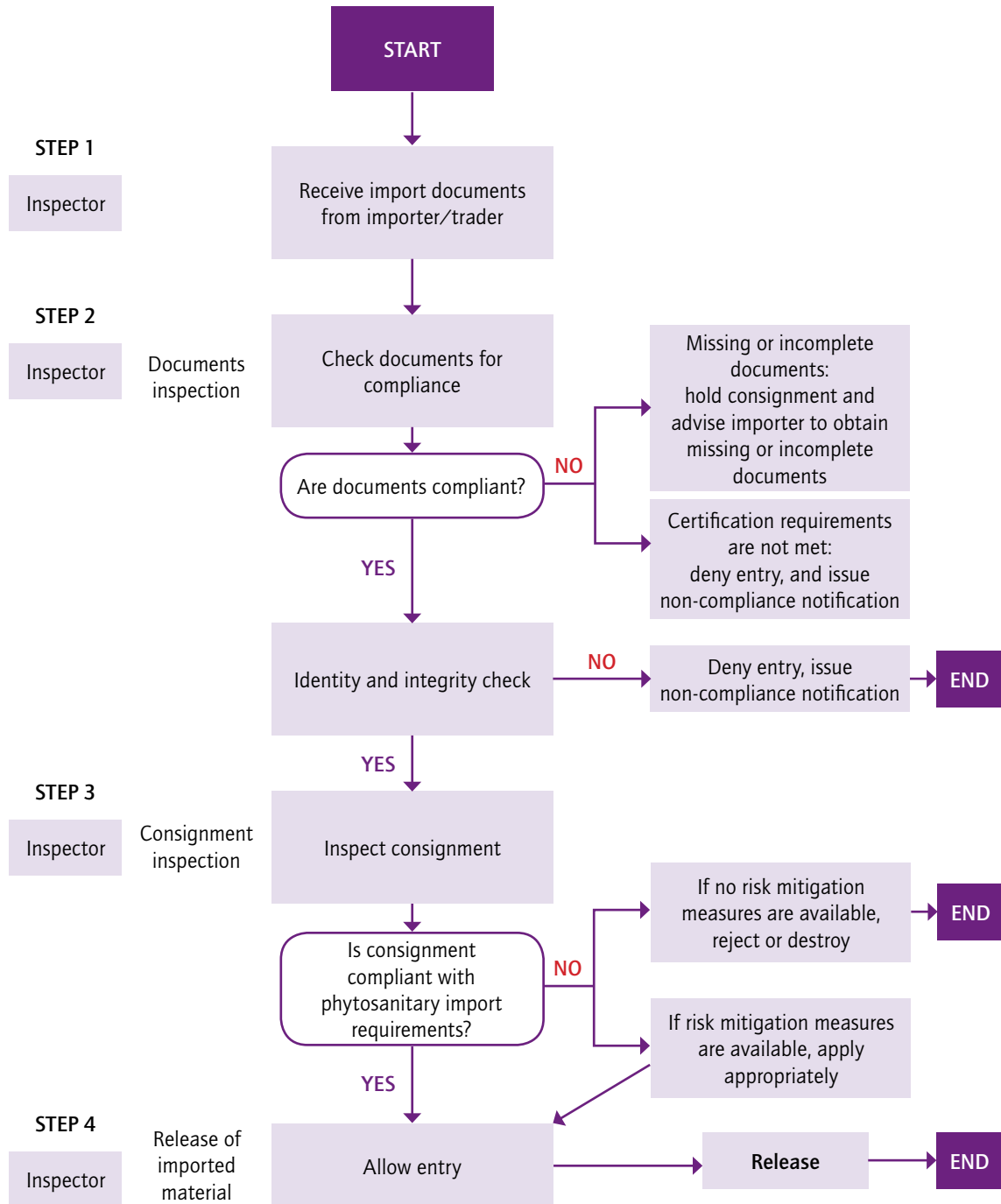
The NPPO of the importing country should:

- ◆ report interceptions, instances of non-compliance (see Annex 1) and emergency actions to the NPPO of the exporting/re-exporting countries so that the NPPOs of the exporting countries understand the basis for phytosanitary actions taken against their consignments and to facilitate corrective action in their export systems
- ◆ put in place a system for the collection and transmission of such information.

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Annex 1: Import Verification Flow Chart



Annex 2: Non-compliance Notification (Example Only)

NON-COMPLIANCE NOTIFICATION			
IMPORTING COUNTRY:	EXPORTING COUNTRY:	DATE ISSUED:	REFERENCE NO.:
TYPE OF NON-COMPLIANCE		DESCRIPTION OF NON-COMPLIANCE (Give summary details of the Type of Non-compliance including botanical name of plant, plant part and scientific name of pest if applicable):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Phytosanitary requirements			
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation requirements			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pest interception			
<input type="checkbox"/> Detection of other regulated articles		SUPPORTING INFORMATION (e.g. treatment records, diagnostic results, other tests or other supporting information included as attachments where appropriate):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Treatment failure			
<input type="checkbox"/> ISPM 15 requirements			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other			
POINT OF ENTRY:	DATE OF ARRIVAL (of consignment):	DATE NON-COMPLIANCE DETECTED:	
EXPORTER/CONSIGNOR NAME & ADDRESS:		IMPORTER/CONSIGNEE NAME & ADDRESS:	
IDENTIFYING MARK OR NUMBERS:		NAME OF CARRIER/SHIPPER:	
NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION OF PACKAGES:		AUTHENTICATION/IDENTIFICATION MARKS:	
DOCUMENTATION			
Phytosanitary Certificate Nos:	Place issued:	Date issued:	
PHYTOSANITARY/EMERGENCY ACTION			
PHYTOSANITARY ACTION TAKEN ON CONSIGNMENT (specify actions taken)			
JUSTIFICATION FOR PHYTOSANITARY ACTION (specify application of national legislation and/or international standards for phytosanitary measures where applicable)			
CONTACT DETAILS (specify identity and contact address of the official acting on behalf of the importing country NPPO):			
NPPO acting official:	Official position:	E-mail:	Telephone:

IPPC

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is an international plant health agreement that aims to protect cultivated and wild plants by preventing the introduction and spread of pests. International travel and trade are greater than ever before. As people and commodities move around the world, organisms that present risks to plants travel with them.

Organization

- ◆ The number of contracting party signatories to the Convention exceeds 181.
- ◆ Each contracting party has a national plant protection organization (NPPO) and an Official IPPC contact point.
- ◆ 10 regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs) have been established to coordinate NPPOs in various regions of the world.
- ◆ IPPC liaises with relevant international organizations to help build regional and national capacities.
- ◆ The Secretariat is provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).



International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

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