



Convention on Biological Diversity

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**AD HOC TECHNICAL EXPERT GROUP MEETING
ON ADDRESSING THE RISKS ASSOCIATED
WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF ALIEN SPECIES
AS PETS, AQUARIUM AND TERRARIUM
SPECIES, AND AS LIVE BAIT AND LIVE FOOD**
Geneva, 16-18 February 2011

CONSIDERATION OF AQUATIC PLANTS WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL PLANT PROTECTION CONVENTION

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. The Executive Secretary is circulating herewith, for the information of participants in the meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Experts on addressing the risks associated with the introduction of alien species as pets, aquarium and terrarium species, and live bait and live food, a note on the consideration of aquatic plants within the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).
2. The note was prepared by the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention and will also be considered at the sixth session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures which will be held in Rome from 14 to 18 March 2011.
3. The document is circulated in the form and language in which it was submitted to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

January 2011



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COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

Sixth Session

Rome, 14 - 18 March 2011

Consideration of aquatic plants within the IPPC

Agenda Item 15.2 of the Provisional Agenda

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1. The issue of aquatic invasive species is becoming increasingly debated in various international forums. International Standards for Phytosanitary measures (ISPMs) under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) aim to assist countries to protect plants from the introduction and spread of pests. Some aquatic invasive species are pests of aquatic plants. Because there has been some debate over the scope and extent to which the protection of aquatic plants is covered by the IPPC, it is now pertinent for the IPPC to consider this issue in more detail and, if appropriate, develop further guidance on aquatic plants. To consider this issue, the IPPC Secretariat proposes to convene a Technical Consultation (TC) on aquatic plants.

BACKGROUND

2. Many aquatic plants (including green algal species) can be considered as weeds, resulting in displacement of natural flora and damaging plant production through competition for nutrients and light. They may also have indirect impacts on plant production such as blocking water channels, interfering with irrigation systems, or threatening aquatic plant production.

3. Mr Geoffrey Howard, Global Invasive Species Coordinator for International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) gave a presentation on aquatic plants at the Fifth Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-5, (2010)). His presentation defined aquatic plants as “*plants that rely on water, as either [free] water dependent plants or those that can survive in flooded conditions*”. Other definitions referring to hydrophytic plants or hydrophytes that have adapted to growing in aquatic environments are consistent with this definition.

4. The protection of aquatic plants in wetlands and the management of the invasive potential of aquatic plants are issues that have been frequently raised, including by Contracting Parties to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

5. The IPPC defines plants as ‘*Living plants and parts thereof, including seeds and germplasm*’. Based on this definition, aquatic plants are clearly a subset of plants as defined by the IPPC and therefore fall within the scope of the IPPC in regard to plant protection.

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6. Algae such as seaweed are often classified as “plants”. The Oxford Dictionary (2010) defines algae as: *“simple, non-flowering, and typically aquatic plant[s] of a large assemblage that includes the seaweeds and many single-celled forms...”*
7. The only direct reference to aquatic plants in IPPC/CPM documents is in the scope section of ISPM 1:2006 that includes aquatic plants in a list of plants that are subject to protection. There is a need to consider the relevance, scope and role of ISPMs in protecting aquatic plants and managing any risks that may be associated with invasive aquatic plants.
8. The guidance given in ISPM 11:2004 on risk analysis for quarantine pests is relevant to the risk assessment and risk management of aquatic plants as pests. However, some of the possible pathways for entry of aquatic plants as potential pests, for example via aquarium trade, may not be pathways that plant quarantine risk assessors are familiar with. Risk management of aquatic plants is likely to involve similar measures and activities to those associated with management of non-aquatic plants. This could include inspection, treatment, sourcing from areas with a defined pest status, consideration of end use, and etc. It may be desirable to be more explicit regards aquatic pest species in the ISPMs and other IPPC Guidance material.
9. Some aspects of the protection of marine and freshwater algal species from pests may be covered by other international agreements. For example, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has a convention (not yet in force) that is relevant to the management of risks associated with the introduction of invasive marine organisms via the ballast water of ships. The scope of the definition of the term “aquatic plants” particularly in regard to the inclusion of algae is an issue that CPM should consider.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The CPM is invited to:
 1. *Request* the Secretariat to convene a Technical Consultation (TC) on aquatic plants, subject to the availability of extra-budgetary resources, to provide specific guidance and recommendations on the subject;
 2. *Agree* to the proposed terms of reference for a TC on aquatic plants detailed in Attachment 1;
 3. *Note* that the TC on aquatic plants will provide a report to CPM for their consideration and further action.

Proposed Terms of Reference for a Technical Consultation (TC) on Aquatic Plants**Scope**

The protection of wetlands and aquatic plants from pests is a significant issue for many countries. The only direct reference to aquatic plants in ISPMs is in the scope of ISPM 1:2006. In existing ISPMs, there is a need to consider the need for explicit guidance in protecting aquatic plants from pests and managing risk from aquatic plants that have the potential to be pests. The scope of the term “aquatic plants” also needs consideration.

Tasks

The TC on aquatic plants should:

1. Consider the scope of the term “aquatic plants” under the IPPC. In particular, provide recommendations on the inclusion of algae in a definition of aquatic plants.
 - Discuss and provide recommendations on the scope and role of other international agreements that are relevant to aquatic plants with the objective of more clearly defining the scope of the IPPC in this regard.
 - Consider and provide recommendations on the scope of aquatic pests under the IPPC, particularly marine pests.
2. Discuss and provide recommendations the role of existing ISPMs and, if appropriate, provide advice on any modifications that may be needed to take account of the protection of aquatic plants and the management of aquatic plants that may be pests.
 - Identify gaps in, and provide recommendations on, existing ISPMs and suggest topics for inclusion in the IPPC standards setting programmes to address these gaps.
3. Consider and provide recommendations on the explanatory or guidance documentation to clarify the role and function of the IPPC and ISPMs in managing the potential risks associated with aquatic pests.

Participation

Experts from NPPOs from all FAO regions, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the International Maritime Organization, other relevant international organizations and the Expert Working Group on Pest Risk Analysis for Plants as Quarantine Pests.

Funding

Extra-budgetary resources.

References

IPPC. 1997. International Plant Protection Convention. Rome, IPPC, FAO.

ISPM 1. 2006. *Phytosanitary principles for the protection of plants and the application of phytosanitary measures in international trade*. Rome, IPPC, FAO.

ISPM 11. 2004. *Pest risk analysis for quarantine pests including analysis of environmental risks and modified living organisms*. Rome, IPPC, FAO.

Oxford Dictionaries. 2010. Available at <http://oxforddictionaries.com> (accessed December 2010).