Support to the International Plant Protection Convention

In terms of normative activities, we support the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), headquartered at FAO in Rome, to develop international standards and to create capacity in Member States in order to apply them.
The IPPC is an intergovernmental treaty signed by over 180 countries, aiming to protecting the world's plant resources from the spread and introduction of pests, and promoting safe trade. The Convention introduced International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) as its main tool to achieve its goals, making it the sole global standard setting organization for plant health.

The IPPC is one of the "Three Sisters" recognized by the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) Agreement, along with the Codex Alimentarius Commission for food safety standards and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) for animal health standards.

Our involvement has been through the support to the Technical Panel on Pest Free Areas and Systems Approaches for Fruit Flies (TPFF) and the Technical Panel on Phytosanitary Treatments (TPPT). We participated in a thorough revision of ISPM No. 3, "Code of Conduct for the Import and Release of Exotic Biological Control Agents" to update and broaden its scope. The use and transboundary shipment of sterile insects had so far been excluded from ISPM No. 3, because biological control agents had been defined as self-replicating organisms. Since the implementation of the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) has largely been dominated by the public sector, this did not represent a problem for the transboundary shipment of sterile insects. However, the lack of regulatory framework did discourage private investment in the production and shipment of sterile insects.

The revised ISPM No. 3 "Guidelines for the Export, Shipment, Import, and Release of Biological Control Agents and Other Beneficial Organisms" explicitly includes sterile insects as beneficial organisms in the revised standard to facilitate the application of SIT for Member States of the IPPC. It also includes official definitions for sterile insect: "an insect that as a result of an appropriate treatment is unable to produce viable offspring", and Sterile Insect Technique: "a method of pest control using area-wide inundative releases of sterile insects to reduce reproduction in a field population of the same species" ISPM No. 5 Glossary of Phytosanitary Terms.

As members of the IPPC-TPFF, we have been involved in providing technical support and in funding and hosting in Vienna meetings of this fruit fly panel. This group of experts has drafted international standards, some of which have in the meantime gone through several rounds of country reviews and have been adopted by the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures. These include: ISPM No. 26) "Establishment of pest free areas for fruit flies (Tephritidae)", and ISPM No. 35 "Systems approach for pest risk management of fruit flies (Tephritidae)" and the ISPM No. 37 “Determination of host status of fruit to fruit flies (Tephritidae)”.

Together with our colleagues from the Food and Environmental Subprogramme of the Joint FAO/IAEA Programme we assisted in the establishment of ISPM No. 18 "Guidelines for the Use of Irradiation as a Phytosanitary Measure", and we are currently supporting another IPPC-TPPT which is involved in developing post-harvest treatments, including fruit irradiation treatments for fruit flies. As result many annexes of ISPM No 28 “ Phytosanitary treatments for regulated pests” have been adopted.

We have also supported IPPC in meetings dealing with the international recognition of pest free areas which are of relevance for fruit fly and other area-wide programmes, as well as in creating

capacity in Member States to use the international standards in order to level the playing field in international agricultural trade.