

**Ex-post evaluation of STDF project 37: assistance to developing countries in the implementation of ISPM 15**

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## Executive summary

In March 2002, International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) No. 15 (*Guidelines for regulating wood packaging material in international trade*) was adopted under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). As countries started to implement this standard, many found that they had difficulties applying it in a practical setting and needed more guidance. In response to this, the Secretariat of the IPPC initiated a project to provide guidance for the implementation of the standard. This project included a workshop on the practical application of ISPM 15 and the development of training material. The project was funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). The STDF has decided that the project should be externally evaluated, and has selected the Dutch Agricultural Economics Research Institute to perform this evaluation.

The objective of the evaluation was to analyze whether the international implementation and harmonization of ISPM 15, particularly in developing countries, has increased since February 2005, and if so, to what extent the workshop and training material have contributed to this. The evaluation was done by reviewing existing documents on the project and on the contents and implementation of ISPM 15, analyzing questionnaires that were sent to representatives of NPPO's, RPPO's, and workshop participants (including industry representatives), and interviewing representatives of the IPPC involved in the project.

The project was judged on the criteria indicated in the guidelines for evaluation of projects funded by the STDF. The project was considered to be highly relevant, as the importance of complying with ISPM 15 has increased over the past two years. Results of the questionnaire analysis significantly showed that the objectives of the project have been met to a reasonable to good extent. Particularly the workshop was highly effective; the effectiveness of the training material has remained limited to the workshop participants and a small group of other countries, due to restricted accessibility and awareness. The project was performed in an efficient way, with an appropriate choice of activities. The workshop, training material, or both, have had a significant positive impact on ISPM 15 implementation in countries involved in the project. The impact of the project on harmonization of implementation of the standard could not be measured, although qualitative analysis indicates that the project has had a moderate positive impact on this. The project has contributed to capacity building in developing countries in complying with SPS, and its effects on implementation of ISPM 15 in these countries can be considered sustainable.

From the evaluation can be concluded that STDF project 37 has considerably contributed to the practical application of ISPM 15, worldwide and in developing countries. The project has strengthened the position of developing countries that have participated in the workshop with respect to international trade of wood packaging. The project could be further improved by increasing the awareness and accessibility of the training material. Suggested follow-up activities include the provision of individual assistance to countries that participated in the workshop but have not yet implemented ISPM 15, and the organization of regional activities (e.g. workshops) in regions where countries still have difficulties in implementing ISPM 15. Important key lessons learnt from this project are: (1) that providing an opportunity for information exchange and interactive learning is a highly effective and sustainable means to achieve capacity building, (2) the suitability of internet for providing support to developing countries may sometimes be overestimated, and (3) in developing countries, lack of knowledge is not necessarily the bottleneck in meeting international standards.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Description of the project

In March 2002, International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) No. 15 (*Guidelines for regulating wood packaging material in international trade*) was adopted under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). ISPM 15 deals specifically with wood packaging material, which has been identified as an important factor for the introduction and spread of pests of plants. As countries started to implement this standard, many found that they had difficulties applying it in a practical setting and needed more guidance.

In response to the concerns raised by several contracting parties of the IPPC in regards to the implementation of ISPM 15, the Secretariat of the IPPC initiated a project to provide guidance for the implementation of the standard. This project included a workshop on the practical application of ISPM 15 and the development of training material. The objective of the workshop was to address the difficulties faced by countries in implementing ISPM 15 and to provide guidance for implementation in addition to that which is given in the standard. The workshop also functioned to provide a forum for participants to meet with others involved in similar activities from around the world, discuss the difficulties faced in specific countries, come to harmonized solutions to problems faced by all countries and provide training materials for use on a national level. During the workshop, training material was provided to assist in implementing the standard. After the workshop, this training material was posted at the IPPC website for access by other countries that did not participate in the workshop.

The workshop was held in Vancouver, Canada, in February / March 2005. A total of 171 delegates attended the workshop, representing 79 countries and 6 regional plant protection organizations. Although not belonging to the target group, industry representatives from a few countries were present as well. The project had a budget of US \$332,000. Funds were received from the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). The majority of these funds were used to assist with the cost of travel for delegates from developing countries.

The workshop program consisted of presentations addressing (barriers to) implementation, approved treatments, and import and export systems approaches for wood packaging material. During plenary discussion and training sessions, specific problems and their possible solutions in implementing ISPM 15 were addressed and attendants were encouraged to develop implementation plans. A field visit was organized to show participants examples of the practical application of ISPM 15 in both wood treatment and wood packaging manufacturing facilities.

From an evaluation completed by participants at the end of the workshop, the organizing committee concluded that participants at that time considered the workshop highly relevant, informative, and timely. Participants indicated that the workshop had provided useful information for countries to implement ISPM 15 and that they had gained a better understanding of the contents of ISPM 15 and the different facets of its implementation.

## 1.2 Policy context and institutional environment

The IPPC is an international treaty to secure action to prevent the spread and introduction of pests of plants and plant products, and to promote appropriate measures for their control. It is governed by the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM), which adopts International

Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs). ISPMs are the standards, guidelines and recommendations recognized as the basis for phytosanitary measures applied by Members of the World Trade Organization under the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. The ISPMs are adopted by contracting parties to the IPPC through the CPM. Non-contracting parties to the IPPC are encouraged to observe these standards.

ISPM No. 15 contains guidelines for regulating wood packaging material in international trade. It is the first commodity specific standard adopted under the IPPC. To avoid unnecessary trade disruption, it is critical that all countries utilizing wood packaging materials with their export commodities establish certification methods in accordance with the standard. Wood packaging material that meets the requirements set out in the standard should display a specified ISPM 15 compliance mark. Wood packaging treatment and manufacturing companies have to be authorized in order to use this mark. A monitoring system is required in order to control the correct use of this mark by authorized industries.

National plant protection organizations (NPPOs) have the responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of ISPM 15 have been met. The above-described workshop was organized to provide national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) with the opportunity to develop implementation plans to facilitate this process. Consequently, members of NPPOs or associated organizations comprised the target group of the project. However, also representatives of wood packaging and wood treatment industry were invited to attend the workshop. Industry plays a major role in the movement of wood packaging, so the input of this sector was considered important. The workshop was made possible in part by funds provided by the STDF. The majority of these funds were used to assist with the costs of travel for delegates from developing countries, to enable also these countries to participate in the workshop. Other, non-STDF contributions included the provision of staff time by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canadian Forest Service and the United States Department of Agriculture, to coordinate and facilitate the workshop.

### **1.3 Objective of the evaluation**

The objective of this evaluation is to determine to what extent STDF project 37, on “assistance to developing countries in the implementation of ISPM 15”, organized by the IPPC, has enhanced the capacity of countries and national plant protection officials to set up adequate infrastructure and systems to implement ISPM 15. More specifically, the evaluation will comprise an analysis of whether the international implementation and harmonization of ISPM 15, particularly in developing countries, has increased since February 2005, and if so, to what extent the workshop and training material have contributed to this.

### **1.4 Indication of independence**

The Dutch Agricultural Economics Institute (LEI) develops economic expertise for government bodies and industry in the field of food, agriculture and the natural environment. LEI performs independent research at the national and international scale. Plant health, and the thereto related phytosanitary issues in (international) trade, comprise one of the fields of expertise of the LEI. LEI does not receive financial or other support from any of the institutions or organizations that were, directly or indirectly involved in the project that is to be evaluated. Neither does the LEI have any structural liabilities to or bilateral agreements with any of these institutions or organizations. LEI can therefore be considered an appropriate institute for performing an independent ex post evaluation of the above-described project.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 General approach

The evaluation was done by reviewing existing documents on the project and on the contents and implementation of ISPM 15, analyzing questionnaires that were sent to different parties involved in the implementation of ISPM 15, and interviewing representatives of the IPPC involved in the project. Below, the activities of the evaluation are explained in detail.

### 2.2 Review of relevant documentation

A review of relevant documentation relevant to the project was performed to get acquainted with the objectives, contents and output of the project and to evaluate the past and current status of worldwide practical application of ISPM 15. This review included the following documents and information sources:

- The full program of the workshop organized, including presentations and training material; available on the website of the IPPC (IPPC, 2007);
- A workshop report, provided by the IPPC Secretariat (FAO, 2006);
- Grant application form for receiving financial assistance from the STDF, provided by the IPPC Secretariat;
- Criteria for the selection of participants to receive travel assistance funding, and a list of participants who had received funding, provided by the IPPC Secretariat;
- Results of an evaluation performed by the workshop organizers at the end of the workshop in 2005, based on a questionnaire filled in by all participants of the workshop.
- Official websites providing information on the adoption of ISPM 15 by individual countries (AQIS, 2007; EPPO, 2007; Forestry Commission, 2007; NAPPO, 2006).

### 2.3 Questionnaires

#### 2.3.1 General

Questionnaires were developed for representatives from NPPO's or associated organizations, for representatives from wood packaging treatment or manufacturing industries, and for representatives from Regional Plant Protection Organizations (RPPOs). All questionnaires were sent around by e-mail; addresses were obtained from the address lists of workshop participants and of NPPO contact points. Background information about the project and the STDF was provided in an accompanying letter that was signed by the Standards Officer of the Secretary of the IPPC. The questionnaire and accompanying letter were provided in English, French, and Spanish (except for the questionnaire to RPPO's, which was only sent in English).

Analysis of the questionnaires was done in SPSS version 12.0.1. Where relevant and possible, a chi-square test was used. This test assesses whether paired observations on two variables (e.g. workshop participation and implementation of ISPM 15) are independent of each other. Variables were considered significantly related if the corresponding chi-square value had a probability of less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

### **2.3.2 Questionnaire to NPPO-representatives**

The questionnaire was sent to persons from 213 different countries. Countries that had not participated in the workshop served as a control group, to be able to distinguish between a general increase in the implementation of ISPM 15 (e.g. due to an increased awareness of the standard since 2005) and the increase in implementation that can be attributed to the workshop. Respondents were asked questions on the status of ISPM 15 implementation in their country and their opinion of the contribution of the workshop and training material to this. The workshop section was only relevant for respondents who had participated in the workshop. The questions on training material were also relevant for respondents who hadn't attended the workshop, as this training material is publicly available from the IPPC website. The complete questionnaire is included in Appendix I.

### **2.3.3 Questionnaire to industry**

Although industry representatives did not belong to the target group of the workshop, they are actively involved and have a direct interest in the practical application of ISPM 15 in their country. Therefore, also industry representatives were considered to have sufficient knowledge of the status of implementation of the standard in their country to be capable of answering the questions. The questionnaire was sent to 36 persons, representing ten countries. Some of these persons were from the same company or organization. Questions asked to industry representatives related to whether their country has implemented ISPM 15 yet, whether the workshop has contributed to the implementation of ISPM 15 requirements in their company, and whether they believe that the workshop has contributed to implementation of the standard in their country. The industry questionnaire is included in Appendix II.

### **2.3.4 Questions to RPPO representatives**

RPPO's are assumed to have, at least to some extent, an overview of the past and current status of ISPM 15 implementation in the countries that belong to their RPPO, and of the common difficulties in implementation that are experienced in their region. Therefore, RPPO representatives were asked by email to give their opinion on the fraction of countries in which the standard has been implemented before or after February 2005, and to what extent the workshop and training material have contributed to this. Email addresses of RPPO representatives were obtained from the list of workshop participants and from the website of the IPPC. The questions asked to the RPPO representatives are included in Appendix III.

## **2.4 Interview**

The Standards Officer of the Secretariat of the IPPC, Mr. Brent Larson, was interviewed, to obtain clarification about certain aspects of the contents and implementation of ISPM 15, and to collect additional information on the issues described above. Additional information was provided through email by Mrs. Stacie Johnson of the Secretariat of the IPPC, who has played a major role in the organization of the workshop.

## 3 Findings and analysis

### 3.1 Findings from the questionnaires and interviews

#### 3.1.1 Response

The questionnaire destined for NPPO's had 52 respondents within a period of two weeks. Questionnaires received more than two weeks after sending were not included in the analysis. The respondents together represented 50 countries. Ten of these were developed countries; the other 40 were developing countries. The industry questionnaire had a response of 11 persons. Together, they represent six countries, of which three are developing countries.

The questionnaire for RPPO representatives had three respondents, two of them representing the same RPPO. A reason for the low response to the RPPO questionnaire is probably that it was sent out in a later stage of the evaluation, so the period of response was shorter and no reminder was sent.

#### 3.1.2 Impact of workshop and training material on ISPM 15 implementation

Respondents were asked whether their country has implemented ISPM 15 prior to 2005, after 2005, or not at all yet. Answers of respondents were compared in relation to: (1) presence at the workshop, (2) knowledge of training material, and (3) representing a developing or developed country.

Table 3.1 shows that of all countries from which questionnaires were received, 14 had already implemented ISPM 15 prior to the workshop, while another 20 have implemented ISPM 15 after the workshop took place. Comparing the moment of implementation of the standard between countries that were represented at the workshop and those that were not shows that among the countries that had not implemented ISPM 15 yet at the time of the workshop, the increase in implementation of ISPM 15 is much higher in the former group. The same applies when comparing countries of which NPPO's have gained knowledge of the training material with countries for which this is not the case.

**Table 3.1. Implementation of ISPM 15 in countries in relation to country status, participation in the workshop, and knowledge of training material. Percentages in relation to total numbers per category (bottom row) are presented in brackets.**

<i>Implementation of ISPM No.15</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>	<i>Workshop participation (%)</i>		<i>Knowledge of training material* (%)</i>		<i>Developing country (%)</i>	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
< 2005	14 (28)	4 (23)	10 (30)	6 (43)	7 (22)	8 (80)	6 (15)
≥ 2005	20 (40)	3 (18)	17 (52)	7 (50)	17 (51)	2 (20)	18 (45)
Not yet	16 (32)	10 (59)	6 (18)	1 (7)	8 (25)	0 (0)	16 (40)
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>40</b>

\* Four respondents did not answer the questions about the training material.

Statistical analysis showed that among the countries that had not implemented ISPM 15 before 2005 yet, countries that were represented the workshop have significantly more often implemented the standard in the past two years than countries that were not. Also the relation between implementation of ISPM 15 in the past two years and knowledge of training material was shown to be significant. Note that most countries have both participated in the workshop

and gained knowledge of the training material; it is therefore not possible to attribute the difference in implementation completely to the workshop or completely to the training material.

Unfortunately, when comparing developed and developing countries for their status of implementation of ISPM 15, the developing countries are still lagging behind. Nevertheless, also among the developing countries, the relative increase in implementation of ISPM 15 after 2005 is higher for the countries of which representatives have participated in the workshop or gained knowledge of training material than for other countries (Table 3.2). Again, this difference is statistically significant.

**Table 3.2. Implementation of ISPM 15 in developing countries in relation to their participation in the workshop and knowledge of training material. Percentages in relation to total numbers per category (bottom row) are presented in brackets.**

<i>Implementation of ISPM No.15</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>	<i>Workshop participation (%)</i>		<i>Knowledge of training material* (%)</i>	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
< 2005	6 (15)	1 (7)	5 (19)	1 (11)	4 (15)
≥ 2005	18 (45)	3 (21)	15 (58)	1 (11)	15 (55)
Not yet	16 (40)	10 (72)	6 (23)	7 (78)	8 (30)
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27</b>

\* Four respondents did not answer the questions about the training material.

### **3.1.3 Harmonization of ISPM 15 implementation**

Whether the workshop has contributed to the implementation of ISPM 15 is difficult to measure, as harmonization is not related to the implementation of ISPM 15 but to *how* it is implemented. Therefore, this objective can only be qualitatively evaluated.

Of the 33 NPPO-representatives who answered the questionnaire and participated in the workshop, 30 respondents believe that the workshop has contributed to the worldwide harmonization of implementation of ISPM 15 in individual countries. Nine of the 11 industry representatives that have participated in the workshop share this opinion. Two NPPO representatives and two industry representatives do not believe that the workshop has contributed to harmonization; one NPPO representative did not answer this question. Also the three RPPO representatives that have responded believe that the workshop contributed to the harmonization implementation of ISPM 15.

The predominantly positive judgment of workshop participants on the impact of the workshop on harmonization of ISPM 15 implementation provides a reasonable indication that the workshop has, at least to some extent, contributed to harmonization of implementation of the standard.

### **3.1.4 Addressing the relevant issues**

NPPO representatives were asked whether their country experienced difficulties in the implementation of ISPM 15 prior to the workshop, and whether these difficulties have been solved in the past two years (Table 3.3). In total, three respondents indicated that the difficulties in their country regarding the implementation of ISPM 15 have been completely solved during the last two years, while 15 respondents indicated that the difficulties in their country have not been solved at all. A significant relation between workshop participation and degree to which difficulties have been solved was found. The relation between ‘Knowledge of train-

ing material' and 'degree to which difficulties have been solved' was not significant. When comparing these variables only for the group of developing countries, both 'workshop participation and knowledge of training material were shown to be significantly related to the degree to which difficulties have been solved (data not shown).

From these results can be concluded that the workshop, and to a lesser extent also the training material, have addressed at least a number of the difficulties NPPO's met before 2005 in implementing ISPM 15 in their country. This conclusion still applies when focusing only on developing countries.

**Table 3.3. Extent to which difficulties experienced in implementing ISPM 15 prior to 2005 have been solved, in relation to country status, participation in the workshop and knowledge of training material. Percentages in relation to total numbers per category (bottom row) are presented in brackets.**

<i>Difficulties solved since 2005</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>	<i>Workshop participation (%)</i>		<i>Knowledge of training material* (%)</i>		<i>Developing country (%)**</i>	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Yes	3 (9)	1 (8)	2 (10)	1 (9)	2 (11)	1 (33)	2 (7)
No	14 (44)	9 (75)	5 (25)	7 (64)	5 (28)	0	14 (50)
Partly	15 (47)	2 (17)	13 (65)	3 (27)	11 (61)	2 (67)	12 (43)
Total	32	12	20	11	18	3	28

\* Three missing data (unanswered questions).

\*\* One missing data.

### **3.1.5 Additional findings and comments**

#### Correctness of implementation

In practice, ISPM 15 is considered implemented if its requirements are somehow embedded in the national legislation, or a national program is available in which the implementation and application of ISPM 15 are described, or (preferably) both. Yet, several respondents indicated in their questionnaire that their country does not have such law or program, whereas it has a system for monitoring correct use of the ISPM 15 compliance mark. One country even does not have such monitoring system, but has authorized one or more companies to use the mark, according to the respondent. In analyzing the questionnaires, these countries were assumed to have currently implemented ISPM 15; however, it is doubtful whether these implementations agree with the intended use of the standard.

#### Valuation of workshop components and training material

Although a more subjective question, the respondents of all questionnaires (including industry and RPPO representatives) were asked whether, in their opinion, the workshop and the training material has contributed to (1) a solution of the difficulties and (2) (improvement of) implementation of the standard in their country.

According to the completed questionnaires, most workshop participants (NPPO, RPPO and industry representatives) believe that the workshop has contributed to both aspects. Also, most respondents who have gained knowledge of the training material believe that it contributed to both aspects. One NPPO representative of a developing country indicated that the workshop material was not applicable to his country.

### Availability of training material

Of all participants who have not participated in the workshop (14 respondents), only four have gained knowledge of the training material (available on the IPPC website). Several respondents indicated in their reply that they were not aware of the existence of the training material and asked where they could find it. Also, one person mentioned that his country had problems downloading the material because of slow internet connection.

### **3.2 Answers to STDF evaluation questions**

Answers to the questions included in the guidelines for the evaluation of projects funded by the STDF are partly based on the above-described results of the analysis of the questionnaires.

#### *1. To what extent are the objectives of the project still valid?*

ISPM 15 was adopted in 2002. However, few countries have started implementing ISPM 15 before 2005. Since then, the number of countries that have implemented the standard has highly increased. At present, most important trading countries require imports to comply with ISPM 15. Consequently, for exporting countries it is essential that they meet the export criteria of ISPM 15 in order to have access to international trade. The objectives of the project are therefore still considered relevant.

#### *2. Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with both the objectives and intended impacts as established in the project terms of reference and also as set out in the broader objectives of the STDF?*

The objectives of the STDF are, amongst others, to assist developing countries in complying with Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, by providing capacity building and technical assistance. The activities of the project included the organization of a workshop and the development of training material to provide assistance to the practical application of ISPM 15. ISPMs are the standards, guidelines and recommendations recognized as the basis for phytosanitary measures applied under the WTO-SPS agreement. The project of the IPPC was aimed at assisting both developing and developed countries. However, only participants from developing countries were eligible for financial assistance. In total, 77 countries were represented at the workshop, of which 61 were developing countries. Participants of 54 developing countries received traveling costs compensation. Without funding from the STDF, the participation of developing countries would have been very low. The activities and outputs of the workshop are therefore consistent with the intended objectives and impacts of the project and fit within the broader objectives of the STDF.

#### *3. To what extent were the objectives and outputs achieved / are likely to be achieved?*

From the analysis of the questionnaires, it was concluded that the workshop, the training material, or both, have significantly contributed to the increase in the number of (developing) countries that have implemented ISPM 15 in the past two years. Also, the workshop, training material, or both, have significantly contributed to a solution of at least part of the difficulties of (developing) countries in implementing ISPM 15. So, the objectives of the project have, at least to some extent, been achieved.

4. *What changes, if any, were made during project implementation?*

No changes have been made during project implementation.

5. *What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives and outputs?*

- Addressing the relevant issues. The program of the workshop was decided on by a steering committee, which was made up of international experts in the field. These experts were aware of the issues and problems that needed addressing and made sure that the program covered the issues of interest to countries as much as possible. According to the evaluation done at the end of the workshop, the majority of participants indicated that at least some of the presentations and training material were useful to them. Nevertheless, most attendants also mentioned one or more questions that had remained unanswered.
- Local circumstances in countries (e.g. legal system, infrastructure). Two years after the workshop, there are still a number of countries that were represented at the workshop, but have not yet implemented ISPM 15. Probably, the local circumstances in these countries are such that the knowledge gained through the workshop and training material cannot be brought into practice. This suggestion is supported by answers and comments of respondents. One respondent indicated that the training material was not applicable to his country. Another (industry) respondent indicated that the workshop had contributed to the theoretical implementation of the standard, but not to the practice in field.
- Budget. The workshop was organized in Vancouver, Canada. For many NPPO representatives in developing countries, participation in the workshop would have been financially impossible if they had not received travel costs compensation. In total, 61 participants from developing, least developed, or low income countries received funding. Funding was denied for another 33 persons who had applied for it, some of which came from countries that were not represented yet by other persons.
- Access to training material. One of the activities of the project was to develop training material, to provide support to countries in developing a national implementation plan. Unfortunately, from the questionnaire it appears that not all countries are aware of the availability of the training material. Also, poor internet connection in some countries restricts access to this material.

6. *Were the activities and outputs produced on time and within the budget?*

The workshop took place in on the same dates as indicated in the STDF grant application form. The workshop was organized in a period in which more and more (developed) countries started implementing ISPM 15. Therefore, the workshop was considered to have a good timing. According to the IPPC, the funding of the STDF was received rather late (one week before the workshop), when most costs had already been made. Some activities of the project exceeded the budget. This was solved by contributions in kinds from other organizations (e.g. Canadian government, Simon Fraser University, industry groups).

7. *Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives, if any?*

No alternatives have been considered. A workshop is a highly efficient means to achieve information exchange and between countries and harmonization of implementation of commonly agreed standards or legislation. A much cheaper alternative would have been to provide information packages, including the training material, to all NPPO's. However, the

effectiveness of such approach is restricted as it may not provide adequate answers to questions and does not allow for information exchange between countries.

A disadvantage of organizing one workshop for all countries in the world is that it is difficult to cover all issues, especially difficulties that specifically apply to a particular region in the world. An alternative would have been to organize several small-scale workshops in different regions in the world. Such workshops on ISPM 15 have been organized by several RPPO's (EPPO, NAPPO). However, for the IPPC, it would have been too costly to organize regional workshops. Thus, given its objectives, the way in which the project was implemented is considered efficient.

8. *What has happened as a result of the project, in particular in relation to measurable impacts on market access, improved domestic, and where applicable regional, SPS situations, and/or poverty reductions?*

As concluded from the analysis of the questionnaires, the project has significantly contributed to an increase in the implementation of ISPM 15, worldwide and in developing countries. For the (majority of) countries present at the workshop, the project has provided the required support for developing a national program for implementation of ISPM 15 and bringing it into practice. For these countries, a phytosanitary barrier in the export of wood packaging material has been removed, and the phytosanitary risks of importing wood packaging material may have increased.

9. *What real difference has the project made / is likely to have on final beneficiaries?*

The persons, in their function of being an NPPO representative, have gained knowledge and skills to develop a national ISPM 15 implementation plan and bring it into practice in their country. Thereby, the project has contributed to capacity building regarding the implementation of international sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards in (the majority of) the developing countries represented at the workshop. Moreover, the project has contributed to worldwide harmonization of implementation of phytosanitary measures concerning wood packaging, and has reduced the phytosanitary risks of international trade.

Countries of which no representatives participated in the workshop may benefit from the project if they have gained knowledge of the training material. However, results of the questionnaire analysis showed that awareness and accessibility of the training material is limited. Moreover, results of the questionnaire show significant differences in the status of implementation of ISPM 15 between developing countries that participated in the workshop and countries that did not. It can therefore be concluded that without this project, at least part of the countries that received funding for participation in the workshop would not have achieved their current status in implementation of ISPM 15 in the past two years.

10. *To what extent will the benefits of the project continue after STDF funding ceased?*

The organization of the workshop, for which the STDF funding was used, was a single event. However, during this event, NPPO representatives have learned how they can overcome the difficulties in implementing ISPM 15 in their country, and how criteria of the standard can be met. Also, they have learnt how to develop a national implementation plan for ISPM 15. This knowledge and training should help them in developing a national implementation plan for

implementation of ISPM 15 in their country. Once the standard is effectively in force in a country, it is very likely that it will remain so in the future.

*11. What are the major factors which influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project?*

- **Learning by doing.** The workshop included group exercise sessions and group discussions on (barriers to) implementation of ISPM 15. Thereby, participants were not only provided with theoretical knowledge, but also received assistance in learning how to translate this knowledge into a workable implementation plan for their own country. At the beginning of the workshop, participants were asked to write down the most important questions they had on practical application of the standard. According to the workshop organizers, at the end of the workshop most participants could answer their own questions.
- **External pressure.** Due to the worldwide increase in implementation of ISPM 15 in the past two years, exports to most countries nowadays have to comply with ISPM 15. Practical application of the standard in a country is thus in the interest of the (exporting) industry. Consequently, the request for implementation of the standard comes not only from abroad; also local industries are increasingly aware of the importance of having the standard implemented in their country.
- **Follow-up, country-specific assistance.** In the evaluation of the IPPC, several workshop participants have requested further assistance and training. Also, there are still a number of developing countries in which ISPM 15 has not yet been implemented. This is – as mentioned earlier – probably largely due to the lack of facilities to bring theoretical knowledge into practice in these countries.

### **3.3 Overall judgement**

- **Relevance.** STDF project 37 on “Assistance to developing countries in the implementation of ISPM 15” has a high relevance. In the past two years, many countries have implemented the standard, and export of packaging material that does not contain the ISPM 15 compliance mark is hardly possible anymore. (Developing) countries that have not implemented the standard yet thus have a weak position in international trade compared to countries that have implemented it.
- **Effectiveness.** The objectives of the project, addressing the difficulties faced by countries in implementing ISPM 15 and providing guidance for implementation of the standard, have been met to a reasonable to good extent. Participation of developing countries in the workshop was high (80%). According to the questionnaire respondents, the workshop and training material have contributed to a solution of the difficulties and (improvement of) implementation of the standard in their country. This also follows from the evaluation of the IPPC at the end of the workshop and comments of the Standards Officer of the IPPC Secretariat. The effectiveness of the training material has been restricted to the workshop participants and a small group of other countries, due to restricted accessibility and awareness.
- **Efficiency.** Given the activities of the project (organization of a workshop and development of training material), it has been performed with good efficiency. Alternatives would have required a higher budget or would have been less effective. Nevertheless, some costs and the time required for organization of the workshop were underestimated. As a consequence, additional sources for budget had to be searched for in a later stage of the project.

- Impact. The workshop, training material, or both, have significantly contributed to the increase of ISPM 15 implementation since 2005 in countries involved in the project. The impact of the project on harmonization of implementation of the standard could not be measured, although qualitative analysis indicates that the project has had a moderate positive impact on this. The benefit for developing countries that were not represented at the workshop is restricted. These countries can increase their theoretical knowledge of implementing ISPM 15 through the training material, but they do not have the opportunity to exchange information and discuss their difficulties in implementing the standard with other countries and experts.
- Sustainability. The effects of the project on implementation of ISPM 15 in countries involved in the project can be considered permanent. Once the standard is practically applied in a country, it is unlikely that the country loses this “ISPM 15 compliance status”. For countries that were not represented at the workshop, or were represented at the workshop but still are not in the stage of implementing ISPM 15, additional support is probably required.

## 4 Conclusions, recommendations and key lessons learned

### 4.1 Conclusions

- STDF project 37 has considerably contributed to the implementation and practical application of ISPM 15, worldwide and in developing countries. The increase in implementation of the standard by (developing) countries in the past two years can at least partly be attributed to the workshop, training material, or both. The same applies to the (partly) solution to difficulties countries experienced two years ago in implementing ISPM 15 in their country.
- STDF project 37 is likely to have provided a reasonable contribution to the worldwide harmonization of implementation of ISPM 15 in countries. This conclusion cannot be supported by objective data; instead, it is based on opinions of persons who responded to the different questionnaires.
- Following the first two conclusions, STDF project 37 has strengthened the position of developing countries with respect to international trade of wood packaging. This effect is sustainable; however, it mainly applies to countries that were represented at the workshop. It is questionable to what extent countries that have not attended the workshop have benefited from the project.
- The effectiveness of the project can largely be attributed to the choice of project activities (interactive learning by group discussions and group exercise sessions) and the external environment (pressure from importing countries and industry).
- Although the training material was developed with the intention to provide also support to those NPPO's that could not participate in the workshop, poor awareness and accessibility of the training material appears to have limited its use by this category.

### 4.2 Recommendations

- Few NPPO's of developing countries that were not represented at the workshop are aware of the existence of the training material. Nevertheless, for those NPPO's that have gained knowledge of the training material all were positive about its applicability and usefulness. Probably, the training material could be more commonly utilized if NPPO's were (again) notified of its existence. Another option would be to provide all NPPO's of (developing) countries with a bound copy of the training material; this would also solve the accessibility problems experienced with the internet version.
- Countries that were represented at the workshop and have not yet started implementing ISPM 15 yet probably deal with other implementation barriers that cannot be solved by a workshop or training material. Apparently, in these countries, knowledge is available, but the local circumstances are hindering translation of this knowledge into practice. In these countries, individual, tailor-made capacity building activities may help overcome the practical difficulties in implementing ISPM 15.

- Although many developing countries were represented at the workshop, even more developing countries were not. Among the latter group, there are still many countries that have not yet started implementing ISPM 15. The reasons for this may be diverse, varying from unawareness of the specific contents of the standard to lack of skills or facilities to develop a national implementation plan. In order to support the practical application of ISPM 15 also in these countries, regional workshops or similar activities could be organized. In the past, regional workshops on the practical application of ISPM 15 have already been organized by other RPPO's (EPPO, NAPPO). Advantages of organizing regional activities are that they may be more easily accessible by NPPO's of developing countries, and that support can be more specifically addressed to the difficulties that apply to that particular region.

### **4.3 Key lessons learned**

- Providing opportunity for information exchange and interactive learning is a highly effective and sustainable means to achieve capacity building. One of the major success factors of STDF project 37 was the choice of activities. Group discussions and group exercise sessions were highly appreciated by the workshop participants. Although the workshop was a single event, its effects were considerable and permanent. The training material, although still available and aimed at a much larger audience, was less effective because it did not reach the target group.
- Although the availability of internet has greatly increased long-distance communication possibilities and the speed of information exchange, its suitability for providing support to developing countries should not be overestimated. Internet connection in developing countries may be slow or unstable, and the use of internet as information provider may not have become as much integrated into daily practice as in developed countries. Therefore, one should not merely rely on internet as an effective provider of information to large target groups, particularly if these groups consist of parties widely distributed all over the world.
- Lack of knowledge is not necessarily the bottleneck in meeting international standards. Provision of knowledge on how to deal with particular difficulties and how to implement international guidelines and standards is a first step in assisting countries in meeting international standards, protocols, guidelines etc. However, the institutional environment or (information or logistic) infrastructure in a country may not be suitable for bringing this knowledge into practice. Such situations are more likely to occur in developing countries than in developed countries, as developing countries are often in a state of transition. For these countries, capacity building should focus on the development of a stable and transparent institutional environment and infrastructure.

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