



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



International  
Plant Protection  
Convention



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF  
**PLANT HEALTH**

2020

**PROTECTING PLANTS,  
PROTECTING LIFE**

## INTRODUCTION

In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2020 as the **International Year of Plant Health (IYPH)**. The year is a once in a lifetime opportunity to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development.

Plants are the source of the air we breathe and most of the food we eat, yet we often do not pay much attention to keeping them healthy. This can have devastating results. For example, FAO estimates that up to **40 percent of food crops are lost to plant pests** and diseases annually. This leaves millions of people without enough food to eat and seriously damages agriculture - the primary source of income for rural poor communities.

Plant health is increasingly under threat. **Climate change**, and human activities, have altered ecosystems, reducing biodiversity and creating **new niches where pests can thrive**. At the same time, international **travel and trade** has tripled in volume in the last decade and can **quickly spread pests and diseases** around the world causing great damage to native plants and the environment.

As with human health, **protecting plants** from pests and diseases is far **more cost effective** than dealing with full-blown health emergencies. Indeed, plant pests are often impossible to eradicate once they have established themselves and managing pests is time consuming and expensive. Thus, prevention is critical for avoiding the devastating impact of pests on agriculture, livelihoods and food security.

The IYPH thus emphasizes **protection and prevention**. Everyone has a role in doing this. For example, **travellers** must avoid taking plants and plant products with them. People in the transportation industries need to make sure ships, airplanes, trucks and trains do not carry plant pests and diseases into new areas. **Governments** should increase their support to national and regional plant health organizations that are the first line of defence.

Because of the strong links between plant health and environmental protection, the IYPH also encourages **environmentally friendly** ways of dealing with pests - such as through integrated pest management. This ecosystem approach combines different management strategies and practices to grow healthy crops and minimize the use of pesticides. Avoiding poisonous substances when dealing with pests not only protects the environment, it also protects pollinators, natural pest enemies, beneficial organisms and the people and animals who depend on plants.

## THE CAMPAIGN

Plants are the source of the oxygen we breathe, the food we eat, and ultimately of all life on earth. Despite their importance, we do not pay enough attention to keeping them healthy. The International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) 2020 will change this by inspiring people to learn more about plant health and, especially, take concrete action.

For this reason, the action-oriented IYPH campaign will be targeted to specific audiences including:

- **The general public:** to make them aware of the risks involved in bringing plants and plant products – which may have pests and diseases - across borders.
- **Media professionals:** to use their channels, including those in local languages, to deliver plant health information to a wide audience. A “Guide to plant health for media professionals” will be prepared to help them understand the major issues and highlight key resources and sources of information.
- **Schoolchildren:** to teach them that plants can get “sick” and that there are environmentally friendly ways of keeping plants healthy. They can warn their family about the risks of travelling with plants and plant products.
- **Farmers:** to prevent pests from spreading by using only certified pest-free seeds and seedlings; and regularly monitoring and reporting the occurrence of pests on their farms. Through grass-roots level campaigns in local languages, they will receive more information about environmentally friendly pest management practices.
- **Government representatives, policy makers and legislators:** to sensitize them to plant health issues, the importance of investing in prevention; and encourage them to provide more resources to national and regional plant protection organizations.
- **Donors:** to keep them regularly informed about opportunities for investing in plant health programmes, initiatives and technologies.
- **United Nations (UN) and staff members of international organizations:** to make them more aware of the role of plant health in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and generate more technical knowledge about plant health. They will be encouraged to include plant health objectives in strategic frameworks, projects and programmes when appropriate.
- **People working in the private sector:** to promote environmentally friendly products and practices; and invest more in plant health research and development. The **transportation and trade sectors** will be encouraged to implement international standards, enforce existing phytosanitary legislation and adopt innovative technologies such as electronic phytosanitary certification (ePhytos) when importing or exporting plants and plant products. They can also inform their clients about the risks associated with taking plants and plant products across borders.

A **variety of channels and media** will be used to encourage target audiences to take action, adopt new practices and change risky behaviors. Multimedia and print ready materials (including files for customizing gadgets, t-shirts, etc.) will be available for download and local production. Materials will be in editable formats to allow minor graphic adaptations such as the addition of partners' logos, in accordance with the [IYPH visual identity guidelines](#). They will be available in at least three, and often six, FAO official languages and in other languages [upon request](#).

## VISUAL IDENTITY & SLOGAN

The IYPH 2020 logo was designed to show a healthy plant, including the idea of protection, and link to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The slogan emphasises the protection aspect of plant health and how healthy plants are the basis for life on earth. Different language versions of the logo can be requested by writing to [IYPH@fao.org](mailto:IYPH@fao.org).



## KEY MESSAGES

### **1. It is risky to bring plants and plant products across borders as this may spread plant pests and diseases.**

**Ordinary citizens** should avoid bringing plants and plant products with them when they travel. They should avoid ordering plants and plant products online or through postal services since packages can easily bypass regular phytosanitary controls.

### **2. Make trading in plants and plant products safe without setting up unnecessary barriers.**

Many **countries** depend on trading plants and plant products to sustain their economies. Yet trade can quickly spread plant pests and seriously damage native plants and biodiversity. Implementing the IPPC and international standards, as well as enforcing existing phytosanitary legislation, help promote trade while keeping it safe.

### **3. Keep plants healthy to protect the environment and biodiversity.**

Plant pests are one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss. Climate change and human actions have altered ecosystems and created new niches where pests can thrive. When combatting pests, **farmers** should adopt, and **policy makers** should encourage the use of, environmentally friendly methods that reduce the use of toxic pesticides, which kill pollinators, natural pest enemies and organisms crucial for a healthy environment.

### **4. Protect, manage and restore terrestrial and marine environments to keep plants healthy.**

Plants can only thrive in a healthy environment. **Policy makers** at all levels should therefore enact policies to protect, manage and eventually restore natural resources. **Ordinary citizens** and citizens' groups can take daily actions to reduce their environmental impact and actively engage in initiatives to protect and manage natural resources.

### **5. Invest in plant health organizations and phytosanitary research and development.**

**Governments, policy makers** and **legislators** need to prioritize policies and legislation related to preventing, monitoring and reporting pest outbreaks; promoting environmentally friendly pest management measures; and facilitating safe trade. They should empower **national and regional plant protection organizations**, and similar institutions, and provide them with adequate human and financial resources. The public and private sector should invest more in plant health initiatives, research and innovative technologies.

### **6. Healthy plants are crucial for ending hunger and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.**

Plants make up 80 percent of the food we eat. Yet they are under constant attack from pests which destroy up to 40 percent of food crops every year and are responsible for agricultural trade losses of over USD 220 billion annually. Plant pests leave millions of people without enough food to eat and negatively affect agriculture – the primary source of income of rural poor communities. Policies and actions to promote plant health are fundamental for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those aimed at reducing poverty, hunger and threats to the environment.

## **7. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) provide guidance and lead global efforts to ensure plant health.**

The **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**, the **International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)** and their **partners** are leading the global effort to promote plant health in 2020 and beyond. The IPPC is a global treaty, signed by over 183 countries, that provides a framework for protecting plant resources from pests and diseases. It leads the development of international plant health standards and promotes safe trade among all countries. The FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality nutritious food to lead active, healthy lives.

## **KEY FACTS AND FIGURES**

- Plants make up 80 percent of the food we eat and produce 98 percent of the oxygen we breathe.
- Plant pests are responsible for the loss of up to 40 percent of global food crops, and for trade losses in agricultural products exceeding USD 220 billion annually.
- The annual value of trade in agricultural products has grown almost three-fold over the past decade, largely in emerging economies and developing countries, reaching USD 1.7 trillion.
- FAO estimates that agricultural production must rise by about 60 percent by 2050 in order to feed a larger and generally richer population.
- Climate change is having a big impact on plant health. It threatens to reduce both the quality and quantity of crops, leading to lower yields. Rising temperatures are also exacerbating water scarcity, and changing the relationship between pests, plants and pathogens.
- More plant pests are appearing earlier and in places where they were never seen before due to climate change.
- Beneficial insects are vital for plant health since they pollinate most plants, keep pests in control, maintain soil health, recycle nutrients, and more. However, 80 percent of the biomass of insects has disappeared in the last 25 to 30 years.

## IYPH 2020 CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES AND CONTENT PRODUCTION

Products will be available in the six official UN languages in the IYPH workspace designed to share materials easily with external partners. A schedule of when new materials will be added is available below.

The workspace is available at: <https://bit.ly/2PjmsDo>

Item	Expected Date
IYPH Brief	√
<a href="#">Call for "MY STORY" human interest stories</a>	√
<a href="#">IYPH Visual Identity Guidelines and waiver of liability</a>	√
IYPH Website – phase 1	July 2019
IYPH Poster	June 2019
IYPH Powerpoint Presentation	June 2019
Online Calendar of IYPH Events	June 2019
Social Media Material	September 2019
IYPH Communications Guide and Toolkit	November 2019
IYPH Banner/Backdrop for Events	November 2019
IYPH Brochure	November 2019
IYPH Promo Video	November 2019
IYPH Website - phase 2	December 2019
IYPH Infographics	December 2019
IYPH Launch Event	December 2019
Photo Contest Starts	December 2019
IYPH Activity Book for Children	early 2020
IYPH Video Message from the FAO Director-General	December 2019/early 2020
IYPH YouTube Video	Early 2020
Photo Contest Winners Announced	TBC – around June 2020