

PCE Desk Study

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Executive Summary

This detailed Desk Study, prepared by Gelder Gingras & Associates Inc. for the FAO's International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat, presents an in-depth assessment of the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) process and online system. The assessment was aimed to understand the effectiveness, challenges, and successes of the PCE tools and process as experienced by National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) worldwide, donors, IC members, and PCE facilitators. Through a methodical examination that included surveys, interviews, and data analysis, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how the PCE supports countries in identifying gaps in their national phytosanitary system and strengthening their phytosanitary capacities.

Overall, NPPOs were satisfied with the results of the process, and particularly with the outcomes achieved. Key findings reveal that while the PCE tool has significantly contributed to improving phytosanitary systems globally, there are notable areas where enhancements are necessary. The following outlines the key findings, by theme/section.

1. **Knowledge and Understanding:** There was minimal to no understanding of the PCE among NPPOs prior to its implementation, other than minimal knowledge gleaned from discussion in professional networks. However, understanding significantly increased after participating in the PCE process, especially among national coordinators.
2. **Communication Needs:** Respondents highlighted their need for improved communication about the PCE, including sharing success stories, clearer process explanations, and showcasing the PCE with multimedia support. Future communications can also highlight how the PCE is evolving to address new and emerging standards and best practices in phytosanitary protection.
3. **Accessibility Concerns:** NPPOs that had not yet engaged in the PCE process expressed concerns about the online system's accessibility, noting that they perceived barriers (cost, time, length of process) deterring them from completing the PCE. They recommended developing an open-access version of the PCE online system (i.e. ability to access the modules, questionnaires, and exercises without formal commitment to use of facilitators). In other words, an approach where NPPOs and donors can specify the type of report they desired, whether it be a self-evaluation (full or selected modules or questions), or a facilitator led PCE process (full or selected modules).
4. **Modules and Strategic Planning Tools:** The PCE modules align well with NPPO needs and international standards, but there are calls for updates and simplifications – particularly when it comes to the questions in the modules, and the need for updates to reflect recent advances/trends in the field of phytosanitary protection. The strategic planning tools within the PCE were appreciated for identifying weaknesses and facilitating the development of logical frameworks and strategies. Finally, there was a demonstrated need for additional training *before* beginning the PCE, such that participating NPPO staff and stakeholders can better understand the strategic planning tools and methodologies. This pre-developed knowledge is expected to improve the efficiency of the missions and PCE module completion.
5. **Findings and Uptake:** The PCE aids NPPOs by pinpointing areas for improvement, prompting activities such as updating legislation and enhancing facilities, while also boosting their credibility among trading partners and securing resources for strategic priorities and collaborations. Additionally, NPPOs utilize PCE recommendations to develop strategic priorities, mobilize resources, and strengthen collaboration with stakeholders, ultimately enhancing their ability to safeguard agricultural imports and exports. NPPOs were able to point to concrete implementation

activities, both conducted in-house and with the support of additional funding secured after the PCE. However, NPPOs indicated interest in additional support after the PCE process is complete, to bridge the gap between the delivery of the final report and the securing of additional funding to implement recommendations.

6. **Process Satisfaction:** Most NPPOs were satisfied with the PCE process but noted that the online system could benefit from user-friendliness improvements and updates to reflect changes in standards and legal obligations.
7. **Facilitator Impact:** Facilitators play a crucial role in the PCE process and were well appreciated by NPPOs who had completed the PCE. They contribute to preserving the quality and integrity of the evaluation methodology by explaining and teaching the methodology and overseeing procedural aspects of workshops and lend objectivity to the assessment process.

Recommendations are comprehensive, focusing on both immediate and long-term strategies to refine the PCE tool's functionality and its relevance to NPPOs' needs. Proposed improvements encompass technological upgrades, expanded user support, and the establishment of a feedback mechanism to continually adapt the tool based on user experience. More specifically, the following broad recommendations were made:

1. **Improve Communication:** Develop a comprehensive communications plan to increase transparency (i.e. provide even more detail on the PCE), showcase success stories, and provide clear information about the PCE process and its benefits. Refer to Appendix 9: Possible Avenues for Improving Communications for a list of possible opportunities discussed at the Review Workshop.
2. **Enhance Module Relevance and Usability:** Convene facilitators to review and update modules, ensuring they reflect new, emerging, and current standards and practices used by countries in their phytosanitary protection systems. Consider the unique contexts of countries with rich biodiversity or large regions.
3. **Strengthen Strategic Planning Support:** Include comprehensive training sessions for key NPPO staff and stakeholders to familiarize them with the PCE methodologies, and ensure missions are conducted primarily in-person with online meetings reserved for follow-ups.
4. **Refine the Online system:** Modernize the PCE online system to enhance user experience, incorporating feedback from users for continuous improvement.
5. **Reevaluate Facilitator Role:** Review the facilitator training program to increase training related to strategic planning tools and soft skills development. Consider the necessity of facilitators in different contexts, especially in countries with phytosanitary systems that can be considered advanced, well-developed, and/or up to date with best practices. Those countries may prefer conducting self-assessments.
6. **Expand Accessibility:** Clarify, openly share, and support an open-access version of the PCE online system to allow NPPOs more flexibility in conducting self-evaluations or facilitated processes should they choose.
7. **Enhance Post-PCE Support:** Provide post-assessment support to NPPOs, especially in connecting with potential funding sources and implementing findings.
8. **Foster a Community of Practice:** Encourage knowledge sharing among facilitators and coordinators through regular meetings or forums to share best practices and experiences.

The study underscores the importance of the PCE process in fostering international cooperation and capacity building in plant protection. It suggests that with the recommended enhancements, the PCE can better serve as a cornerstone for assessing and contributing to the improvement of robust phytosanitary systems, ultimately facilitating safer global trade and enhancing plant health worldwide.

Part I. Introduction

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, which host the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat has engaged Gelder, Gingras & Associates Inc. (GGA) to conduct a desk study of the current Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) process and its online system. The process and the online system support countries to develop National Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategies that address phytosanitary weaknesses identified on system, organizational and technical levels. They also allow a country to revise its phytosanitary legislation.

The PCE is a process that supports countries in evaluating their phytosanitary capabilities. It is a self-evaluation process that involves internationally trained facilitators who assist the NPPOs in conducting a thorough assessment, when the country decides it. The PCE process is supported by an online system comprising 13 modules designed in a questionnaire-style format to document the evaluation process systematically. NPPOs can select modules based on their priorities and needs. Through the PCE process, the NPPOs and country stakeholders reach a consensus on the main phytosanitary gaps in the system, organizational and technical matters. Under a structured framework, the PCE process helps identify how to address these critical gaps based on strategic planning and logical framework methodologies.

The PCE is meant to be implemented at the pace defined by a country and according to its priorities. Countries may apply it more or less frequently as the case necessitates. However, the IPPC Secretariat recommends that the PCE be applied at a minimum interval of 3 years.

PCE Desk Study Objective

The goal of the PCE Desk Study was to conduct a desk study, with a final report detailing insights from the field research, as well as a list of recommendations to improve the efficiency of the PCE process and online system. The desk study includes the following elements:

1. Analysis of the level of understanding of the PCE, as well as perspectives on communications.
2. Analysis of the needs of its target audiences (NPPOs).
3. Analysis of challenges and successes of the current PCE modules, tools and process.
4. Analysis of the uptake and impact of the results of the PCE.
5. Identification of success factors.
6. Identification of opportunities to make the process more efficient, based on feedback from NPPOs regarding their current experience with the process.
7. Recommendations (embedded throughout the findings).

In order to undertake this process, the IC developed a Statement of Work and Request for Quotation, with the following recommendation: “The IC Team on PCE recommends a review of the current PCE process

and PCE tool and of the mechanisms for its implementation and to develop the policy framework and road map for the ongoing evolution of the PCE as a critical core function for the IPPC Community. This review is expected to identify gaps and provide recommendations.” GGA responded to the Request for Quotation, and the IC accepted the proposal. As a result, the IC issued a purchase order for the development of this Desk Study.

Part II. Methodology

In order to carry out this study, the methodological considerations listed below were taken into account:

1. Selection of sample of relevant interviewees
2. Definition of core interview questions
3. Conduction of interviews and surveys
4. Data analysis
5. Data synthesis
6. Recommendations
7. Review and validation (including workshop to discuss results)
8. Report writing
9. Dissemination

1. Selection of sample and participants

To gather comprehensive information, a range of evidence was collected during the desk study. First, all relevant documentation was thoroughly reviewed (please refer to list of sources in Appendix 8). Additionally, individual interviews were conducted with NPPOs (N=8 NPPOs who had completed PCE and 2 NPPOs who had not conducted PCE and had expressed concerns on the tool), donors (N=3), PCE facilitators (N=2), and IC Team on PCE (N=1) to gain a deep understanding of their perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, a survey was administered to NPPOs who had completed the PCE (i.e. the same NPPOs who had participated in the interviews), aimed at gathering quantitative data on their experience with the process and tools, supplementing the qualitative analysis from the interviews. Respondents were also invited to share the survey with other colleagues who had been involved with the PCE. Through this multi-faceted approach, a nuanced understanding of the subject matter was achieved.

2. Definition of core questions for the survey and interviews

The study comprised six thematic groups of questions, for both surveys and interviews, each designed to explore distinct facets of the PCE under a holistic perspective laying the groundwork for insights and actionable recommendations.

The following is an overview of the guiding themes for this assessment. Please refer to the interview guides for detailed questions and prompts, organised for each of the three main respondent groups.

Thematic	Description	Respondents	Format
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Group 1: PCE Knowledge and understanding	To examine the level of awareness and knowledge about the PCE.	NPPOs, facilitators, donors (if applicable).	Interview, Survey
Group 2: Vision and audience need	To understand vision for the PCE and focus on NPPO needs and its specific expectations.	NPPOs, facilitators, donors (if applicable)	Interview
Group 3: Experiences and feedback	To assess the entire process, the modules and the online PCE system.	NPPOs, facilitators, and donors (if applicable).	Interview, Survey
Group 4: Findings uptake and impact	To maximize utilization of the PCE process by target audiences, identify key factors.	NPPOs, facilitators, donors (if applicable)	Interview, Survey
Group 5: Success factors	What PCE facilitators consider key success factors.	Facilitators, NPPOs, donors	Interview
Group 6: Process enhancement	To identify opportunities for improving the PCE and the extent to which the PCE process have contributed to the ability of NPPOs to elaborate phytosanitary capacity development strategies.	NPPOs, facilitators, donors (if applicable) (after at least a year of conducted a PCE)	Interview, Document review, Survey

3. Conduction of interviews and surveys

Surveys

To supplement the qualitative data gathered through the interview process, a set of quantitative (multiple choice, scale, yes/no) questions was developed and set up in an online survey tool (see Appendix 7) for NPPOs who had completed the PCE. Open-fill questions were added in places where respondents were encouraged to elaborate on their answers. This survey was complementary to the interviews and was intended to be completed in advance of the interviews. Selected respondents were invited to participate in both the survey and the interview, as well as to share the survey tool further with colleagues who were also well positioned to respond. All NPPOs who had completed the PCE responded to the survey.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the recommended interviewees indicated in Annex 1. The scheduling of the interviews was conducted by GGA, following an introductory letter from the IPPC Secretariat (Annex 2). GGA conducted the interviews in English, French and Spanish.

Interview Guides

Interview guides were tailored to NPPOs that had or had not undertaken a PCE, PCE facilitators and donors. The guides included an introductory statement, confidentiality assurance, and relevant question for each of the following groups:

- NPPOs that have undertaken a PCE (Appendix 2)
- NPPOs that have not undertaken a PCE and had expressed concerns on the PCE (Appendix 3)
- PCE Facilitators (Appendix 4)
- Donors (Appendix 5)

4. Data Analysis

A qualitative analysis approach (i.e., qualitative, inductive content analysis of both manifest and latent content) was used to identify patterns, themes, and trends that were present in the sources. During this process, all the sources (interview notes, open fill survey questions, relevant reports and documents) were read and notated to determine the emerging key themes and code words. These codes were grouped thematically in a process of decontextualization (breaking down the texts into smaller meaning units) and eventual recontextualization and categorization (identification of themes, categories in order to arrive at findings).

Once the patterns and themes had emerged and been established, they were used to interpret the patterns, themes, and categories to arrive at a set of overall findings, aligned with the research questions. Conclusions were drawn from the principal themes arising from the coded data.

5. Data Analysis

Statistics, tables, and visual displays of the quantitative data were used to support the qualitative analysis and reporting. Summary statistics/descriptive statistics were used in cases where one number (e.g., averages, percentages, etc.) could indicate the level of data distribution. Where applicable, data was also broken down by segment in order to provide a comparative and comprehensive look from diverse viewpoints.

6. Recommendations

The result of the thematic analysis and data synthesis was to provide findings that spoke to the initial set of assessment themes and questions. From there, a set of recommendations was developed. Conclusions were meant to provide a suggested roadmap for improving the PCE.

7. Review and Validation

As a preliminary reporting stage, close to the end of our data collection and analysis activities, a report was provided to inform the team of the sources used, the preliminary findings, challenges, and gaps, and the direction of the report. This was a key opportunity for feedback or suggestions/comments to address any gaps or areas that lacked clarity.

8. Report Writing

A draft report was written detailing insights from the field research, along with a list of recommendations to improve the efficiency of the PCE process and tool. This present report contains an executive summary, a summary of the background and rationale, methods, findings and results, conclusions, and implications of the work, as well as recommendations, as appropriate. The findings and conclusions were formulated, for each research question, using inductive reasoning. The key intent was to prepare a clear and concise report that would address the needs of the audience, using appropriate formatting conventions.

9. Dissemination

Comments and questions on the draft report were addressed, and feedback from the review workshop was integrated in the development of the final report. This document represents the final version, which IPPC Secretariat may disseminate and use in their programming.

Part III. Scope and Limitations

1. Scope

The focus of this study is specific to the experiences of participating respondents, including national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) that have conducted a PCE, two NPPOs from within the Pacific region who have not engaged in PCE but expressed concerns about it, as well as PCE facilitators and donors. The research approach encompasses both qualitative and quantitative aspects, with qualitative evidence being complemented by quantitative findings. Notably, the study does not delve into the historical context, nor the intricate organizational structure (Convention) and politics associated with the ownership, maintenance, and deployment of the PCE. Furthermore, the scope of this study is limited to the examination of the current iteration of the PCE, as it has been implemented and utilized since 2017 up to the present day.

2. Limitations

The study's scope is characterized by several limitations. Firstly, when considering the perspective of NPPOs that have not conducted a PCE, the data is restricted to insights from just two NPPOs within a single region who had specifically expressed concerns on the PCE. This limited sample size impacts the generalizability of the findings, as the scope remains confined to a narrow representation.

Secondly, the study's reliance on both quantitative and qualitative findings should be approached with caution. With a participant pool of just nine individuals (N=9) for the quantitative findings through the survey and sixteen (N=16) interviews overall, the results are indicative rather than conclusive. The small number of participants necessitates careful consideration of the study's findings.

Thirdly, IPPC Secretariat staff proposed interviewees on the basis of the categories agreed with the IC, with interviews and surveys conducted based on respondent availability. While efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of region, gender, and the date of PCE conduct, there may still be inherent selection bias within the sample, which could influence the study's outcomes.

Furthermore, when examining the NPPOs that did conduct the PCE, the study's findings are largely derived from the perspective of PCE national coordinators. This limited perspective may not encompass the full range of experiences and viewpoints within these organizations.

Lastly, the study encountered linguistic diversity during data collection, with interviews and surveys conducted in three languages: English, French, and Spanish. For respondents interviewed in their second language, there is a possibility that some of the findings may reflect minor linguistic misunderstandings, which could impact the accuracy of the data collected.

Part IV. Findings

1. PCE Knowledge and Understanding:

To examine the level of awareness and knowledge about the PCE.

Concerning the level of understanding regarding the PCE among NPPOs that have conducted PCE, in general, there was minimal to no understanding of PCE before its implementation, with most participants having limited prior knowledge. Some NPPOs had only heard about the PCE through their professional networks or from colleagues who had participated in previous evaluations but lacked comprehensive insight into what the process entailed. As one respondent put it, "I knew that by doing the PCE, we would be able to access international support and tools, but I didn't know about the actual PCE and did not imagine all of the work and tools that could be completed. It's quite a good system that has been developed." Another participant remarked, "Yes, we knew how we could have benefited and how the PCE could have assisted, but there was limited information on the website. We never received any real training on the PCE as to what exactly it entailed." This critical information informs one of the key recommendations for this report, i.e. the need for a detailed communications plan with clear messaging. Appendix 9: Possible Avenues for Improving Communications provides a list of possible opportunities discussed at the Review Workshop.

For coordinators, the level of understanding increased to high after going through the PCE process. However, there is a possibility that NPPO staff not having being part of the coordination activities may continue to have a limited understanding of the PCE even after its completion. As one coordinator pointed out, after the PCE, the coordinator/coordinating staff come away with a deep knowledge of the PCE process and tools, but participating stakeholders only get a glimpse into a slice of the process.

On the other hand, facilitators involved in the PCE process reported having a moderate to high level of understanding of PCE prior to receiving their training. All of the PCE facilitators interviewed had prior experience with the PCE, which contributed to their solid grasp of the concepts and procedures involved. This background knowledge played a crucial role in their ability to effectively guide and support NPPOs through the PCE process.

When it comes to additional information, respondents suggested that the PCE could be better supported in future communications efforts by sharing the following:

- List of countries that have conducted PCE;
- Success stories with details (e.g. how much funding was applied, how the country was able to use the findings, etc.);
- Publicly shared information on findings of the PCE (where possible);
- Clarity on the process: the need for facilitators, the nature and type of question, the approach and methodology used, etc.;
- Information on how the tool actually works;
- A better showcase of the PCE, with videos, a better populated landing page, case studies, media support, and additional communications; and,
- Information on how long it takes to complete the PCE and how the selection of modules impacts the timing.

Respondents also suggested the following ways of improving the communications:

- Offering the ability for NPPOs to showcase their own information – how it went for them, the results, and additional information that could be relevant to a wider stakeholder base; and,
- Developing and sharing additional webinars.

NPPOs that had not conducted the PCE expressed concerns primarily centered around barriers to accessing information. Firstly, they raised questions regarding the need for protection of the tool and the potential risk of it becoming inaccessible. While acknowledging the importance of safeguarding the tool's integrity, process, and outputs to instill donor confidence, they argued that the perceived difficulty of access hindered countries seeking to use the tool for self-assessment. Secondly, these respondents questioned the necessity of intellectual property (IP) ownership for the tool, contending that the development of parallel tools by other organizations would ultimately benefit by enhancing countries' knowledge and capacity to improve their phytosanitary systems. Thirdly, there was ambiguity among respondents in this category regarding whether the PCE was exclusively intended for developing countries or if it could also be beneficial for developed countries and how. Lastly, they heard that the PCE was a complex, time-consuming process requiring substantial investments of time and resources, deterring them due to competing priorities and resource constraints.

The prevailing sentiment among these two NPPOs was that the PCE remained highly inaccessible unless they made significant commitments of time, money, or navigated additional bureaucratic steps such as formal requests via the Minister for tool access.¹ To address these challenges, respondents recommended the development of an open-access version of the tool, allowing NPPOs and donors to specify the type of report they desired, whether it be a self-evaluation (full or selected modules or questions) or a facilitator-led PCE process (full or selected modules).

¹ IPPC staff have indicated that necessary action has been taken to change information on the website so that a letter from the NPPO is sufficient. This has since been clearly presented to the SPG where the representatives from New Zealand and Australia participated.

Notably, one facilitator speculated that there might be misinterpretations and misconceptions about the PCE among developed countries, largely stemming from the current lack of detailed information about the process, its modules, questions, and approaches.

Improving Knowledge and Understanding- Recommendations:

Consider developing a communications plan with the following objectives:

- Increasing transparency of PCE process, benefits, and recommended approaches by providing detail on the process, modules, approach, and questionnaires.
- Clarifying the intended audience/users of the PCE, determining best use of PCE for developing vs developed countries.
- Showcasing and leveraging the PCE community of practice, including providing NPPOs that have completed the PCE with a voice to share their successes and expertise. Share stories and open channels of communication between NPPOs.
- Dispelling sources of misunderstanding: consult with NPPOs who have not completed the PCE, donors, facilitators, and past coordinators to find out the top questions that need to be addressed. Make this information easily and readily accessible.

Include multiple forms of media, including videos, text, tutorials, and webinars. Appendix 9: Possible Avenues for Improving Communications provides a list of possible opportunities discussed at the Review Workshop.

2. Vision and Audience Need:

To understand vision for the PCE and focus on NPPO needs and its specific expectations.

Motivating Factors: NPPOs who have conducted PCE

For NPPOs that have undergone PCE, several motivating factors have been identified.

The key motivator among NPPOs has been the identification of strengths and weaknesses within their institutions. NPPOs have used PCE as a means to pinpoint areas of improvement. Subsequently, they have leveraged this insight to develop national capacity-building strategies that prioritize necessary actions. This strategic approach applies not only to newer institutions but also to more established ones, demonstrating the versatility and value of PCE.

Secondly, two NPPOs mentioned that a key motivating factor was increasing the confidence of the export market. This suggests that PCE plays a pivotal role in enhancing their ability to participate effectively in international trade.

Lastly, another noteworthy motivating factor is the desire to receive support from donors. This indicates that NPPOs see PCE as a means to garner support and resources from external funding sources, further underscoring the program's significance in facilitating phytosanitary capacity development.

Additionally, among facilitators involved in the PCE process, there has been a recurring theme. Two facilitators, in particular, expressed their interest in becoming facilitators due to their prior experience with

PCE in various capacities. This includes roles such as initial developers of the PCE, trainers, beneficiaries, and coordinators. Their familiarity with the process has inspired them to take on the role of facilitators.

Motivating Factors: NPPOs who have not conducted PCE and had concerns on the PCE

There are several key observations from NPPOs that have not yet conducted a PCE and have expressed concerns. Both responding NPPOs expressed potential interest in selecting specific questions from the PCE to incorporate into their strategic planning or deliberations. However, they raised concerns about the administrative burden associated with the current state of PCE, suggesting that it may not be worthwhile in its present form if it merely reaffirms what they already know. This line of thinking is indicative that the perceived benefits/costs of the PCE may not align with the realities. Again, the need for revised communications is clear.

Interestingly, both NPPOs that had never conducted a PCE, and were interviewed for this assessment, demonstrated a potential interest in utilizing selected PCE questions to enhance their internal assessments. Specifically, one NPPO mentioned the possibility of using PCE questions to test their systems, identify areas for further investment, and streamline unnecessary expenditures. However, they emphasized the need for a comprehensive understanding of the entire PCE, beyond just the module titles, to make an informed decision. Moreover, these NPPOs indicated a willingness to support other NPPOs within their region with the PCE in the future, highlighting a collaborative approach to capacity development.

Finally, an interesting discussion was had with some respondents (facilitators, IC staff, and NPPOs that had not never conducted a PCE) about whether the PCE could be useful for developed countries. The perspective of one of the responding NPPOs is that it could be relevant, but not in the current way that it is set up to use. The reliance on facilitators may not be relevant for developed countries that are already quite mature in their strategic planning processes. Instead, the NPPOs of developed countries may prefer to “cherry pick” specific questions from the PCE methodologies for reflection. This said, respondents indicated that it remains difficult to be certain of the PCE’s potential usefulness without knowledge of the tools and more information.

It is relevant to note that both of the interviewed NPPOs who had not undertaken (or completed) a PCE were located in the Pacific. They highlighted the uniqueness of their perspective, as they maintain close relationships with the Pacific Islands, acting in the interest of supporting and bolstering the capacity of the smaller islands, rather than viewing them simply as trade competitors. These islands have sought assistance from Australia and New Zealand and are willing to share the results of their PCE to contribute to the improvement of phytosanitary systems across the regions². Additionally, it was suggested that, given the unique context of the Pacific Islands, local resources would be more appropriate for facilitating and assisting with the PCE in these regions (rather than externally located facilitators).

² A note must be made here that technically, this type of arrangement breaches the confidentiality rule intended to protect the confidentiality of NPPO’s information garnered through the PCE.

3. Experiences and Feedback:

To assess the entire process, the modules and the online PCE system.

PCE Modules³

Meeting Needs

The PCE modules have shown a commendable alignment with the needs of the NPPOs, effectively adhering to the International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) and comprehensively covering their fundamental functions. Interview responses have consistently highlighted a significant strength of these modules: their capacity to assist users in identifying critical weaknesses within their respective NPPOs. This has proven invaluable for most, offering a precise diagnosis of areas requiring improvement. However, it's noteworthy that one NPPO that completed the PCE found that the modules did not seamlessly fit their unique circumstances as their relatively small territory includes complex and rich biodiversity as well as several diverse microclimates, necessitating a multiplicity of approaches for phytosanitary protection.

Table 1: Rating Table for PCE Modules

Survey Question	Average Rating /10	Range /10
The PCE modules align well with the roles and functions of NPPOs and address areas that are fundamental to NPPOs mission.	9.2	7-10
The PCE modules have been designed with a keen understanding of NPPO needs.	9.1	7-10
There is alignment between the areas assessed by the PCE modules and the ISPMs.	9.3	7-10
There is alignment between the areas assessed by the PCE modules and the core objectives of NPPOs.	9.3	7-10
The PCE modules are relevant to NPPOs.	9.2	6-10

Successes

The success of the PCE modules can be attributed to the thoroughness of the questions they contain. These questions have been instrumental in helping NPPOs uncover weaknesses, issues, and gaps that might otherwise have escaped notice. This comprehensive evaluation has offered clear guidance for areas in need of enhancement. Many respondents expressed appreciation for the challenge posed by these questions, as they pushed NPPOs out of their comfort zones, ultimately fostering growth and improvement. Moreover, optimal success has been achieved when there's a harmonious balance between a committed NPPO, motivated and engaged stakeholders, and a facilitator well-versed in guiding the NPPO through the process. When asked to identify the most useful modules, NPPOs frequently singled out Module 4, focusing on NPPOs' mission and strategy, and Module 2, covering national phytosanitary legislation, among others. Other mentioned modules include modules 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13.

³ For detailed information on the modules, please refer to Appendix 10: Modules.

Challenges

Despite their overall effectiveness, the PCE modules presented several challenges for NPPOs. NPPO staff occasionally grappled with the complexity of the questions and struggled to discern their intended purpose without the guidance of facilitators or experts. Some respondents suggested the inclusion of sample answers or dropdown selections to provide insight into the range of possible responses. Additionally, reaching a consensus among NPPO staff on certain issues proved challenging. There were perceptions that some questions within the modules were outdated or redundant, prompting suggestions for a critical review and updating of the questions. Examples of specific questions were not provided; however, it was noted that the modules do not cover newer practices, such as eCommerce, ePhyto and environmental protection. The in-depth nature of the questions also occasionally placed NPPOs in an uncomfortable position, as self-evaluation sometimes meant acknowledging vulnerabilities and gaps in front of participating stakeholders. This sentiment was shared by a facilitator, who noted that the wording of the questions, designed to pinpoint flaws, gaps, or faults, could inadvertently lead to some individuals feeling offended or highly vulnerable.

Further challenges included the time allocated for completing missions, particularly for NPPOs undertaking numerous modules, often necessitating independent work between missions. Limited funding posed significant obstacles, compelling NPPOs to adopt innovative approaches to engage stakeholders, as convening all stakeholders in one location for collaborative work proved to be prohibitively costly. Technical challenges related to the online tool and internet connectivity, such as data loss, also hindered the process.

As mentioned, the suggestion was made by several respondents for the modules to undergo updating, particularly for 1) language and question format improvements, 2) the reduction of overlap and duplication, 3) the inclusion of new standards like the recently introduced ISPM 47, and 4) reflections of newer practices, such as eCommerce, ePhyto and environmental protection. Additionally, streamlining online tools and templates for user-friendliness, and exploring alternative methodologies, such as PESTL⁴ analysis instead of SWOT, were proposed for consideration.

Module 2 on phytosanitary legislation

Individuals who completed Module 2 within the PCE generally expressed high satisfaction with the overall tool and found the process highly effective. However, some minor issues arose concerning the comprehensibility and usability of the tool, particularly regarding the difficulty of understanding certain questions and usability concerns related to the online system.

The NPPOs participating in the process greatly valued the opportunity it provided to collaborate with stakeholders and appreciated the entire PCE process. Notably, Module 2 enabled NPPOs to achieve two critical objectives: firstly, the update or development of modern and robust phytosanitary legislation that closely aligns with international phytosanitary agreements and standards. Secondly, it facilitated the

⁴ A PESTL analysis is another environmental scanning tool. Whereas the SWOT gauges internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the PESTL asks participants to consider current influencing factors from Political, Economic and/or Environmental, Social, Technological, and Legal lenses. The two forms of analysis may be complementary, or uniquely selected.

creation of a comprehensive capacity development strategy and workplan, encompassing essential components such as operational manuals and diagnostic methods.

For those NPPOs that opted not to complete Module 2, their decision was often based on having recently updated their legislation before engaging in the PCE process.

Table 2: Rating Table for Module 2

Survey Question	Average Rating /10	Range /10
The overall process is highly effective for developing new or revised legislation/regulation (Module 2).	9.2	7-10
The situation Analysis is useful for identifying to assessing the current legal framework's strengths and weaknesses	9.2	8-10
As decided by the NPPO, drafting and consultation involving stakeholders' input and the creation of a draft of new or revised legislation/regulation is a crucial step of the process	9.0	8-10
Validation of the draft new or revised legislation/regulation is crucial to address legal gaps in context.	9.2	8-10
The adoption of new or revised legislation and regulations provides legal mechanisms to address identified phytosanitary issues.	9.3	8-10

Improving PCE Modules – Recommendations:

Consider convening facilitators to conduct a review of all modules and questionnaires in order to update, clarify, and streamline. Use insights and recommendations from coordinators where needed.

Consider country-specific factors (e.g. rich, varied biodiversity; extremely large regions, etc.) and how those may affect their PCE.

Strategic Planning Tools

Successes

The strategic planning component within the PCE process garnered significant appreciation from all participating NPPOs. Several notable successes emerged from this aspect of the evaluation:

- This component facilitated the identification of weaknesses by analyzing primary causes, consequences, and deep-seated issues within their systems.
- The self-assessment process within the strategic planning phase enabled NPPOs to gain a comprehensive understanding of areas requiring improvement.
- The development of a logical framework with well-defined objectives, expected results, and associated activities, complete with details regarding responsibility and financing, was particularly praised.
- NPPOs found value in the creation of a strategic plan, which served as a roadmap for their activities.

- Furthermore, the strategic planning component contributed to the revision of legislation, helping to establish a unified system.

Obstacles

However, certain obstacles were encountered during the strategic planning phase:

- Technical challenges related to the online system and internet connectivity occasionally resulted in lost work for NPPOs. To mitigate these issues, some NPPOs resorted to creating their own versions of documents in Word format for ease of use.
- Some NPPOs encountered difficulties in understanding and explaining strategic planning activities without a facilitator. Elements such as the problem tree and logical framework were initially challenging for stakeholders to grasp, and several NPPOs suggested the inclusion of a capacity-building component, including more comprehensive training before embarking on the PCE process.
- Some NPPOs faced difficulties when determining objectives and indicators, particularly in articulating the purpose-objective-output for each module. While objectives and outputs were relatively straightforward to identify, defining the purpose often presented a more abstract challenge.
- Connecting the concepts of SWOT analysis, problem tree analysis, and the logical framework proved challenging for some NPPOs, leading to confusion and delays in the process.
- Assistance was provided during the strategic planning process, but NPPOs expressed a need for ongoing support afterwards.
- The COVID-19 pandemic posed logistical challenges, making it difficult to convene and focus stakeholders during virtual sessions. This necessitated creative solutions to address the resulting issues.

Table 3: Rating Table for Strategic Planning Process and Tools

Survey Question	Average Rating /10	Range /10
The utilization of strategic planning tools in the PCE is highly effective for developing a Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy.	8.6	7-10
Gaps identification and its causes and effects analysis are valuable tools for assessing phytosanitary capacity and planning improvements.	9.0	8-10
SWOT analysis is a useful approach for evaluating our organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the context of phytosanitary capacity development.	8.9	8-10
The logical framework provided offers a structured and effective way to design and implement projects for improving phytosanitary capacity.	8.8	7-10
Through the use of strategic planning tools, NPPOs can develop a comprehensive and effective strategy that considers NPPOs; capabilities and limitations.	8.8	7-10

When asked to identify the most useful tools within the strategic planning component, NPPOs highlighted the following:

- SWOT analysis was favored, especially by NPPOs with prior experience in using this tool. It was appreciated as an initial assessment of primary causes and consequences.
- While SWOT analysis was found to be polished, the problem tree analysis delved deeper into the "why" of the identified issues.
- Gap analysis was recognized for its effectiveness in identifying weak points and proposing corrective measures.
- The logical framework was also deemed highly valuable for structuring planning and evaluation activities.

Improving Strategic Planning Process and Tools: Recommendations

Consider including a comprehensive training session for key NPPO staff and participating stakeholders prior to starting the PCE process. The aim of this training session would be to bring together the participants and teach the methodologies used throughout the missions in order to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

Consider methods to ensure that missions take place predominantly in in-person formats. Reserve online meetings for follow ups and additional or in-between mission support.

Process

When asked in the survey to what extent NPPOs who had completed the PCE agreed with the current process, three indicated, "I completely agree with the current PCE process – no changes are required" and five indicated, "I agree to a great extent with the current PCE process, but some changes are required."

Overall, NPPOs were satisfied with the results of the process, and particularly with the outcomes achieved. The tool/online platform, however, was cited as requiring updates to enhance user friendliness, to accommodate changes in standards, legal obligations; and work in eCommerce and environmental considerations, and to streamline questions. As well, it was noted that the use of an online format for the PCE consensus workshops is useful but has limitations. Participants can be distracted, and there is a low level of participation. Face-to-face sessions of the PCE consensus workshops are recommended for more effective engagement, although this was hindered by COVID-19 in some cases. In addition, more time and resources are needed to complete the modules and to support the coordinator in the immense work of coordinating the PCE. These points help to frame the ratings to the following survey questions:

Table 4: Rating Table for PCE Process (Missions)

Survey Question	Average Rating /10	Range /10
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The PCE modules provide a comprehensive evaluation of phytosanitary capacities.	9.1	7-10
The PCE modules provide valuable insights for improvement.	9.2	6-10
The PCE modules provide a tailored (e.g. non-generic) assessment of the NPPO.	8.7	5-10
The structured questionnaire format used during the first mission in the PCE process effectively identifies gaps in NPPO plant health capacities and is a crucial component of the PCE process.	8.2	5-10
The use of strategic planning tools during the second mission, including the development of tailored plans, is a valuable approach for addressing weaknesses in plant health capacities and is a crucial component of the PCE process.	8.6	8-10
During the third mission, involving validation of the PCE findings, activities, and estimated costs is a crucial component of the PCE process.	9.3	8-10

Facilitator Impact on PCE

The incorporation of facilitators into the PCE process has proven to be a pivotal development, significantly enhancing the Secretariat's ability to administer the program. Insights gleaned from discussions with both NPPOs having completed the PCE and the facilitators themselves underscore the profound and positive influence that facilitators exert on the entire PCE process.

Facilitators undergo an intensive two-week training program, which provides them with an in-depth understanding of the PCE process. This formal training course is complemented by an array of supplementary materials, online resources, and tools. It has been highlighted, however, that while facilitators are often well-versed in technical aspects, often stemming from their own practical experience within NPPOs, there exists a pressing need for further training, particularly in the effective utilization of planning tools like the logical framework and SWOT analysis. Additionally, the development of "softer skills," including those essential for consensus-building and conflict resolution, emerges as an area demanding heightened attention. Training should also focus on new and emerging standards to ensure appropriate interpretation when applying the PCE.

NPPOs that have completed the PCE acknowledge the pivotal role of facilitators in the process. They highlight that facilitators play a crucial role in ensuring that all stakeholders have a comprehensive understanding of the evaluation tool. Facilitators are recognized for their role in maintaining the focus and direction of workshops and discussion groups, as well as facilitating brainstorming sessions by offering diverse perspectives and examples. They guide discussions towards productive conclusions while refraining from expressing personal opinions, ensuring NPPOs and stakeholders take full ownership of the process. Facilitators also contribute to preserving the quality and integrity of the evaluation methodology by explaining and teaching the methodology and overseeing procedural aspects of workshops. It's important to note that facilitators enhance the objectivity of the evaluation practice.

It is worth noting that certain countries participating in this study conducted their PCE entirely or partially during the challenging backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, they were compelled to rely on virtual sessions. The collective feedback from these NPPOs resonates with a unanimous sentiment that virtual sessions exhibited reduced effectiveness compared to in-person interactions. Technical glitches,

logistical challenges, diminished focus, and lowered productivity were recurrently cited concerns. These experiences serve to underscore the prevailing preference for conducting PCE missions in-person whenever feasible.

One thought-provoking discussion that arose from the interviews revolves around the necessity of facilitators, particularly in the context of developing versus developed countries. A pertinent question arose as to whether countries possessing a mature understanding of strategic planning processes could or should autonomously conduct the PCE or perhaps engage the services of local consultants, based on the perception of interviewees at the time of questioning that facilitators are a mandatory/very strongly encouraged part of the process.⁵ While the majority of NPPOs successfully completing the PCE have come from developing countries, uniformly emphasizing the indispensable role of facilitators, NPPOs from developed countries that have not yet embarked on the PCE journey have posed pertinent questions. They have raised concerns regarding whether facilitators, who are perceived by some to inherently rely on PCE evaluations for income, might harbor a vested interest in perpetuating a process perceived by non-participating entities as inaccessible without substantial financial commitment. One facilitator encapsulated this debate, remarking, "The facilitator has to be required, perhaps because it's mostly developing countries that use the tool – and certain countries are 'more' developing than others...The most developing a country is, the more challenges and the greater the need, and they have very little training, especially with strategic/technical aspects, so the work of the facilitator is key." This debate underscores the nuanced considerations surrounding the role of facilitators in the diverse landscape of phytosanitary capacity evaluation.

Barriers to PCE Uptake

Following barriers to the implementation of the PCE were highlighted:

Cost: One significant barrier mentioned was the cost associated with applying the PCE. One donor emphasized that the expense can be prohibitive, stating, "it's overly expensive to apply the PCE. The ballpark figure we got averages \$60-\$70k. That is an incredibly large sum of money for a developing country that has multiple needs. A lot of it tends to be donor funded and that is well intended, but over

⁵ Please note: per <https://www.ippc.int/en/about/core-activities/capacity-development/phytosanitary-capacity-evaluation/>, NPPOs can conduct their PCE on their own, without a facilitator. Within the process, the IPPC Secretariat contacts the requesting country to discuss and determine the whether the country wishes to recruit a certified PCE facilitator or not. Should the requesting country wish to recruit a certified PCE facilitator, the IPPC Secretariat will ask the country to select the preferred certified PCE facilitators from the updated IPPC list, considering geographical proximity to limit travel costs and language requirement. The IPPC Secretariat will then contact the preferred certified PCE facilitators for their availability and revert to the requesting country with the outcome. The requesting country is responsible to liaise with the PCE facilitator and agree on contractual terms. The alternative is for countries to conduct a PCEs independently, without the support of a PCE facilitator or the IPPC Secretariat. The IPPC also confirms whether the requesting country wishes to engage the IPPC Secretariat for support with the overall follow-up of the PCE process, in addition to the recruitment of a certified PCE facilitator.

time, you want countries to take ownership. The current model is not set up for countries to keep doing it on a regular basis.”

Length of Process: The duration of the PCE process was identified as another barrier. Some participants felt that the PCE takes too long. Additionally, others noted that they didn't have sufficient time during and between missions to complete all of the modules, necessitating extra time and commitment.

Response Time and Bureaucracy: Concerns were raised regarding the length of time it takes to receive a response from the IPPC and the complexities associated with navigating a large bureaucratic organization like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). These challenges may hinder the timely start and progression of the PCE process.

Improving PCE Process overall – Recommendations:

Based on the observations and recommendations from participants and comprehensive assessment by the evaluator, the following process improvements are suggested:

- In response to the perceived high burden of work associated with selecting multiple/many modules, consider extra/in-between mission support that could be provided outside of the three main missions.
- Consider updating the online system and platform. Modernize and update tools and templates.
- Review training for facilitators. Consider opportunities for improvement in training on strategic planning tools and soft skills (conflict mediation, facilitation skills, consensus-building approaches)
- Consider the role of facilitators and the format of the PCE when it comes to countries with mature phytosanitary systems and high level of capacity and expertise in strategic planning.
- Consider communicating the possibilities for more flexible PCEs (in terms of financial commitment, extensiveness of modules, length of process, inclusion of facilitators) to increase access and uptake.
- Consider increasing opportunities for facilitators and coordinators to meet and share best practices.
- Consider criteria and requirement for selection of national PCE coordinators (or team of coordinators), using insights from NPPOs.

4. Findings Uptake and Impact:

To maximize utilization of the PCE process by target audiences, identify key factors.

Results

The PCE is recognized for its significant role in bolstering the internal capacity of NPPOs. This comprehensive evaluation is perceived to serve several essential purposes:

1. Identification of Opportunities for Improvement: NPPOs leverage the PCE to identify areas where improvements can be made within their operations. This process assists them in fine-tuning their

strategies and activities to align with international standards and best practices. By way of example, the NPPOs mentioned the following activities that resulted from their PCE:

- Launching new Project Plans
- Developing and publishing mission, vision, and priorities online
- Updating legislation
- Enhancing facilities and laboratories
- Introducing new processes and tools (e.g., Standard Operating Procedures, generators, etc.)
- Implementing internal restructuring
- Creating guidance and manuals
- Improving export certification and border inspection

2. Enhancing Credibility with trading partners: The PCE contributes to enhancing the credibility of NPPOs in the eyes of collaborating partners, as well as to administrators and funders. By undergoing this evaluation, NPPOs establish themselves as reliable and competent entities in the realm of phytosanitary measures, thereby fostering more fruitful collaborations.

3. Safeguarding Interests in Imports: NPPOs benefit from the PCE by strengthening their ability to safeguard their own interests concerning imports and exports. By adhering to international standards and norms, NPPOs ensure the integrity and safety of imported agricultural products.

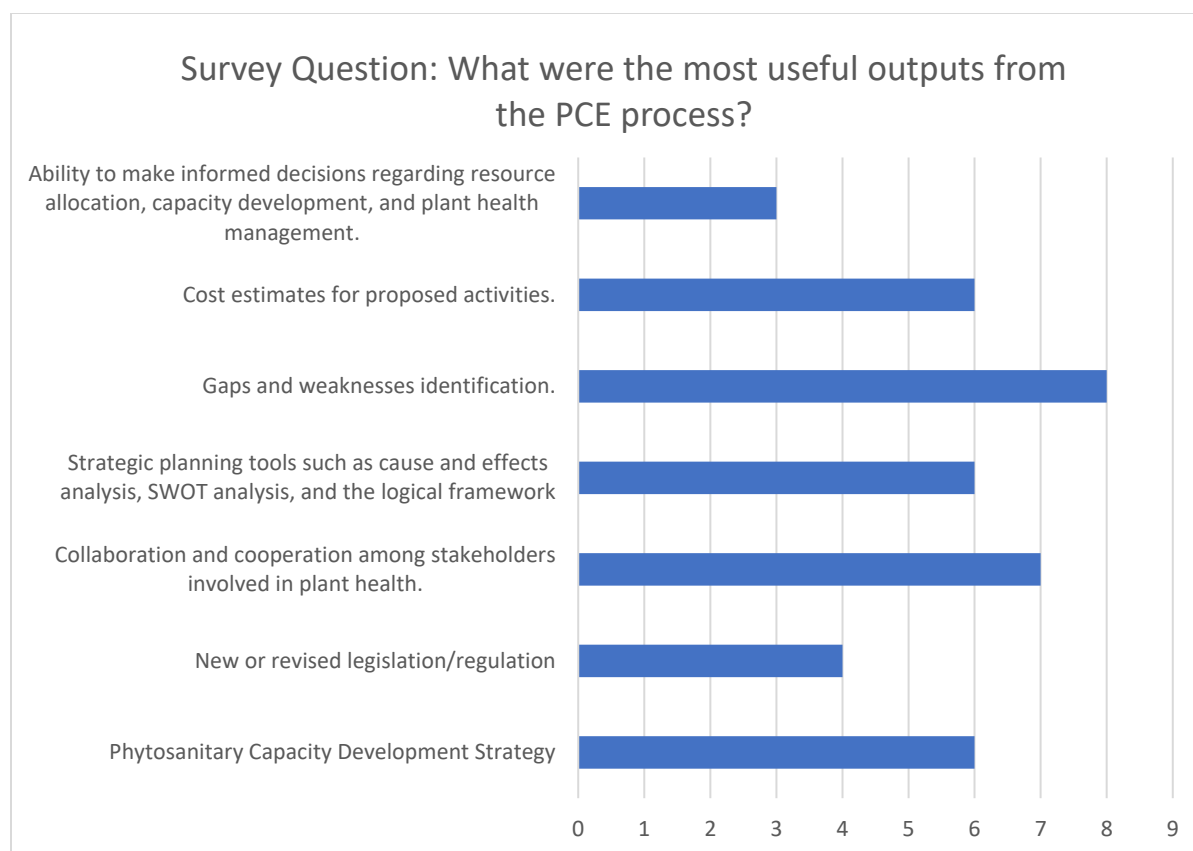
4. Strategic Priority Development: NPPOs utilize the recommendations stemming from the PCE to formulate short, medium, and long-term strategic priorities, as well as to inform the update or development of new phytosanitary authorities/administrative bodies and the hiring of new resources. While implementation may necessitate additional time and resources, NPPOs gain a clear understanding of key needs, priorities, and international standards requirements.

5. Mobilizing resources: As a result of the PCE, NPPOs have been able to apply for grants and contributions, secure funding, and garner increased support and resources from their governments.

6. Strengthening collaboration with stakeholders: The PCE has allowed NPPOs to have increased credibility when presenting to administrators, stakeholders, funders, and collaborators.

When asked to select the most useful outputs of the PCE process from a list, survey respondents indicated the following:

Figure 1: Most Useful Outputs



The report generated after the PCE is seen to be particularly instrumental in elevating the credibility and influence of NPPOs when seeking additional resources, facilities, funding, and other forms of support. The fact that this report is produced by the FAO further enhances its weight and significance. Moreover, the report streamlines the engagement of NPPOs with development partners, as much of the groundwork necessary for funding applications has already been completed. Several NPPOs have also expressed their intention to undertake the PCE in the future and have indicated that they hope/expect that the process will be more streamlined and efficient due to their prior experience.

Table 5: Rating Table for PCE Results

Survey Question	Average Rating /10	Range /10
Setting priorities on the actions to be taken is an important step in order to gain national and international support.	9.3	8-10
The modules provide insights that easily translate into actionable changes.	8.4	6-10

However, as highlighted by one donor, the results of strategic planning efforts, while promising, may remain on hold until funding is secured. The implementation of priorities resulting from the PCE varies among NPPOs: some have successfully secured additional funding, while others have integrated action items into their daily operations. However, many actions await implementation, contingent on securing

the necessary funding. To address this, one donor proposed involving donors and potential funders earlier in the PCE process to secure their commitment to the outcomes. Similarly, one facilitator suggested providing additional support after the assessment phase to connect NPPOs with potential funding sources.

All NPPOs concurred, with some emphasizing the challenging nature of the funding landscape, stating that "funding is our major, major problem" and acknowledging the difficulty of sourcing resources given their limited budgets.

Indeed, when asked in survey about how the NPPO used the findings of the PCE to engage development partners and institutions at both national and international levels for resource mobilization, the following answers were obtained:

- Our NPPO has successfully mobilized resources at both national and international levels based on the PCE findings (4 respondents)
- We have initiated discussions with international partners, but resource mobilization is still in progress (1 respondent)
- Resource mobilization efforts are in the planning stages, and we intend to engage both national and international institutions (1 respondent)
- Our NPPO hasn't yet started resource mobilization efforts based on the PCE findings (1 respondent)
- Our NPPO is in the process of assessing potential resource mobilization opportunities based on the PCE findings (1 respondent)
- Resource mobilization from both the International and National resources have been initiated and, in the process, but not enough due to the multiple responsibilities, limited organizational setup and scarcity of human resources (1 respondent)

In addition, when asked whether activities from the PCE have been implemented by the NPPO, 3 responded that "most activities have been implemented, but not all," and 5 responded that "some activities have been implemented, but there are significant ones that are pending."

Improving Findings Uptake overall – Recommendations:

Consider providing additional support to NPPOs after the development of final outputs. Particularly consider supporting NPPOs with linking to and finding sources of funding.

Consider approaches for increasing buy-in from existing and potential donors, governments, and trading partners. For example, through publication of a database of PCE results; by involving donors in the early stages of PCE; and developing detailed findings reports that connect to the values of local governments.

Learning and Capacity Enhancement through Strategic Planning

Besides the tangible outputs of the PCE, a significant outcome of the PCE is the strengthening of NPPO capacity for strategic planning. This strategic planning process empowers NPPOs in various ways:

1. The strategic planning component enables NPPOs to articulate their weaknesses, gaps, issues, consequences, and needs on paper. This documentation serves as a valuable resource for advocating with their own administrative bodies and collaborating with organizations, importers, and exporters.
2. Strategic planning contributes to enhancing the competence of plant health personnel in the domain of planning, equipping them with essential skills and insights.
3. While certain obstacles may surface during the strategic planning phase, NPPOs that have successfully completed the PCE unanimously affirm that the experience is beneficial, both during and after the PCE process.
4. The PCE can have a transformative impact on organizational culture. By way of example, one NPPO highlighted how the PCE experience opened their eyes to the intricacies of their operations. After completing the process, they became more observant and detail-oriented in striving to address all areas for improving their system. This shift led to a dynamic approach, encompassing aspects such as list compilation, materials management, sampling, inspections, collaborative engagement with laboratories during specimen collection, and overall enhancement of results aligned with their mission and vision. Another NPPO cited concrete changes, particularly in the realm of market access, where systems were established, data was meticulously compiled, and efforts were directed toward risk-based sampling and seizing opportunities for system improvement.

On the last point, several NPPOs noted that they successfully leveraged the methodologies and practices acquired during the PCE and applied them to other planning endeavors, showcasing the enduring value of the experience.

Facilitators shared a similar sentiment during their interviews, emphasizing that when NPPOs fully engage with the PCE process, they are empowered with the tools and insights necessary for independent strategic development. This empowerment enables participants to proficiently contribute to the creation of strategies and projects. Facilitators recognized that NPPOs, having undergone strategic planning during the PCE, are better equipped to navigate future planning initiatives.

These collective insights underscore the tangible benefits derived from the PCE's strategic planning component, not only enhancing NPPO capacities but also fostering a culture of continuous improvement and proactive planning within plant health organizations.

5. Success Factors:

What PCE facilitators consider key success factors.

The success factors considered crucial by PCE facilitators are central to achieving the desired outcomes of the PCE and contribute to the achievement of key outcomes, including enhancing the national phytosanitary capacity of the NPPOs; ensuring compliance with international obligations such as the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures; boosting confidence in import and export partnerships; improving access to donor funding; and facilitating the identification of gaps to develop actionable strategies and updated legislation.

1. **NPPO's Willingness and Commitment:** The willingness and commitment of the NPPO to engage in the PCE process significantly impact the likelihood of success. A motivated and dedicated NPPO is more likely to achieve favorable outcomes.
2. **Political Will and Resources:** The presence of political will, both at the international and national levels, to support and allocate resources to the PCE process and the strategies arising from it is crucial for success.
3. **Facilitators' Skills and Qualities:** Facilitators play a pivotal role and must possess certain skills and qualities, including presentation skills, experience in training, confidentiality maintenance, adeptness in handling difficult situations and conflict resolution, tact, the ability to engage stakeholders and staff, and the capacity to explain complex concepts. They must be knowledgeable about the country's realities, flexible, and well-respected by all stakeholders. Additionally, they should demonstrate dedication to upholding ethical standards. Language proficiency in the country's language is also deemed critical by some interviewees.
4. **Inclusive Participation:** Ensuring the inclusion of diverse experts and stakeholders, who are invited based on their expertise and voices, is essential. This enhances stakeholder awareness and appreciation of the country's phytosanitary capacity.
5. **Adequate Time for Modules and Missions:** Sufficient time to study the questions in the modules and complete the modules during the missions is necessary for effective participation and success – particularly for those NPPOs who have selected many modules, or who find themselves in need of additional capacity and support.
6. **Trust and Confidentiality:** Trust in the PCE process and the assurance of confidentiality are fundamental for a successful evaluation, as is trust in the facilitator.
7. **Resource Availability:** Sufficient resources are required to bring all stakeholders together and facilitate consensus building.
8. **Experienced and Knowledgeable Coordinators:** Experienced and knowledgeable coordinators, or a team of coordinators, who possess a deep understanding of the PCE tool are instrumental for success.
In this regard, the selection of the coordinator is particularly important. Respondents indicated that they should ideally be someone in middle management within the phytosanitary system. This individual should possess experience, be well-connected to day-to-day activities, and have a voice at the leadership level. Coordinators should also undergo comprehensive training in the PCE process and tools before commencing the evaluation, which enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the process.
9. **Experienced Facilitators:** Having experienced facilitators with a proven track record is critical for ensuring the smooth conduct of the PCE.
10. **Stakeholder Willingness:** The willingness of stakeholders to actively participate in the PCE process is a key determinant of success.

Table 6: Rating Table for Facilitator and Stakeholder Involvement

Survey Question	Average Rating /10	Range /10
The involvement of internationally trained facilitators in the PCE process is crucial for assessing the country's plant health capacities.	8.7	5-10

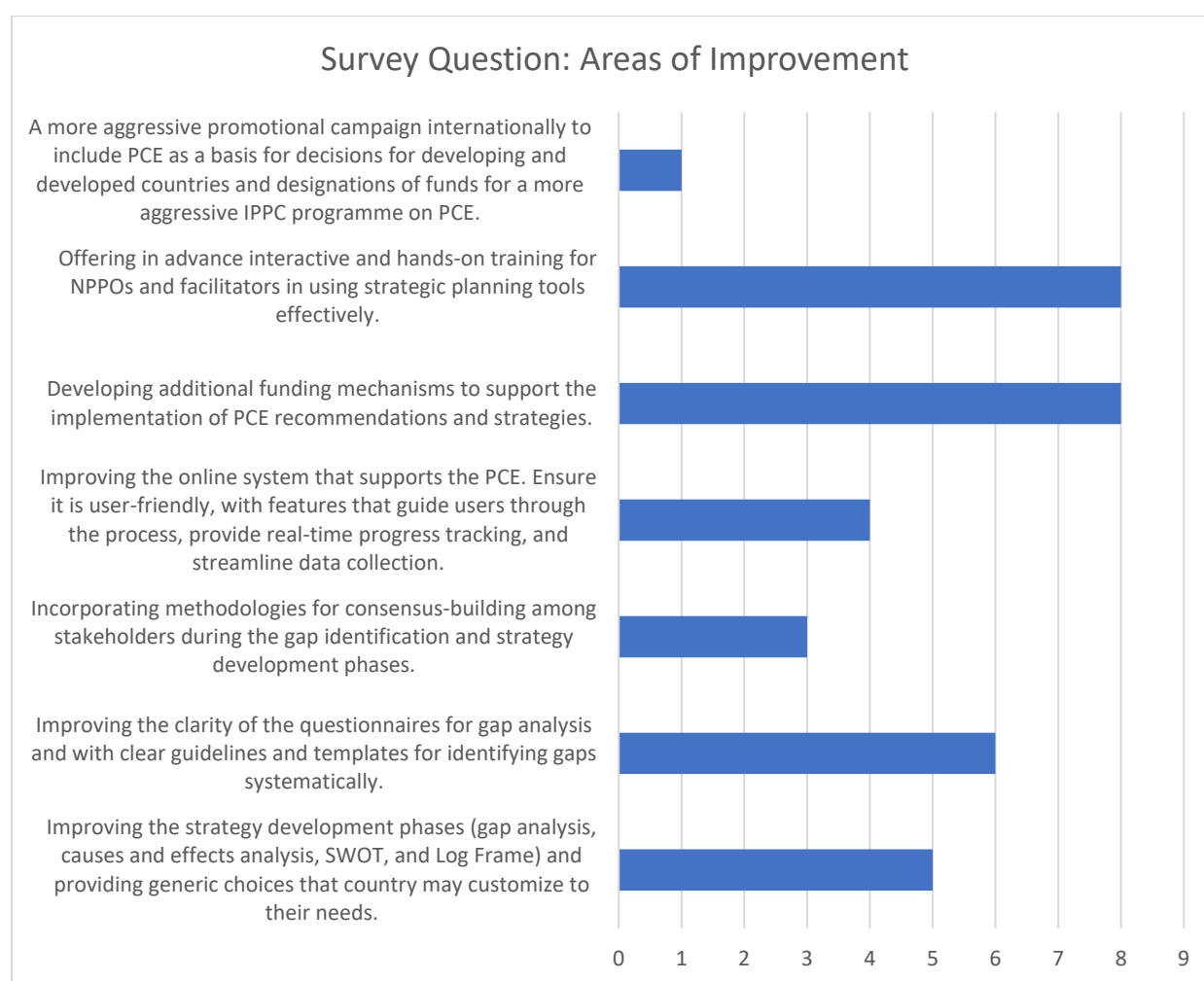
The country's stakeholders play a crucial role during the PCE process to develop a structured plan that addresses weaknesses and enhances plant health capacities.	8.6	5-10
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6. Process Enhancement:

To discover opportunities for improving the PCE and the extent to which the PCE process have contributed to the ability of NPPOs to elaborate phytosanitary capacity development strategies.

When asked to select areas for improvement from a list, survey respondents indicated the following:

Figure 2: Areas of Improvement



Building on the broad areas for improvement described in the survey, the following opportunities for process enhancement were identified:

1. **Increased Pre-PCE Support:** Provide heightened support and training on PCE methodologies before the assessment process begins. This helps familiarize NPPO leads with concepts, reducing stumbling blocks during the process.
2. **Alternative Coordinator Selection:** In addition to increased pre-PCE support, explore alternative approaches for selecting national coordinators. Consider assembling a work team in advance to manage the substantial workload and time commitment effectively (instead of appointing only one national coordinator).
3. **Increased Post-PCE Support:** Extend support after the PCE to assist NPPOs in leveraging assessment results for securing funding and additional resources. A follow-up mechanism can help strengthen capacity and offer guidance on accessing funds.
4. **Expanded Mission Duration:** Consider extending the number of missions and/or the time allocated to each mission. Acknowledge the experiences of NPPOs that needed additional sessions to complete their work in between the primary missions.
5. **In-Person Emphasis with Virtual Follow-ups:** Emphasize conducting the majority of the PCE process through in-person missions, complemented by virtual follow-ups, to maximize effectiveness and engagement.
6. **User-Friendly Online Platform:** Improve the online platform to enhance user-friendliness, modernize the interface, and increase efficiency. Prioritize clean module designs and cater to user needs, taking insights from facilitators and coordinators into account. Consider offline elements/functionalities (e.g. downloadable templates) to assist NPPOs that experience a high degree of issues with connectivity.
7. **Multilingual Accessibility:** Acknowledging that the PCE is currently offered in the regulated six (6) FAO-official languages, continue to ensure that facilitators are trained and available to assist those countries who have other language requirements.

Two key considerations for improvement were highlighted by NPPOs who had not conducted PCE and had expressed concerns about the PCE:

1. **Enhance Openness and Transparency:** Reevaluate the level of protectiveness surrounding the PCE and consider measures to increase transparency. Share additional information about the modules, processes, approaches, and questions to enhance accessibility and benefits.
2. **Adaptable PCE Approach:** Clarify, support, and communicate the various approaches to administering the PCE, including facilitator-led, self-administered, or with selected experts/consultants, based on the specific needs of the NPPO and funding partners.

The following three opportunities relate specifically to facilitators:

1. **Facilitator-Led Review:** Conduct a detailed question-by-question or module-by-module review of the PCE with facilitators' input. Seek feedback from coordinators on questions that may require clarification or restructuring.
2. **Facilitator Knowledge Sharing:** Promote more frequent meetings or knowledge-sharing sessions among facilitators to exchange experiences and best practices, fostering continuous improvement.

3. **Community of Practice:** Draw upon the deep knowledge and experience of facilitators to improve the PCE tool. Establish a community of practice for facilitators to exchange ideas and best practices.

From the donor perspective, three opportunities for improvements were suggested:

1. **Public Dissemination of Results:** Explore the possibility of publicly sharing concrete PCE results that the NPPOs wish to share (e.g. changes or outputs that took place after PCE was conducted), potentially through the creation of a PCE database containing indicators and metrics. This approach aims to tangibly illustrate how the PCE contributes to transformative change. Note that the PCE findings are confidential and the property of the country.
2. **Enhance Alignment of SPS and TFA Agreements:** Foster greater alignment between Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) agreements to streamline phytosanitary processes (this suggestion aligns with the recommendation to improve the PCE tool and modules globally).
3. **Comprehensive Post-PCE Reporting:** Enhance the narrative of post-PCE reports by providing a deeper, more comprehensive analysis, including a trade perspective. This approach ensures better alignment with comprehensive governmental values, going beyond action item lists.

7. Conclusions

The PCE represents a pivotal resource for NPPOs globally, offering a structured approach to identifying strengths and areas for improvement within phytosanitary systems. The findings from the PCE Desk Study Report underscore the tool's significance in enhancing the capabilities of NPPOs to safeguard plant health and ensure the smooth facilitation of international trade in compliance with international standards.

The study's findings highlight the critical need for ongoing updates, improved communication strategies, and enhanced support mechanisms to maximize the PCE tool's effectiveness. While the PCE has fundamentally contributed to the development of robust phytosanitary capacities, the evolving nature of trade and plant health risks necessitates continuous refinement of the tool and its processes.

Recommendations presented in the report focus on actionable strategies to address identified challenges. Enhancing the user experience of the PCE's online platform, increasing the tool's accessibility, and providing tailored support for NPPOs post-evaluation emerge as key areas for immediate action. Additionally, fostering a community of practice among facilitators and NPPO coordinators can significantly contribute to shared learning and the tool's dynamic evolution.

In conclusion, the PCE tool is an invaluable asset for the global phytosanitary community. Its continued improvement and adaptation to the changing landscape of plant health and international trade will ensure it remains a cornerstone of global efforts to protect plant resources. Implementing the recommended enhancements will not only increase the tool's utility but also reinforce the global network of NPPOs in their critical role of protecting plant health, thereby supporting sustainable agricultural development and economic growth worldwide.

Part V. Appendices

Appendix 1: Recommended Interviewees

Respondent	Type	Comments	Language of Interview
St Lucia (1 interviewee)	NPPO that completed PCE	Did PCE recently	English
Mauritius (1 interviewee)	NPPO that completed PCE	Did PCE recently	French
Uzbekistan (1 interviewee)	NPPO that completed PCE	Did PCE recently	English
Nicaragua (2 interviewees)	NPPO that completed PCE	Did PCE recently	Spanish
Nepal (1 interviewee)	NPPO that completed PCE	Did PCE recently	English
Kenya (1 interviewee)	NPPO that completed PCE	Did PCE recently	English
Senegal (1 interviewee)	NPPO that completed PCE	Did PCE recently	French
Madagascar (1 interviewee)	NPPO that completed PCE	Did PCE long time ago	French
Australia (2 interviewees)	NPPO that did not conduct PCE		English
New Zealand (1 interviewee)	NPPO that did not conduct PCE		English
STDF (3 interviewees)	Donor	Funded PCE activities – Facilitators training	English
World Bank (1 interviewee)	Donor	Funded PCEs	English
GIZ (1 interviewee)	Donor	Funded PCE	English
Seasoned Facilitator (1 interviewee)	Facilitator	Seasoned facilitator	English
New Facilitator (1 interviewee)	Facilitator	New Facilitator	English
IC Team Member (1 interviewee)	Team Member		English

Appendix 2: Introduction Letter Prior to Interview Scheduling

Dear Mr./Ms. NAME,

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations' International Plant Protection Convention (IPCC) Secretariat has engaged Gelder, Gingras & Associates Inc. (GGA), an independent evaluation consulting firm from Canada, to conduct a desk study of the current Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) process and online system, which supports country phytosanitary assessments. This review will provide a thematic analysis of the PCE experience from the perspective of **NPPOs**, **Facilitators** and **Donors** and will include identification of gaps and opportunities and recommendations with the objective of improving the efficiency of the PCE.

To that end, please expect an email from Eva Maxwell (eva@gelder-gingras.ca) from GGA. She will reach out to you separately to ask for your interest and availability in participating in 1) a survey and 2) an interview. The surveys are intended to be completed in *advance* of the interview, and both processes are complementary. Interviews will take approximately 60-90 minutes and the questions will be provided to you ahead of time. The main intent of the interview will be to ask you a few questions about the process and your experience. Feel free to invite other members of your team to the interview.

Please note that conversations will be recorded and will be kept confidential between the participants of the interview and the GGA team. All data will be compiled and analysed, and the consultant team will group findings thematically: thus, no specific attribution will be made to any individual participant/organisation and no identifiable information will be shared. Participation in this interview will bear no direct impact on the participants; the only aim is to improve the PCE moving forward.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact: CONTACT INFO FROM IPPC.

Sincerely,
CONTACT INFO

Appendix 3: Interview Guides for NPPOs That Have Undertaken a PCE

Introductory statement

Our team has been engaged on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations' International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat to conduct a desk study of the current Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) process and online system, which supports country phytosanitary assessments. We understand that your country has undergone the PCE process and used the associated PCE tools. We would like to ask you a few questions about the process and your experience. This valuable input will help us obtain key data about the PCE, so that we may share findings and provide recommendations for improvements going forward.

Confidentiality assurance

Please note that this conversation will be recorded but is kept confidential between the participants of the interview and our team. We will be meeting with other NPPOs, facilitators and donor countries. From that point, we will analyse all data and group findings thematically: thus, no specific attribution will be made to any individual participant/organisation and no identifiable information will be shared.

Thank you in advance for the generosity of your time and the information you share with us.

General Information

1. Could you start by introducing yourself? (open question)
2. When did your organisation complete a PCE? (open question)
3. What was your role?
 - a) National coordinator
 - b) Editor of modules

- c) NPPO staff participating as stakeholder.
 - d) Not directly involved with the PCE
 - e) Other (Specify)
4. Was the PCE validated and completed in your country?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 5. What was the motivating factor behind your NPPO's decision to initiate a PCE? Generally, did the PCE meet your expectations?
 6. How many of the thirteen modules were selected?
 7. Please indicate the modules were selected.

System Level		Core Activities	
1: Country profile	<input type="checkbox"/>	7: Pest diagnostic capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>
2: National phytosanitary legislation	<input type="checkbox"/>	8: NPPO pest surveillance and pest reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>
3: Environmental forces assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	9: Pest eradication capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization Level		10: Phytosanitary import regulatory system	<input type="checkbox"/>
4: NPPOs mission and strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	11: Pest risk analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>
5: NPPOs structure and processes	<input type="checkbox"/>	12: Pest free areas, places and sites, low pest prevalence areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
6: NPPOs resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	13: Export certification, re-export, transit	<input type="checkbox"/>

PCE Knowledge and Understanding

Through the PCE process (gap identification, strategic planning, validation), it is expected that the NPPO, involving stakeholders and reaching consensus, identifies gaps and weaknesses in its phytosanitary capacities and systems. Once these gaps are identified, the NPPO can create a sovereign plan to address and rectify these issues by applying a strategic planning tool such as cause and effects analysis, SWOT analysis, logical framework, and the final output, the phytosanitary capacity development strategy is validated by stakeholders.

Considering the previous information, please answer the following questions:

8. Prior to undertaking the PCE, how would you rate your understanding of the tool, the process, or the expected outputs?
 - a) High understanding (strong understanding of the process, methodology, and tools, expected outputs)
 - b) Moderate understanding (some knowledge of the process and expected tools)
 - c) Limited understanding (relatively unfamiliar with the methodologies and tools involved and required additional guidance)
 - d) No understanding (concepts and procedures were entirely new to me)
 - e) Other (specify)

9. How did your knowledge of the PCE evolve after commencing the process? (select one option)
- a) High understanding (strong understanding of the process, methodology, and tools, expected outputs)
 - b) Moderate understanding (some knowledge of the process and expected tools)
 - c) Limited understanding (relatively unfamiliar with the methodologies and tools involved and required additional guidance)
 - d) No understanding (concepts and procedures were entirely new to me)
 - e) Other (specify)

10. Please explain, from your perspective, your understanding of the PCE process and tools.
Were there any outstanding questions or concerns? Is there any information you would have liked to receive prior to beginning the process? Did you attend of the PCE training sessions or webinars?

Modules

The PCE modules cover:

- 1) System Level to assess the overarching phytosanitary framework and environment within a country;
- 2) Organization Level to assess structures, processes, and resources of the NPPO; and
- 3) Core Activities that assess the specific phytosanitary functions and capabilities that are crucial for safeguarding plant health.

11. What has been your personal experience with the PCE modules?
How well did the modules align with the roles and functions of your NPPO?
To what extent do the modules meet your NPPO's needs?

Strategic planning tools

In order to effectively develop a Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy, the PCE utilizes various strategic planning tools. These tools include gap identification and causes and effects analysis, SWOT analysis, and logical framework, which provides a structured approach to designing and implementing a Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy. By utilizing these tools, the PCE can develop a comprehensive and effective strategy that considers the organization's capabilities and limitations.

12. Could you please share your personal experience with the PCE strategic planning tools?

How would you describe your overall experience with the PCE strategic planning tools?
Were there any specific challenges or difficulties you encountered while using the PCE strategic planning tools? If so, please describe them.
Can you highlight any notable successes or positive outcomes that you experienced as a result of using the PCE strategic planning tool? Please provide examples.

PCE process

The PCE process is led by the NPPO and involves facilitators who are trained internationally to assess and improve a country's ability to protect plant health. The ultimate goal of the process is to reach a consensus and develop a structured plan that addresses weaknesses and enhances the country's capacity in plant

health, involving the country's stakeholders. The desired outcome of the PCE process is the creation of a National Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy and in new or revised legislation/regulation.

To develop a **National Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy**, the process involves three PCE missions and various stakeholders who work together to identify gaps using a structured questionnaire format during the first mission. During the second PCE mission, strategic planning tools are used to develop a tailored plan for each module. The third mission involves validation of the PCE findings, including activities and estimated costs, and follow-up on the implementation of the strategy and resource mobilization.

13. In your view, what was the impact (if any) of the facilitators of the PCE process?
14. Which of the modules/associated tools was most useful for your NPPO and why?
15. What did your NPPO learn during the three missions? How practical/actionable were the results of the process? Was there anything missing from the process?

For countries who have completed Module 2: In the context of **new or revised legislation/regulation** (Module 2), the process begins with a thorough Situation Analysis to assess the current legal framework's strengths and weaknesses during a first legal mission. As decided by the NPPO, drafting and consultation follow, involving stakeholders' input and the creation of a draft of new or revised legislation/regulation that addresses identified gaps. This draft is then subjected to review and validation, ensuring legal soundness and international alignment. Finally, the Follow-up phase focuses on adoption and implementation of the new or revised legislation/regulation.

16. Could you please share your personal experience with the PCE process.
Were there any specific challenges or obstacles you encountered during the PCE process? If so, please describe them.
What was useful/helpful to you when completing the PCE process?

17. If you completed Module 2, to what extent was the process in Module 2 effective for your NPPO?
18. What was the result of the PCE process for your organisation?
Was a Strategy developed? Was any legislation added/remove/changed as a result?

Uptake and Impact

19. The PCE enables NPPOs to identify and prioritize in-house activities that can be implemented without external financial support. Have these activities been implemented by your NPPO? Why or why not?
20. To what extent has your NPPO used the findings of the PCE to engage development partners and institutions at both national and international levels for resource mobilization?
Was your NPPO able to secure project funding to implement the PCE outcomes?
21. To date, have the activities from the PCE been implemented by your NPPO? How?

22. To what extent did the PCE process contribute to your NPPO's ability to plan and/or develop strategies?

What skills did your NPPO staff learn by undertaking the PCE (e.g. problem analysis, SWOT, log frame)?

Process enhancement

23. How could the PCE be improved, if at all, to better meet your needs? What would make the PCE even more useful and/or desirable to your NPPO in the future?

Closing

24. Thank you for all of the information you shared today. Do you have any questions or additional comments for us?

Appendix 4: Interview Guide for NPPOs Who Have Not Undertaken a PCE and had expressed concerns on the PCE

Good day,

Our team has been engaged on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations' International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat to conduct a desk study of the current Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool and process, which supports country phytosanitary assessments. We understand that your country has not yet undergone the PCE process or used the associated PCE tools. We would like to ask you a few questions about your current knowledge and experience. This valuable input will help us obtain key data about the PCE, so that we may share findings and provide recommendations for improvements going forward.

Please note that this conversation is kept confidential between the participants of the interview and our team. We will be meeting with other NPPOs, facilitators, and donor countries. From that point, we will analyse all data and group findings thematically: thus, no specific attribution will be made to any individual participant/organisation and no identifiable information will be shared.

Thank you in advance for the generosity of your time and the information you share with us.

Questions

1. Could you start by introducing yourself? What is your role? When did your organisation become aware of the PCE?
2. How would you rate your understanding of the tool, the process, or the expected outputs?

- a) High understanding (strong understanding of the process, methodology, and tools, expected outputs)
 - b) Moderate understanding (some knowledge of the process and expected tools)
 - c) Limited understanding (relatively unfamiliar with the methodologies and tools involved and required additional guidance)
 - d) No understanding (concepts and procedures were entirely new to me)
 - e) Other (specify)
3. Regarding your current understanding of the PCE, do you have any outstanding questions or concerns?
Is there any information you would like to receive? Did you attend of the PCE training sessions or webinars? Have you read the guide?
4. What would be the motivating factor behind your NPPO's decision to initiate a PCE?
- a) The desire for a comprehensive assessment of the phytosanitary system and strategies to transition from the current state to the desired state.
 - b) The aim to enhance the country's standing in international markets and improve import and export procedures.
 - c) The commitment to demonstrate dedication to plant health, fostering engagement with capacity development partners.
 - d) The goal to enhance the efficiency of the phytosanitary system, through modernizing the organizational structure and processes of the NPPO thereby benefiting the national agricultural sector.
 - e) Other: _____
5. If your NPPO has not completed a PCE, why not?
What are some of the barriers, if any, preventing you from going through the PCE process?
What would be useful/helpful to you prior to commencing the PCE process?
6. If your country has started the PCE, but not completed, why?
- a) Issues with the online system
 - b) Insufficient information
 - c) Process is too onerous
 - d) Timing constraints
 - e) Lack of capacity to complete
 - f) Insufficient funds/funding
 - g) Lack of support at higher levels (leadership)
 - h) Other: _____
7. How could the PCE be improved, if at all, to better meet your needs? What would make the PCE more useful and/or desirable to your NPPO?
8. To your knowledge, to what extent might the PCE meet your NPPO's needs?
Which PCE-generated outputs most interest you (e.g. report, strategic plan, diagnostic tools)? Which skills would interest you (e.g. problem analysis, SWOT, log frame)? How might you envision using the results of the PCE (e.g. securing funding, changing legislation)?

9. At this point in time, would you recommend to your NPPO that it undertakes the PCE in the near future? Why or why not?

What other information or forms of communication might you need to provide the recommendation? What other types of support might you need to provide the recommendation (financial, administrative support, other)?

10. What is your understanding of the PCE's relevance to the plant health community?

11. Thank you for all of the information you shared today. Do you have any questions or additional comments for us?

Appendix 5: Interview Guide for PCE Facilitators

Good day,

Our team has been engaged on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations' International Plant Protection Convention (IPCC) Secretariat to conduct a desk study of the current Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool and process, which supports country phytosanitary assessments. We understand that you are a facilitator for the PCE. We would like to ask you a few questions about the process and your experience. This valuable input will help us obtain key data about the PCE, so that we may share findings and provide recommendations for improvements going forward.

Please note that this conversation is kept confidential between the participants of the interview and our team. We will be meeting with other NPPOs, facilitators, and donor countries. From that point, we will analyse all data and group findings thematically: thus, no specific attribution will be made to any individual participant/organisation and no identifiable information will be shared.

Thank you in advance for the generosity of your time and the information you share with us.

Questions

12. Could you start by introducing yourself? When did you become a PCE Facilitator and why?
13. Prior to your training to become a facilitator, had you had any experience with the PCE? Please describe.
14. Prior to becoming involved with the PCE, how would you rate your understanding of the tool, the process, or the expected outputs?
- f) High understanding (strong understanding of the process, methodology, and tools, expected outputs)
 - g) Moderate understanding (some knowledge of the process and expected tools)
 - h) Limited understanding (relatively unfamiliar with the methodologies and tools involved and required additional guidance)
 - i) No understanding (concepts and procedures were entirely new to me)
 - j) Other (specify)

15. How did your knowledge of the PCE evolve after becoming involved in the process as a donor organisation? (select one option)
- High understanding (strong understanding of the process, methodology, and tools, expected outputs)
 - Moderate understanding (some knowledge of the process and expected tools)
 - Limited understanding (relatively unfamiliar with the methodologies and tools involved and required additional guidance)
 - No understanding (concepts and procedures were entirely new to me)
 - Other (specify)
16. What can you share about the existing material and communication methods for the PCE?
Is the existing information readily available? Is it well understood? Are the communication methods working? What could be improved?
17. From your perspective, what are the key components that are essential for a successful PCE experience? And, what are the desired outcomes for the PCE?
18. Please tell us about your experience with facilitating and administering the PCE modules, tools, and process.
What challenges, if any, do you experience? What successes, if any, do you experience? What are some of the barriers, if any, you have noted for the PCE process? What is useful/helpful for successful completion of the PCE process?
19. In your view, what is the impact of the facilitators of the PCE process?
20. Regarding the modules, please rate from 0 to 10 the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Use 0 for no agreement and 10 for absolute agreement.

a) The PCE modules provide a comprehensive evaluation of phytosanitary capacities.	
b) The PCE modules align well with the roles and functions of NPPOs and address areas that are fundamental to NPPOs mission.	
c) The PCE modules have been designed with a keen understanding of NPPO needs.	
d) The PCE modules provide valuable insights for improvement.	
e) The PCE modules are relevant to NPPOs.	
f) There is alignment between the areas assessed by the PCE modules and the core objectives of NPPOs.	
g) The PCE modules provide a tailored (e.g. non-generic) assessment of the NPPO.	
h) The modules provide insights that easily translate into actionable changes.	

21. To your knowledge, to what extent does the PCE process contribute to NPPOs' ability to plan and/or develop strategies?
22. To your knowledge, to what extent does the PCE meet NPPOs' needs?
How could the PCE be improved, if at all, to better meet their needs? What would make the PCE even more useful and/or desirable to NPPOs?
is the PCE suitable for a broad range of NPPOs? If not, how could the PCE be improved to meet the needs of NPPOs that might not currently see a good "fit"?

23. To your knowledge, how useful are the PCE tools for NPPOs?
What, in your opinion, are some of the most useful outputs from the PCE Tool (e.g. report, strategic plan, diagnostic tools)?
What skills do NPPOs learn by undertaking the PCE (e.g. problem analysis, SWOT, log frame)?
How successful have NPPOs been in securing project funding to implement the PCE outcomes?
What about in revising their plant health legislation?
24. How would you rate the online system?
What works and what doesn't work? How could it be improved?
25. Where can the PCE be improved, when it comes to design, user interface, efficiency, and outputs?
26. Thank you for all of the information you shared today. Do you have any questions or additional comments for us?

Appendix 6: Interview Guide for Donors

Good day,

Our team has been engaged on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations' International Plant Protection Convention (IPCC) Secretariat to conduct a desk study of the current Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool and process, which supports country phytosanitary assessments. We understand that your organisation has been a donor for NPPO(s) going through the PCE. We would like to ask you a few questions about the process and your experience. This valuable input will help us obtain key data about the PCE, so that we may share findings and provide recommendations for improvements going forward.

Please note that this conversation is kept confidential between the participants of the interview and our team. We will be meeting with other NPPOs, facilitators, and donor countries. From that point, we will analyse all data and group findings thematically: thus, no specific attribution will be made to any individual participant/organisation and no identifiable information will be shared.

Thank you in advance for the generosity of your time and the information you share with us.

Questions

27. Could you start by introducing yourself? When did your organisation become a donor for PCE, and, what was your role?
If you were not directly involved with the PCE, how familiar are you with the PCE tool? Have you read the guide? How recently? Do you have a copy of the PCE report?
28. Tell us more about your organisation's experience as a donor. How many NPPOs has your organisation sponsored?
29. What, to your knowledge, is the reason behind your organisation's decision to become a donor?

- f) The desire for a comprehensive assessment of the phytosanitary system and strategies to transition from the current state to the desired state.
- g) The aim to enhance the NPPO country's standing in international markets and improve import and export procedures.
- h) The commitment to demonstrate dedication to plant health, fostering engagement with capacity development partners.
- i) The goal to enhance the efficiency of the phytosanitary system, through modernizing the organizational structure and processes of the NPPO, thereby benefiting the national agricultural sector.
- j) Other: _____

Through the PCE process (gap identification, strategic planning, validation), it is expected that the NPPO, involving stakeholders and reaching consensus, identifies gaps and weaknesses in its phytosanitary capacities and systems. Once these gaps are identified, the NPPO can create a sovereign plan to address and rectify these issues by applying a strategic planning tool such as cause and effects analysis, SWOT analysis, logical framework, and the final output, the phytosanitary capacity development strategy is validated by stakeholders. Considering the previous information, please answer the following questions:

- 30. Prior to becoming involved with the PCE, how would you rate your understanding of the tool, the process, or the expected outputs?
 - k) High understanding (strong understanding of the process, methodology, and tools, expected outputs)
 - l) Moderate understanding (some knowledge of the process and expected tools)
 - m) Limited understanding (relatively unfamiliar with the methodologies and tools involved and required additional guidance)
 - n) No understanding (concepts and procedures were entirely new to me)
 - o) Other (specify)

- 31. How did your knowledge of the PCE evolve after becoming involved in the process as a donor organisation? (select one option)
- 32. High understanding (strong understanding of the process, methodology, and tools, expected outputs)
- 33. Moderate understanding (some knowledge of the process and expected tools)
- 34. Limited understanding (relatively unfamiliar with the methodologies and tools involved and required additional guidance)
- 35. No understanding (concepts and procedures were entirely new to me)
- 36. Other (specify)

- 37. From the point of view of available information about the PCE, do you have any outstanding questions or concerns? Is there any information you would have liked to receive? Did you attend of the PCE training sessions or webinars?

- 38. How did your understanding of the PCE change after financing a PCE?

39. Please tell us about your experience with the PCE from the donor perspective. *How did it go? What challenges, if any, did you experience? What successes, if any, did you experience?*
What were some of the barriers, if any, when going through the PCE process? What was useful/helpful for completing the PCE process?
40. From your perspective, to what extent does/did the PCE meet the needs of the NPPO your organisation sponsored?
How could the PCE be improved, if at all, to better meet needs? What would make the PCE even more useful and/or desirable to other NPPOs in the future?
41. To your knowledge, to what extent did the PCE process and tools contribute to the NPPO's ability to plan and/or develop strategies?
What were the most useful outputs from the PCE (e.g. report, strategic plan, diagnostic tools)? What skills were learned? What were the direct outcomes of the PCE?
42. Where can the PCE be improved, when it comes to design, user interface, efficiency, and outputs?
43. After the initial experience with the PCE, did/would your organisation choose to sponsor another NPPO through the process? Why or why not?
44. Thank you for all of the information you shared today. Do you have any questions or additional comments for us?

Appendix 7: Survey Questionnaire for NPPOs

Survey Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PCE-DeskStudy>

About

Our team has been engaged on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations' International Plant Protection Convention (IPCC) Secretariat to conduct a desk study of the current Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) process and online system, which supports country phytosanitary assessments. We understand that your country has undergone the PCE process and used the associated PCE tools. We would like to ask you a few questions about the process and your experience. This valuable input will help us obtain key data about the PCE, so that we may share findings and provide recommendations for improvements going forward.

Please note: This survey should take you 15-30 minutes to complete, and we ask that you complete it prior to your interview (if you are participating in one). All questions in this survey are optional. If you believe you do not know/have the information for a particular question, please either leave the question blank or respond "N/A".

Confidentiality assurance

Please note that the authors of survey responses are kept confidential between the participants of the interview and the consultant team. All respondents will be provided with a numerical response tag. We will be meeting with other NPPOs, facilitators and donor countries. From that point, we will analyse all

data and roll up findings: thus, no specific attribution will be made to any individual participant/organisation and no identifiable information will be shared.

Thank you in advance for the generosity of your time and the information you share with us.

About You

1. Country name: _____
2. Your Organisation: _____
3. What was your role?
 - a) National coordinator
 - b) Editor of modules
 - c) NPPO staff participating as stakeholder.
 - d) Not directly involved with the PCE
 - e) Other: _____

General: About Your PCE

4. What was the motivating factor behind your NPPO's decision to initiate a PCE?
 - k) The desire for a comprehensive assessment of the phytosanitary system and strategies to transition from the current state to the desired state.
 - l) The aim to enhance the country's standing in international markets and improve import and export procedures.
 - m) The commitment to demonstrate dedication to plant health, fostering engagement with capacity development partners.
 - n) The goal to enhance the efficiency of the phytosanitary system, through modernizing the organizational structure and processes of the NPPO thereby benefiting the national agricultural sector.
 - o) Other: _____
5. How many of the thirteen modules were selected?
6. Please indicate the modules were selected.

System Level		Core Activities	
1: Country profile	<input type="checkbox"/>	7: Pest diagnostic capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>
2: National phytosanitary legislation	<input type="checkbox"/>	8: NPPO pest surveillance and pest reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>
3: Environmental forces assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	9: Pest eradication capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization Level		10: Phytosanitary import regulatory system	<input type="checkbox"/>
4: NPPOs mission and strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	11: Pest risk analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>
5: NPPOs structure and processes	<input type="checkbox"/>	12: Pest free areas, places and sites, low pest prevalence areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
6: NPPOs resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	13: Export certification, re-export, transit	<input type="checkbox"/>

Modules

The PCE modules cover:

- 1) System Level to assess the overarching phytosanitary framework and environment within a country;
- 2) Organization Level to assess structures, processes, and resources of the NPPO; and
- 3) Core Activities that assess the specific phytosanitary functions and capabilities that are crucial for safeguarding plant health.

7. Considering this information, please rate from 0 to 10 the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Use 0 for no agreement and 10 for absolute agreement.

i) The PCE modules provide a comprehensive evaluation of phytosanitary capacities.	
j) The PCE modules align well with the roles and functions of NPPOs and address areas that are fundamental to NPPOs mission.	
k) The PCE modules have been designed with a keen understanding of NPPO needs.	
l) The PCE modules provide valuable insights for improvement.	
m) The PCE modules are relevant to NPPOs.	
n) There is alignment between the areas assessed by the PCE modules and the core objectives of NPPOs.	
o) The PCE modules provide a tailored (e.g. non-generic) assessment of the NPPO.	
p) The modules provide insights that easily translate into actionable changes.	

Strategic planning tools

In order to effectively develop a Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy, the PCE utilizes various strategic planning tools. These tools include gap identification and causes and effects analysis, SWOT analysis, and logical framework, which provides a structured approach to designing and implementing a Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy.

8. Considering this information, please rate from 0 to 10 the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Use 0 for no agreement and 10 for absolute agreement.

a) The utilization of strategic planning tools in the PCE is highly effective for developing a Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy.	
b) Gaps identification and its causes and effects analysis are valuable tools for assessing phytosanitary capacity and planning improvements.	
c) SWOT analysis is a useful approach for evaluating our organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the context of phytosanitary capacity development.	
d) The logical framework provided offers a structured and effective way to design and implement projects for improving phytosanitary capacity.	
e) Through the use of strategic planning tools, NPPOs can develop a comprehensive and effective strategy that considers NPPOs' capabilities and limitations.	

PCE process

The PCE process is led by the NPPO and involves facilitators who are trained internationally to assess and improve a country's ability to protect plant health. The ultimate goal of the process is to reach a consensus and develop a structured plan that addresses weaknesses and enhances the country's capacity in plant health, involving the country's stakeholders. The desired outcome of the PCE process is the creation of a National Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy and in new or revised legislation/regulation.

To develop a **National Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy**, the process involves three PCE missions and various stakeholders who work together to identify gaps using a structured questionnaire format during the first mission. During the second PCE mission, strategic planning tools are used to develop a tailored plan for each module. The third mission involves validation of the PCE findings, including activities and estimated costs, and follow-up on the implementation of the strategy and resource mobilization.

9. Please rate from 0 to 10 the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Use 0 for no agreement and 10 for absolute agreement.

a)	The involvement of internationally trained facilitators in the PCE process is crucial for assessing country's plant health capacities.	
b)	The country's stakeholders play a crucial role during the PCE process to develop a structured plan that addresses weaknesses and enhances plant health capacities.	
c)	The structured questionnaire format used during the first mission in the PCE process effectively identifies gaps in NPPO plant health capacities and is a crucial component of the PCE process.	
d)	The use of strategic planning tools during the second mission, including the development of tailored plans, is a valuable approach for addressing weaknesses in plant health capacities and is a crucial component of the PCE process.	
e)	During the third mission, involving validation of the PCE findings, activities, and estimated costs is a crucial component of the PCE process.	
f)	The follow-up on the implementation of the strategy and resource mobilization is a crucial component of the PCE process.	

For countries who completed Module 2 only: In the context of **new or revised legislation/regulation** (Module 2), the process begins with a thorough Situation Analysis to assess the current legal framework's strengths and weaknesses during a first legal mission. As decided by the NPPO, drafting and consultation follow, involving stakeholders' input and the creation of a draft of new or revised legislation/regulation that addresses identified gaps. This draft is then subjected to review and validation, ensuring legal soundness and international alignment. Finally, the Follow-up phase focuses on adoption and implementation of the new or revised legislation/regulation.

10. Please rate from 0 to 10 the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Use 0 for no agreement and 10 for absolute agreement (NB: if the legal module was not selected, please move on to the next question without answering this one.).

a)	The overall process is highly effective for developing new or revised legislation/regulation (Module 2).	
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b)	The situation Analysis is useful to identify to assess the current legal framework's strengths and weaknesses	
c)	As decided by the NPPO, drafting and consultation involving stakeholders' input and the creation of a draft of new or revised legislation/regulation is a crucial step of the process	
d)	Validation of the draft new or revised legislation/regulation is crucial to address legal gaps in context.	
e)	The adoption of new or revised legislation and regulations provides legal mechanisms to address identified phytosanitary issues.	

11. To what extent do you agree with the current PCE process?

- a) I completely agree with the current PCE process – no changes are required.
- b) I agree to great extent with the current PCE process, but some changes are required.
- c) I somewhat agree with the current PCE process, but many changes are required.
- d) I strongly disagree with the PCE process, and believe it should be entirely redesigned.

12. Please explain your answer: _____

Uptake and Impact

13. The PCE enables NPPOs to identify and prioritize in-house activities that can be implemented without external financial support. Have these activities been implemented by the NPPO?

- a) Yes, all identified in-house activities have been successfully implemented.
- b) Yes, some of the identified in-house activities have been implemented.
- c) Yes, a few identified in-house activities have been partially implemented.
- d) No, none of the identified in-house activities have been implemented.
- e) I'm unsure about the status of the implementation of in-house activities.
- f) I'm unsure if the PCE identified any in-house activities for implementation.
- g) Other: _____

14. How has your NPPO used the findings of the PCE to engage development partners and institutions at both national and international levels for resource mobilization?

- a) Our NPPO has successfully mobilized resources at both national and international levels based on the PCE findings.
- b) Resource mobilization at international levels has been successful, but not at the national level.
- c) Our NPPO has secured resources at the national level but have not yet pursued international partnerships.
- d) We have initiated discussions with international partners, but resource mobilization is still in progress.
- e) Resource mobilization efforts are in the planning stages, and we intend to engage both national and international institutions.
- f) Our NPPO hasn't yet started resource mobilization efforts based on the PCE findings.

- g) Our NPPO is in the process of assessing potential resource mobilization opportunities based on the PCE findings.
- h) Other: _____

15. Have the activities from the PCE been implemented by your NPPO?

- a) Yes, all the activities have been fully implemented.
- b) Yes, most of the activities have been implemented, but not all.
- c) Some activities have been implemented, but there are significant ones that are pending.
- d) Implementation has started, but progress has been slow.
- e) No, the activities have not been implemented yet.
- f) The implementation status is being assessed, and decisions are pending.
- g) Resource constraints have hindered the implementation progress.
- h) Other: _____

16. What were the most useful outputs from the PCE process? (Select multiple choices)

- a) Phytosanitary Capacity Development Strategy
- b) New or revised legislation/regulation
- c) Collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders involved in plant health
- d) Strategic planning tools such as cause and effects analysis, SWOT analysis, and the logical framework
- e) Gaps and weaknesses identification
- f) Cost estimates for proposed activities
- g) Ability to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation, capacity development, and plant health management.
- h) Other: _____

Process enhancement

17. How can we improve the PCE? You may select multiple choices to answer.

- a) Improving the strategy development phases (gap analysis, causes and effects analysis, SWOT, and Log Frame) and providing generic choices country may customize to their needs.
- b) Improving the clarity of the questionnaires for gap analysis and with clear guidelines and templates for identifying gaps systematically.
- c) Incorporating methodologies for consensus-building among stakeholders during the gap identification and strategy development phases.
- d) Improving the online system that supports the PCE. Ensure it is user-friendly, with features that guide users through the process, provide real-time progress tracking, and streamline data collection.
- e) Developing additional funding mechanisms to support the implementation of PCE recommendations and strategies.

- f) Offering in advance interactive and hands-on training for NPPOs and facilitators in using strategic planning tools effectively.
- g) Other: _____

Closing

18. Thank you for all of the information you shared today. Any other comments?

Appendix 8: Document Review Resources

Day, R., Quinlan, M., and Ogutu, W. (2006). Analysis of the Application of the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation Tool.

FAO (2001). Third Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures.

IPPC (2018). Developing a Strategy for the Phytosanitary Capacity Development (PCE) Tool (Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat)

IPPC (2021). Confidentiality Agreement for Representatives from International Organizations and Donors Participating in the IPPC Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation Process as Observers.

https://assets.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2022/02/Confidentiality_agreement_regarding_the_IPPC_PCE.pdf

IPPC (2021). Procedure for a PCE Facilitator Certification.

https://assets.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2022/02/Procedure_for_PCE_facilitator_certification.pdf

IPPC (2021). Tenth Session of the Strategic Planning Group Meeting (SPG). Virtual Meeting 19 and 21 October 2021.

IPPC (2024). Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE). What is a Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation?

<https://www.ippc.int/en/about/core-activities/capacity-development/phytosanitary-capacity-evaluation/>

IPPC Secretariat (2021). Applying Design Thinking to Implementation and Capacity Development Issues – Pilot.

Ransom, L. (2021). Ex-post Evaluation of the STDF Project. Training of Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) Facilitators.

Appendix 9: Possible Avenues for Improving Communications

The Review Workshop held on March 5, 2023, revealed several interesting avenues for improving communications. This short appendix summarizes the discussion:

1. In the early days of the PCE, certain questions posed by NPPOs were answered by IPPC with reference to the focus on confidentiality. Although confidentiality is inherently an important trait to the PCE, the result was messaging that could have been perceived as ambiguous or shrouded in secrecy, leading to more concerns. The PCE is now more “open”, but the previous perceptions remain. The increased transparency needs to be clearly communicated. Suggestions for this include “sneak previews” of the tool, more webinars, and Q&A sessions/meetings with NPPOs prior to PCE implementation.
2. Communications must share more about what the PCE is and what the modules entail. The information conveyed must present NPPOs with adequate information for the selection of modules to avoid situations where NPPOs simply choose all or most modules because they feel that is the way to garner the best value from the PCE.
3. Information can be conveyed in ways that are more succinct and simpler. Consider the use of videos, infographics, and dashboards.
4. Consider sharing more success stories and simpler descriptions of the PCE.
5. Share information in ways that NPPOs will be likely to access it. For example, it was suggested that NPPOs may be reluctant or unwilling to seek information for themselves on the website. Instead, consider ways of directly providing information to the NPPOs.
6. Convey the idea that the PCE is for all NPPOs. Consider using the success stories from developed countries (e.g. Estonia) to share the value of the PCE for non-developing countries. Consider ways of making the PCE more attractive to developed countries.
7. Communicate the possible ways of doing the PCE flexibly (e.g. “PCE lite”). Explain how countries can undertake the PCE in self-assessment mode.
8. Communicate the value added by the PCE. Consider sharing tangible results via tracked indicators.
9. Explain the role and value of facilitators. Share the success stories around facilitator involvement and explain that the facilitators are there to help navigate the process (not as examiners, for instance). Clarify where facilitators come from, and how they can be matched with countries in a way that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.
10. Describe the need for more facilitators. Be transparent about the training and certification process.
11. Explain the benefits of PCE for capacity development. Share how facilitators can help countries increase their strategic capacity.
12. Provide more transparency around the costs of the PCE, including where the funding comes from, how it will be used, and the tangible outcomes related to the expenses.

Appendix 10: PCE Modules

From [IPPC's website on the PCE tool](#), the modules are described as such:

“The PCE modules cover the **System Level**, which assesses the overarching phytosanitary framework and environment within a country; the **Organization Level**, which assesses the structures, processes, and resources of the NPPO; and the **Core Activities**, which assesses the specific phytosanitary functions and capabilities that are crucial for safeguarding plant health.

The number of modules is chosen by national stakeholders, and it reflects and depends on the country's needs. A minimum of 5 modules is recommended, excluding module 1 – country profile – being mandatory.”

Figure 3: Modules

