The issue

The COVID-19 outbreak highlighted the risks related to delays or potential downfall of the phytosanitary capacity at the national level. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many human activities while underlining the importance of effective and resilient food systems at the national and international level. National phytosanitary services had to adapt quickly while exposing their staff to higher risks of contagion because measures such as lockdowns did not stop plant pests and diseases from spreading. All staff involved in plant health activities did not halt their inspection activities to ensure continuity, particularly in agriculture, to avoid additional constraints on plant and plant product exports. The necessity to ensure continuity to phytosanitary services exposed them to new sanitary risks.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant disruption of many value chains, generating major concerns for consignments of perishable goods, such as plants and plant products. The Bureau of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM Bureau) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat developed a COVID-19 page on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPPC – https://www.ippc.int/en/covid-19/) with the most up-to-date information and official document collection on the COVID-19 pandemic effects on phytosanitary activities, in view of mitigating its dreadful effects. The IPPC Community reacted promptly to the global sanitary crisis and held virtual meetings amongst all its contracting parties (CPs) aiming to assess the preliminary impacts of COVID-19, noting negative impacts for both developing and developed countries, including food loss and food security.

The IPPC Secretariat noted the key role of some core functions of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the need to reinforce them to strengthen the phytosanitary security at the national and international level. The main activities to address will articulate on two main areas of work:

1. facilitating dialogue amongst the IPPC contracting parties through the organization of regional workshops, with focus on innovation and adoption of digital technologies in phytosanitary activities;

2. ensuring continuity to the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) achievements and its legacies, particularly the establishment of the International Day of Plant Health, amongst other activities; and

3. promoting collaborative tools to share relevant phytosanitary information amongst IPPC contracting parties (CPs) and all relevant stakeholders.

This initiative is essential to continue raising awareness about the central role of plant health amongst all involved stakeholders while promoting effective, collaborative and inclusive ways to strengthen the phytosanitary security at the national and international level.
national, regional and international level. The proposed actions aim to implementing and achieving this project harmoniously and coherently, minimising the risk of duplication of existing initiatives. The IPPC Secretariat, particularly the Integration and Support Team, will lead the coordinated implementation of this project in alignment with the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020 – 2030 and its development agenda.

The expected outcomes will be assessed against ad hoc and commonly used indicators, together with a precise monitoring system allowing detailed and scheduled revision of implementation status. The IPPC Secretariat may set up additional systems for monitoring and evaluation as deemed necessary.

The action

The IPPC Secretariat and its partners will assess, plan and implement various initiatives and other relevant actions on several programmes, activities and initiatives to increase the phytosanitary security at the national, regional and international level in alignment with the two identified objectives. The project aims to (i) facilitate dialogue amongst the IPPC contracting parties through the organization of regional workshops, with focus on innovation and adoption of digital technologies in phytosanitary activities; (ii) ensure continuity to the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) achievements and its legacies, particularly the establishment of the International Day of Plant Health, amongst other activities; and (iii) collaborative tools to share relevant phytosanitary information amongst IPPC contracting parties (CPs) and all relevant stakeholders.

The Integration and Support Team of the IPPC Secretariat will promote the following actions to achieve the expected results:

- organization coordination of IPPC regional workshop with a focus on facilitating safe trade through the adoption of digital technologies in phytosanitary activities;
- organization and coordination of technical cooperation amongst IPPC regional plant protection organizations (TC-RPPOs) fostering dialogues on the application of digital instruments for phytosanitary activities at the regional level;
- monitoring on the advancements in applying innovation and digital technologies in phytosanitary activities;
- participatory and promotional events on plant health topics in collaboration with all stakeholders at the national, regional and global level;
- publication of awareness-raising articles on plant health for broader and specific audiences alike through collaborations with journals and other media globally;
- support to the establishment and planning of the International Day of Plant Health and its related activities after its declaration;
- advocating for plant health in national, regional and international political agendas as a legacy of the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH);
- initiating research on the climate change impacts on plant health;
- assessing and reordering the information exchanges of the IPPC community;
- developing or improving existing online tools to facilitate access to phytosanitary information;
- proposing and participating to in awareness raising programmes at the national, regional and international level; and
- developing a framework to improve global phytosanitary research coordination.

Expected results

The IPPC Secretariat, under the coordination of the Integration and Support Team for this project, expects to build on the achievements of the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) and strengthen collaboration, information exchange and research coordination of plant health at the global, regional and national level.

The deliverables as listed in the Action Plan will follow an implementation scheme aiming to ensure that the expected results can be achieved in the suggested timeframe (2021–2025). The IPPC Secretariat will achieve a more robust and collaborative IPPC community, where relevant phytosanitary information is accessible, available and coherent, thanks to specific tools for facilitating the exchange of said information.

The IPPC Secretariat foresees that the plant health community will establish stronger partnerships and collaborations to improve safe trade facilitation globally.

Partnerships

- Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Organization (Lead: Integration and Support Team)
- Regional Plant Protection Organizations (RPPOs)
- National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Right to Food Team
- FAO Office for Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment
- FAO regional and country offices
- Relevant UN bodies and committees (e.g. CFS, UNEP, UN Water, etc.)
- Academia, relevant civil society organizations (CSOs) and private sector entities.
Programme links

- IPPC Regional Workshops: https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/capacity-development/regional-ippc-workshops/
- 2021 work plan and budget of the IPPC Secretariat
- Ongoing IPPC study on climate change impacts on plant health.

Country focus

The project has a global scope but shall include adaptation at the regional level to incorporate the inherent characteristics, necessities and conditions aiming to the highest levels of inclusion, participation and shared ownership. Surveys, interviews and meeting may be used to ensure consistency and coordination in the project implementation, especially with country offices of the Food and Agriculture Organizations (FAO), regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs) and national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) of the International Plant Protection Convention.

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