

9th REGIONAL MEETING OF PACIFIC HEADS OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY SERVICES (PHOAFS)

Paper reference	Session 4: Agenda item 1
Title	Progress update: Pacific Plant Protection Organisation (PPPO)
Action	For Information
Author(s)	Dr. Visoni Timote, Riten Gosai Reviewed by: PPPO Executive Committee

Background

1. Founded in 1994, the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation (PPPO) is one of the 10 Regional Plant Protection Organisations (RPPOs) recognised by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). The PPPO aims to maintain the Pacific region's Biosecurity, Sanitary and Phytosanitary standards (SPS) to prevent entry, establishment and spread of transboundary pests and diseases. It does this by:
 - a) Ensuring consideration of the views and concerns of PPPO Member Countries in developing and implementing global phytosanitary measures.
 - b) Assisting in the development and implementation of effective and justified phytosanitary measures.
 - c) Providing a framework for regional and global cooperation in phytosanitary matters consistent with international principles for trade in plants and plant products.
 - d) Facilitating information flow among Members, other RPPOs, and international SPS bodies.
 - e) Collaborating with the Pacific Community (SPC) Land Resources Division (LRD) on specific biosecurity and SPS issues, including pesticide usage and controls in the region and integrated pest management.
2. The PPPO secretariat is housed within SPC–LRD. It supports Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) in addressing biosecurity and quarantine issues covering pre-border, border, and post-border activities. The LRD manages the secretariat functions of the PPPO and provides complementary technical services in plant health, biosecurity and SPS.

3. The PPPO works with member countries . The Executive Committee (ExCo) guides the strategic directions and priorities of the PPPO with the Regional Technical Board (Full Board) meeting taking place every three years where the triennial PPPO workplan is agreed and Exco changes over.. Given the increases in trade volume and the rise in e-commerce, the need for biosecurity to protect our borders and facilitate safe trade remains utmost priority.
4. Development partners operating in the region continue to support the work of the PPPO in extending biosecurity and SPS-related assistance to PICTs. These include:
 - a) European Union – Safe Agriculture trade Facilitation through Economic integration in the Pacific (SAFE Pacific) Project
 - b) Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), Australia – Pacific Biosecurity Partnerships Program (PBPP)
 - c) Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), New Zealand – Enhanced Pacific Market Access Partnership (EPMAP) Project

Purpose

5. This paper presents the progress of the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation (PPPO) 's work. It will present the actions implemented to support the biosecurity, sanitary, and phytosanitary (SPS) services the PPPO Member Countries provided since the last update.

The update covers four main areas of work as follows.

- a) **Strengthening Phytosanitary Standards and compliance with International Guidelines**
- b) **Strengthening management systems across the biosecurity continuum.**
- c) **Improved Market Access and Safe Trade**
- d) **PPPO 10th Regional Technical Board Meeting Outcomes and the Priorities of PPPO for 2024-2025**

Strengthening Phytosanitary Standards and Compliance with International Guidelines

Supporting Biosecurity/Quarantine authorities in addressing relevant risk pathways associated with pests and diseases.

6. The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Regional Workshop on Review of Draft International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) and other topics was completed in August 2023 in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

7. Government representatives from 15 PICTs, that is, American Samoa (ASM), Cook Islands (CKI), Fiji (FIJ), French Polynesia (FRP), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati (KIR), Marshall Islands Republic (RMI), Nauru (NRU), New Caledonia (NCL), Niue (NUE), Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa (SAM), Tonga (TNG), Tokelau (TKL), Tuvalu (TUV) and Vanuatu (VAN) attended in person; Australia, New Zealand, IPPC Secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands (FAO SAP) were also represented.
8. Through the workshop, PPPO Members contributed to international plant health standard setting by providing important comments on the following:
 - a) Reorganization and revision of pest risk analysis standards
 - b) Draft Annex: International movement of *Mangifera indica* fresh fruit to ISPM 46 (Commodity-specific standards for phytosanitary measures)
 - c) 2022 Amendments to ISPM 5 (Glossary on phytosanitary terms); Second Consultation
 - d) Draft Annex: Use of systems approaches in managing the pest risks associated with the movement of wood to ISPM 39 (International movement of wood)
 - e) Draft Annex: Criteria for evaluation of available information for determining host status of fruit-to-fruit flies to ISPM 37 Determination of host status of fruit-to-fruit flies (Tephritidae)
 - f) CPM Recommendation on sea containers
9. Additionally, the PPPO agreed to draft a proposal on the “Movement of Coconut” as an annexe to the next Call for Topics for Commodity Standard.

Reviewing and developing Legislation, Standard Operating Procedures, and export processes

10. The PPPO Secretariat, through SPC-LRD’s Biosecurity SPS Team, is facilitating a review (national consultation and gap analysis) of the biosecurity legislation in three countries: Kiribati, Samoa and Tuvalu. The outcomes from this review will inform the compilation of ‘drafting instructions’ to assist these countries in revising their biosecurity legislations to ensure they are on par with international guidelines and SPS compliance. The consultants hired for this work will also develop several SOPs to standardise operations and help harmonise the implementation of biosecurity procedures across the region. The PPPO Secretariat is also developing a simplified SOP for fruit fly surveillance suitable for the Pacific context.
11. It is developing capacities and capabilities in sanitary and phytosanitary safe trade and regional integration and looking through the EU-Pacific States Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) to strengthen the potential of commodities or products that can be exported from the PICTs into the European Union market.
12. The PPPO Secretariat delivered the following trainings (inclusive of refreshers, workshops, hands-on and field immersion exercises) to participants from the region’s NPPOs, including support to Timor Leste :

Training course	Mode	Country	Male	Female
Introduction/Overview of Import Risk Analysis and Pest Risk Assessment	face-to-face	Samoa	16	13
Import Risk Analysis/Pest Risk and Market Access	Face to face collaboration with DAFF)	Solomon Islands	8	1
Pre-Border, Border and Post-Border: Biosecurity Risk Mitigation	Face to Face	Samoa	16	13
		Timor Leste	10	7
Emerging Pests – Risks on the Horizon	Face to Face	Samoa	16	13
		Timor Leste	10	7
Best Practices in Sample Collection and Submission	Face to Face and in Field	Samoa	16	13
		Timor Lest	10	7
Specific Surveillance for Fruit Flies and Fall Armyworms (FAW)	Face to face	Samoa	16	13
		Tuvalu – <i>Including GPS Site Location and Site Marking</i>	9	5
		Timor Leste	10	7
Notable Pest and Disease List Drafting	Face to Face	Samoa	4	3
		Timor Leste	10	7
Sea Container Hygiene System (SCHS)	Face to Face	Samoa	17	11
		Timo Leste	10	7
Systems Approach to Fresh Produce Exports and Bilateral Quarantine Arrangement		Solomon Islands	23	11
		Samoa	14	11
		Tonga	10	8
Pest List Database	Face to Face	Timo Leste	10	7

13. In collaboration with the United Nations Centre for Trade and Development (UNCTAD)/Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT) Project, national workshops on 'Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) including Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS)/ Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs) and International Trade Promotion' were facilitated in six (6) countries with the following participants.

Country	Males	Females
Vanuatu	15	20
Fiji	17	18
Solomon Islands	21	7
PNG	22	14
Tonga	17	13
Timor Leste	43	27

14. Apart from pest and disease issues, food safety, food quality, the safe application of pesticides (understanding withholding period and maximum residue limits), as well as organics and market certification were also discussed in:

[Strengthening management systems across the biosecurity continuum](#)

15. The PPPO Secretariat team, in collaboration with DAFF Australia, provided on-the-ground support to Biosecurity Solomon Islands (BSI) to manage heightened biosecurity risks related to hosting the 17th Pacific Games (November 19-December 02, 2023), which included assistance with border operations, priority pest surveillance and waste management. Two officers from Cook Islands Biosecurity were attached with BSI/SPC during this period for knowledge exchange and to build experience and skills around scaling operations in their home country when they hold a regional event in the near future.

16. The PPPO Secretariat provided technical inputs for Plant Health Clinics (PHC) and Farmer Field Schools (FFS) to highlight plant pest/disease issues, encourage the adoption of good agricultural practices, and ensure improvement in farm biosecurity.

Addressing relevant issues at Pre-Border, At-Border and Post-Border levels, including through risk assessments, surveillance and monitoring, pest identification and authentication

17. As part of developing and maintaining early warning systems (EWS), the PPPO Secretariat provided countries with Fall Armyworm (FAW) and Fruit Fly (FF) traps,

lures, and other surveillance supplies. The team collaboratively developed resource materials on trap assembly and deployment and emerging pest and disease risks to ease the in-field work of Biosecurity Officers. The materials are available from the PPPO Secretariat.

18. Fruit fly response: At the request of the Tuvalu Government, SPC Biosecurity and Plant Health officers collaborated with the Tuvalu Department of Agriculture (DOA) to design and implement a fruit fly management and population suppression strategy on Niulakita Island. The team worked in the field during the in-country mission completed in July 2023. It assisted DOA/ Biosecurity officers in monitoring, surveillance, and early warning activities, including using digital tools (GPS), accurate data recording, and analysis of fruit fly traps, fall armyworms, and exotic ants.

19. The above activities were supported through the European Union Funded SAFE Pacific Project.

Improved Market Access and Safe Trade

Regional ePhyto Project – Roll-out and Implementation of the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) (EPMAP and PBPP and Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus))

20. Electronic phytosanitary certificate (ePhyto) exchange will enhance and strengthen import and export compliance and facilitate efficient, cost-effective trade.
- a. Thirteen (13) countries have completed their Country Readiness Assessments and GeNS onboarding documents. These are Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Tonga Palau, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tokelau, Niue, Nauru
 - b. Ten (10) countries have progressed to GeNS Production, an increase of five countries from the last report. These are Fiji, Samoa, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Tuvalu, and Papua New Guinea. Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Niue, and Tuvalu are only receiving certificates in GeNS Production, not sending them.
 - c. Another two (2) countries remain in the GeNS User Acceptance Testing (UAT) phase – Palau and Nauru
 - d. PPPO Secretariat facilitated the third Regional ePhyto Workshop, held in Nadi, Fiji, in November 2023. Significant outcomes of the workshop were:
 - i. Recommendation of several new enhancements to improve the use of the GeNS platform. These will be submitted to the global ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) through the regional (South-West Pacific) representative to the ESG.

- ii. Agreement to establish PPPO ePhyto Working Group to explore mechanisms that will effectively enable paperless trade within the region . The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Working Group is being designed and will be approved through the PPPO ExCo.
- iii. Launch of the Regional *ePhyto Talanoa* initiative with the overall objective of to keeping the PPPO members connected, informed, and prepared in the ePhyto space. TORS for the ePhyto Talanoa session and social media platforms was endorsed at the 2023 PPPO Regional Technical Board Meeting.
- iv. Review of the PPPO ePhyto Regional Implementation Plan to guide the project into 2024.
- v. Assured support from NZ MPI/MFAT, Australia DAFF/DFAT and Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus) for the implementation of ePhyto in the region.

Revamping and back-end upgrade of the Pacific Islands Regional Pest List Database (PLD) and Biosecurity Information Facility (BIF) (through PBPP, EPMAP and SAFE Pacific support)

21. The PPPO Secretariat facilitated the overall upgrade of the PLD in collaboration with Australia DAFF, internal SPC teams and IT service provider ACTON Fiji Pte Limited. A training was held in May 2023, which brought together 19 Biosecurity Officers from 8 Melanesian and Polynesian countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu) and informed them of the upgrade works and new functionalities of the PLD. This workshop also provided an opportunity for the Country PLD Administrators to become well-versed with the upgraded PLD workflow and effectively be able to input country data. The revamped PLD can be accessed at <https://pld.lrd.spc.int/>
22. The PPPO Secretariat integrated the old Biosecurity Information Facility (BIF) into the SPC-LRD website under Markets for Livelihoods – Biosecurity and Safe Trade. The renewed BIF can be accessed at <https://lrd.spc.int/work-areas/markets-for-livelihoods/the-regional-biosecurity-information-facility>
23. The PPPO secretariat worked on establishing a webpage for the PPPO, which is now hosted on the SPC-LRD website. The new PPPO webpage is accessible at <https://lrd.spc.int/work-areas/markets-for-livelihoods/biosecurity/pppo>.
24. The revamped PLD, BIF, and new PPPO webpage were launched at the August 2023 PPPO Regional Technical Board meeting.
25. The Enhanced Partnership Programme (EPMAP) funded by the New Zealand MPI , supported the EPMAP Project Coordinator role which delivered project activities in Fiji, Samoa , Tonga and Vanuatu which included Export Plan workshops,

Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluations and Phytosanitary Certification Systems, GIS Electronic Export facilitation systems for Fiji and Tonga and the roll out of the Ephyto implementation plan .

PPPO Talanoa Sessions

26. The “PPPO Talanoa Session” was established to keep the PPPO Members connected and updated during the COVID pandemic when face-to-face events were not possible. Since then, the Talanoa Session has become an essential element for PPPO engagement and continues to generate impact as a platform to reflect on priorities and capture new ones, sharing issues/challenges, successes, and lessons learnt.

27. The key outcomes from this platform have been:

- a) The PPPO representatives consistently provide updates to the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM), IPPC Standards Committee (SC), IPPC Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC), and IPPC Focus Groups (various topics). This was previously not possible unless email updates were provided.
- b) Allowing introductions, discussions, and endorsements “out of (ExCo/Full Board) session” regarding matters of the PPPO.
- c) Allowing discussion on important regional phytosanitary matters, pest/disease incursions and related projects, for example, the progress of the Pacific Awareness and Response to the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (PARC) project in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Discussions on a sustainable funding model for the Ephyto solution , approach to “one Health” in the region from plant health perspectives.
- d) NPPOs get an informal insight and become familiar with the structure and work of partner NPPOs through country presentations.

PPPO Decisions/Outcomes from the 10th Regional Technical Board Meeting

28. At its last Regional Technical Board (Full Board) meeting held in August 2023 in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, the PPPO elected its new ExCo as described below:

- i. Chairperson: Niue – Mr. New Aue
- ii. Vice Chairperson: Australia – Dr. Sophie Peterson
- iii. Committee Members: Melanesia: Papua New Guinea (Ms. Marjorie Kemoi) and Vanuatu (Mr. Armstrong Sam); Micronesia: Federated States of Micronesia, FSM (Mr. John Wichep) and Republic of Marshall Islands, RMI (Mr. Byrelson Jacklick); Polynesia: Cook Islands (Mr. Ngatoko Ngatoko) and Samoa (Ms. Nafanua Malele)

29. In addition to the above, the PPPO Members deliberated and:

- i. Agreed to proceed with a consultancy to review the PPPO and its Secretariat functions.
- ii. Endorsed a regional standard-setting process and approved the development of the regional standards or guidance material on the Safe Provision of Humanitarian Aid During Emergency Situations, Movement of Sand and Gravel, Movement of Handicrafts, and Disposal of International Waste.
- iii. It was agreed that the PPPO Standards Committee (SC) would consist of two members per subregion, plus Australia and New Zealand (eight members, with five making up the quorum).
- iv. Endorsed a process for regional representatives' nomination to IPPC fora and filling vacant positions for the SC, IC, and CPM Bureau. Also endorsed a process for mid-term nomination of a chairperson or Vice-Chairperson. In the case the PPPO Executive Secretary (or his/her rep) is unable to attend the TC-RPPO, a process for proxy representation of the RPPO was also accepted.
- v. It was agreed that taro will be the priority commodity for the development of a commodity standard (in collaboration with Caribbean and African RPPOs).
- vi. Endorsed creation of an *ePhyto Talanoa Session* (to be held one week before the PPPO Talanoa Session) and *GeNS Pasifika Messenger Chat Group* for quick communication and assistance with system troubleshooting.

Priorities for 2024-2025

30. In streamlining its activities and more efficiently addressing the needs of Member Countries, the PPPO has the following priorities for 2024-25:

Promote greater collaboration and coordination between regional programmes and development partner activities:

31. The PPPO Secretariat will continue to assist with the work of the Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service (PRISMS) implemented by the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The teams closely cooperated in updating and publishing the second edition of 'The Guiding Framework for Invasives Species Management In The Pacific'. PRISMSS is a multi-agency coordinating mechanism designed to facilitate the scaling up of operational management of invasive alien species (IAS) in the region.
32. The PPPO Secretariat will continue to facilitate regular discussions to encourage strategic implementation of project activities so that donor interventions are based on synergies and areas of complementary rather than duplication of efforts between:

- a. PACER Plus: Australian Fumigation Accreditation Scheme (AFAS) and ePhyto trainings/workshops
 - b. Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Plus (PHAMA Plus): research around potential alternative treatments to methyl bromide fumigation, Train the Trainers on the SCHS and other SPS or related activities
 - c. FAO SAP: biosecurity legislation reviews and drafting of updated legislation for selected countries
 - d. Australia DAFF and New Zealand MPI
 - e. Other regional and international agencies
33. The ongoing work on the Concept Note (CN) with the Green Climate Fund team in SPC. This is the CN on “Enhancing resilience of agricultural systems in Pacific Island Countries to adapt to increased incidence of pest, pathogen, and invasive alien species under a changing climate to ensure food security.” This CN is in collaboration with FAO.

The upcoming Work of the PPPO

- a. Deliberate on the outcomes of the consultancy that reviewed PPPO and its Secretariat functions and decide on the next steps.
- b. Continue to support the IPPC's work by leading the Focus Group on Safe Provision of Food and Other Humanitarian Aid (Vanuatu is the Chair of this Focus Group, and PPPO's Executive Secretary is the PPPO rep to the Focus Group).
- c. Continue supporting the IPPC's work at the global level by ensuring a PPPO voice in the CPM (Australia and New Zealand reps), SC (Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea reps), IC (Australia, New Zealand, Cook Islands and Fiji reps) and other fora.
- d. Continue facilitating the regional ePhyto project and ensure that most PPPO Member Countries can fully exchange phytosanitary certificates electronically, including collaboration with PACER Plus on capacity and capability improvements.
- e. Further deliberate on and endorse the next set of *regional standards for phytosanitary measures (RSPMs)* covering the following topics: Safe Provision of Food and Other Humanitarian Aid During Emergency Situations; Movement of Sand and Gravel; Movement of Handicrafts; and Disposal of International Waste.
- f. Further discuss and endorse a process for identifying the need for new PPPO pest alerts and an approach to producing these alerts, with an aim for a more country-driven process.
- g. Further deliberate on and endorse a regional work plan for the Sea Container Hygiene System (SCHS) capacity building, synergies and implementation work plan.
- h. Based on the gap analysis survey outcomes 2023, map a way forward regarding emergency response preparedness and early warning systems.
- i. Develop a support paper (including funding) to host (in one of the PPPO Member Countries) the International Plant Health (IPH) Conference.

- j. Address other relevant matters as they arise.

Key Challenges

34. The work of the PPPO to support biosecurity, SPS, and safe trade remains a high priority for PICTs. Still, core services delivered by the PPPO Secretariat and the technical inputs from SPC are currently dependent on project funding. As reported at the last session, this creates inherent risk in the regional Biosecurity SPS support system and work of the PPPO.
35. To address this, SPC is developing a programmatic approach to delivering PPPO services and, in collaboration with key partners, building a business case for sustainable programme funding.

Recommendations:

36. The PHOAFS are invited to :

- a) **Note** the work of the PPPO and engagements with regional and international development partners.
- b) **Note** the PPPO outcomes from the 10th Regional Technical Board (full Board) and the identified priorities for 2024-2025
- c) **Support** the development of a business case for sustainable programme funding for regional biosecurity , sanitary and phytosanitary services including the PPPO Secretariat.