



## **THE IPPC IN 20 YEARS**

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## Notable strategic considerations for shaping IPPC activities in the next 20 years

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The role of International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) as a critical instrument for promoting joint actions and International Corporation and leadership in protecting global plant resources is set to expand in the coming years. Over the last 63 years, since IPPC was agreed as the primary treaty for protecting global plant resources (including forests, non cultivated plants and biodiversity) from plant pests as well as facilitation of safe movement of plants, and plant products in the international trade, there has been changes in global economic and trade situations, environment and natural resources, demographic trends and food security whose combined effect continues to shape regulatory policy and present Phytosanitary challenge.

Much literature casts sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) standards as a barrier to trade, because some appear to be thinly disguised protectionist measures or discriminate against certain suppliers, or because of the high cost of compliance. Yet, in many cases, such standards have played a positive role, providing the catalyst and incentives for the modernization of export supply and regulatory systems and the adoption of safer and more sustainable production practices (Steve Jaffee et al. 2006; *Sanitary and Phytosanitary Regulation: Overcoming Constraints*).

In the recent years, Standards and technical regulations have gained prominence as the new critical issue in trade thus raising concerns of 'within the border' barriers as. It is argued that SPS measures have complexities which border on potential trade obstacles (Leonardo Lacovone et al. 2003) In its strategic theme of supporting safe expansion of food and agricultural trade, the IPPC recognizes trade in plants as an important part of many countries economic growth strategy and hence commits itself to support and guide this expanding trade. Looking ahead, there is need to lay strategy to dispel fears of protectionism in the implementation of the SPS measures. Emerging economic blocks form a strategic platform for IPPC to deliver on its objective as these blocks pool synergies to upgrade their members' Phytosanitary statuses.

Standards and regulations in general, and Sanitary and Phytosanitary in particular involve a mix of protection and protectionism objective which is very complex to disentangle (Howse and Trebilcock, 1999) Developing economies have often found themselves in the dilemma of interpretation of SPS measures, setting up of structures and systems to implement these measures among other social economic

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challenges. To help these economies demystify this complexity and join in IPPCs goal of protecting global plant resources, the IPPC will need to strengthen and upscale its capacity development initiatives among the developing countries. Low or lack of effective national Phytosanitary and Sanitary systems has been a source of Phytosanitary heterogeneity as countries come together to form regional economic blocks. Promotion of harmonized scientifically based Phytosanitary measures forms key strategy of elevating countries, especially those whose major economic income is exports, to a level where they can participate in international trade. At the same time these are steps towards harmonized global arena where protection of plant resources from pests would be more effective. There is an emerging trend where market quality standards are rapidly growing in prominence thus creating possibility of capacity strain on developing countries. IPPC will need to explore possibilities of engaging other standard setting bodies with a view of having harmonized standard that also addresses market quality.

The increasing recognition of IPPC as the primary international framework for addressing challenges posed by globalization and cross border movement of injurious plants and pests call for urgent determination of how to fund IPPC activities. There is need for IPPC to evaluate its activities to determine those that contribute or translate to direct service to members with a view of putting a cost. Ability to mobilize monetary resource shall be key in moving the IPPC to its vision in the next 20 years.

## **Conclusion**

Changes in global economic and trade situations, environment and natural resources, demographic trends and food security will continue to shape the strategy adopted by the IPPC in protection global plant resources. The debate on Genetic engineering in food production and its impact on environment and natural resource should also find a place in the IPPC strategic plan. Capacity development to enable contracting parties to effectively participate in regional and global SPS initiatives will need to be prioritized. Finally, the IPPC recognizes the key to the success of its strategies lies not in the contracting parties' agreement but willingness to support the activities. It would be therefore prudent for IPPC to strategize on how to secure and sustain the contracting parties willingness to support the convention

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**Leonardo L. (2003)** *Analysis and impact of Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures*, International Economics Of Sussex University

**Howse R., Trebilcock** (1999) *Regulations of international trade* Routledge