

ISPM 15 - Portugal - New phytosanitary requirements commenced 2009.

The original plan that EU countries would be exempt from having to treat pallets to ISPM 15 when exchanged between community members had to be abandoned when the pinewood nematode (PWN) was discovered in Portugal. To prevent the spread of the PWN from Portugal to the rest of the EU, wood packaging material (WPM) made from conifer wood produced in Portugal has had for some time to be ISPM compliant for circulation *within* the EU. However, despite these measures having been in place for some time, the PWN has been detected in WPM from Portugal both on marked and *unmarked* pallets and packaging which might have originated in Portugal and have slipped through the net.

Further measures have therefore been imposed and as from 16th June 2009 *all* WPM made from conifer wood leaving Portugal, has had to meet ISPM 15 requirements. This includes WPM made from conifer wood imported into Portugal from the other Member States and then re-used for subsequent exports. Therefore any unmarked pallets or packaging will need to be treated in Portugal before leaving and, apart from the additional costs this would entail, Portugal currently does not have the capacity to do this.

The UK Forestry Commission (FC) now strongly advises that *all* WPM being sent to Portugal, regardless of wood type (since species identification is problematic), should be ISPM treated to avoid any delays in delivery. The approved treatment measures in the Standard are either *heat treatment* (HT) to a minimum core temperature of 56°C for at least 30 minutes, or, *methyl bromide* (MB) gas fumigation.

It is likely in any case that Portuguese importers/customers will stipulate ISPM compliant packaging to avoid costs to themselves of treating or disposing of unmarked WPM.

The FC also advises UK purchasers of goods and timber from Portugal to specify ISPM 15 compliant packaging (and sawn timber) when placing contracts, with the supplier agreeing to meet the cost in the event of failing to comply. If non-compliant conifer timber or WPM from Portugal is detected in the UK through FC spot checks, the occupier of the premises or the person in charge of the material will be responsible for the cost of any remedial action considered necessary.

EU packaging produced outside Portugal can still circulate within the EU without meeting ISPM 15 requirements, though, ultimately, it is likely that when treatment facilities are sufficient this will change.