The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is an International Treaty established within the framework of the Food Agriculture Organization (FAO), which is aimed to prevent the spread and the introduction of pests of plants and plant products into areas where they are not present, promoting appropriate measures for their control.

Apart from safeguarding agriculture, an important element of the IPPC is to facilitate safe trade. To this end, the Convention prohibits contracting parties (to date, 183 members) to apply phytosanitary measures in an arbitrary, unjustified and discriminatory way, with the only purpose to restrict trade (according to its Preamble, the contracting parties recognise *"that phytosanitary measures should be technically justified, transparent and should not be applied in such a way as to constitute either a means of arbitrary or unjustified discrimination or a disguised restriction, particularly on international trade"*
). Article VII of the Convention, in particular, stipulates that
"In order to minimise interference with international trade, ...(g) contracting parties shall institute only phytosanitary measures that are technically justified, consistent with the pest risk involved and represent the least restrictive measures available, and result in the minimum impediment to the international movement of people, commodities and conveyances"
.

Moreover, the same article establishes that if a contracting party requires consignments of particular plants or plant products to be imported only through specified points of entry, such inspection points must be selected as not to unnecessarily impede international trade and their list must be communicated to the Secretary, any regional plant protection organization of which the contracting party is a member, all contracting parties which the contracting party believes to be directly affected, and other contracting parties upon request (art. VII, par. 2, d). A similar obligation concerns the so-called "pest lists". Contracting parties must, to the best of their ability, establish and update lists of the plants and plant products subject to control with the aim of avoiding the introduction of exotic plant pests and diseases in their territories, using their scientific names to identify them. Such lists must be made available to the Secretary, to regional plant protection organizations of which they are members and, on request, to other contracting parties (art. VII, par. 2, d). Further information on pest lists are contained in the Guidelines on lists of regulated pests
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Both the inspection points of entry lists and the pest lists are publicly available on the IPPC website, so that traders can easily know what kind of plants or plant products are subject to restrictions in the country where they wish to export. However, to date, not all the members of the Convention have communicated these two lists to the IPPC Secretariat.

The IPPC provisions also apply to any organism, object or material that can act as a vector for the spread of pests of plants, particularly where international transportation is involved (e.g. containers, soil, used vehicles and machinery, and packaging material).

Lastly, the convention contains a Model Phytosanitary Certificate and a Model Phytosanitary Certificate for Re-Export. Imports of plants or plant products or other regulated articles into the territories of every contracting party can be carried out only by using a phytosanitary certificate which complies with such models.

For regulated plants or plant products (which include seeds, fresh fruits, flowers, plantlets and agricultural produce, like rice or beans) which are included in the pest lists, the importer is required to obtain a phytosanitary certificate issued by a duly authorized plant quarantine (public) officer of the country of origin, following the completion of a specific inspection process which can include the taking of samples for lab testing purposes.