

European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

37/5 Meeting of the Executive Committee 17 May 2019

Agenda item 1 – Background note

Provisional Annotated Agenda Forty-first Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) Budapest, Hungary, 1–2 October 2019

Following the assessment of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA), which highlighted that the value of the ECA Sessions could be increased by focusing on fewer topics to allow for more in-depth technical discussions and to stimulate the participation of national technical experts, this format was successfully implemented during the Fortieth Session of the ECA in 2017. Further to the review of potential topics for the Forty-first Session of the ECA, the Executive Committee has identified plant health as the Session's main theme. Based on these recommendations, the ECA Secretariat has developed the following provisional annotated agenda.

Main theme for the Session: Plant health in Europe and Central Asia

Opening of the Session

- 1. Adoption of the agenda and timetable**
- 2. Appointment of the Rapporteur**
- 3. Plant health in Europe and Central Asia – relevance, trends and developments**

Importance of plant health for the region and relevance to regional priorities

Plants are the foundation of life on earth. They produce most of the oxygen we breathe and provide much of the food we eat. We use them to make clothes, shelter, medicines, and many other things essential to our lives. Plant resources help stabilize the climate, and for nearly half of the Earth's population they are a primary source of income. Countries trade plants and plant products to support economic development and assure food security.

Plant pests continue to threaten plant and food systems in Europe and Central Asia. Estimates of pest-related losses range from 20 to 80 percent, depending on the types of plants, locations and climatic conditions, with the estimated value reaching hundreds of billions of euros a year.

Trends and developments

The current environment for plant health operations can be characterized by the following main trends:

- increasing and more diversified trade;



- structural and operational challenges in the way national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) work;
- scientific and capacity development and innovation;
- impacts of climate change on plant health; and
- more frequent pest incursions and outbreaks.

In this context, the draft International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Strategic Framework for 2020–2030¹ foresees the following key development programmes:

- 1) harmonization of electronic data exchange;
- 2) commodity-specific international standards (International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures: ISPMs);
- 3) management of e-commerce and courier mail pathways;
- 4) enabling the use of third-party entities;
- 5) strengthening pest outbreak alert and response systems;
- 6) assessment and management of climate change impacts on plant health;
- 7) global phytosanitary research coordination; and
- 8) the establishment of a diagnostic laboratory network.

When adopted, this *IPPC Strategic Framework* should form the basis for global work on developing harmonized solutions and guidance on their implementation. These strategies may be supplemented by appropriate solutions at regional and country level. Regional plant protection organizations may support this by providing support and forums for discussions on addressing plant health implementation issues.

Members may consider the following topics for discussion:

- Key plant health issues and trends at regional and country level
- Food security and nutrition: the impact of plant pests
- Relevance of plant health for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDGs 1, 2, 8, 12, 13, 15 and 17
- Challenges and opportunities for the implementation of plant health development programmes
- The need for ecosystem-based approaches for sustainable management of pests

4. Plant pests and diseases in the context of climate change and climate variability, food security and biodiversity risks

Plant pest threats and the changing climate

Climate change, climate variability and extreme events may create environmental conditions conducive for the movement and development of pests. The impacts of pests extend beyond agriculture, especially to forests. Introduction of new species into ecosystems may also pose risks to the local biodiversity through direct damage or competition. These can be compounded by lack of knowledge, early detection and prevention systems or pest control measures. Monitoring, preventive measures and international collaboration are key for minimizing those impacts.

The impacts of climate-related factors on risks posed by pests need further investigation. Countries and relevant scientific institutions are encouraged to cooperate to enhance the technical knowledge in that area. At the same time, the impact and implication for producers, in particular smallholders, and other

¹ <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/governance/ippc-strategic-framework/>



actors within the food system needs to be further appraised, and adequate solutions and measures need to be identified.

Human activities and the spread of pests

Plant pests may move among countries and continents with consignments in trade and tourism, especially as they^{2,3} increase their intensities and range.

In the past, Europe and Central Asia saw numerous introductions of pests, with immense impacts on the development and food security of the region. Examples of recent incursions include *Xylella fastidiosa* devastating olive trees in southern Italy and red palm weevil wiping out palm trees in some parts of the Mediterranean.

Transboundary plant pests: cooperation is essential

Countries protect their territories from the introduction and spread of pests, usually through the establishment of relevant legislation and its implementation by NPPOs, often in cooperation with other partners. Plant health activities are harmonized globally, and phytosanitary measures are adopted under the IPPC. It is of key importance that countries maintain sufficient capacities of their NPPOs to operate effective plant health systems, enabling them to timely identify and address pest challenges.

For the successful management of many transboundary plant pests, careful monitoring of pest populations, exchange of information and coordination of activities among countries are essential. Enhanced monitoring or forecasting systems should be accompanied by strengthening countries' capacities to apply relevant pest control measures effectively.

Given the complexity of relations among the environment, pests, trade, development, livelihoods and food security, effective planning and implementation of pest-mitigating actions requires cooperation among countries, but also with relevant stakeholders within countries.

Role for international institutions

The World Trade Organization (WTO) SPS Agreement⁴ and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) provide platforms for the cooperation of countries on plant health.

FAO – in particular, its Plant Production and Protection Division – promotes sustainable intensification of crop production, including the strengthening of national capacities to monitor and control pests, and maintains a number of relevant information systems,⁵ such as FAO's Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES)⁶ promoting international cooperation, preventive approaches, monitoring, early warning, rapid response and integrated management.

At the regional level, the exchange of expertise and work on effective plant health solutions is supported by regional plant protection organizations.⁷ An example of a network coordinating national research in plant health in Europe and Central Asia is Euphresco⁸, supported by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO).

² https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/its2015_e/its15_merch_trade_product_e.htm

³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/209334/total-number-of-international-tourist-arrivals/>

⁴ WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/information-resources/en/#c68639>

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/food-chain-crisis/how-we-work/plant-protection/en/>

⁷ <https://www.ippc.int/en/external-cooperation/regional-plant-protection-organizations/>

⁸ <https://www.euphresco.net/>



Members may consider the following topics for discussion:

- Regional situation of emerging plant pests
- Economic and environmental impacts of plant pests
- The most threatening emerging plant pests in the region and cooperation on plant health activities
- Efforts by countries and roles for international institutions in addressing plant health threats in the region
- Possible regional actions from the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) to assist Member Countries in cooperating on plant health issues

5. Impact of global trade and human mobility on the health of agricultural crops and forests in Europe and Central Asia

There is a wide range of examples that illustrate the potential of pests introduced through human activities into Europe and Central Asia to damage agriculture and forestry.

Areas that may require increased attention in the future include:

- international trade of live plants, including forestry species;
- Internet trade (e-commerce); and
- human mobility.

Insufficient pest risk management in the international trade of live plants is often considered the main reason for the recent rise in the number of introduced pests. Although EPPO monitors the distribution of pests that may potentially be introduced and the spread of pests that already are established in the region, the available mitigation measures to prevent incursions and manage pests that have already entered Europe are limited. ISPM 36 *Integrated measures for plants for planting*, adopted in 2012, redresses the balance somewhat by emphasizing the roles of countries of origin and producers of plants in ensuring that exported plants are free from pests of quarantine status for the importing country.

Internet trade in plants or plant products and the role of this trade in the introduction and spread of pests has been underestimated. Its rapid development in recent years has attracted the attention of the phytosanitary community. Plants purchased through e-commerce often originate in countries or continents different from the country of destination and may carry dangerous pests. In many cases, small shipments of plants undergo phytosanitary controls neither at origin nor at destination.

Another important aspect is human mobility. Individuals moving among countries and continents quite often bring with them plants or parts of plants that may harbour pests. Sometimes those plants are planted outdoors, where pests may develop and spread. Usually, individual travellers do not undergo phytosanitary checks at border crossings. Nevertheless, other relevant activities may be considered, such as the awareness-raising “Don’t Risk It” campaign launched by EPPO in 2013.⁹

Members will be invited to consider relevant international standards, review pest risks associated with various pathways, consider the implementation of activities enhancing the capacity of inspectors to detect new pests in imported consignments or continuous training programmes to maintain the diagnostic abilities of phytosanitary staff, and incorporate elements related to plant health into their national climate change policy strategies. Members also will be invited to consider implementing the principles of FAO’s EMPRES system and to consider supporting the enhancement of knowledge, skills and practices of farmers and extension services to address pest threats.

Members may consider the following topics for discussion:

⁹ https://www.eppo.int/RESOURCES/eppo_publications/don_t_risk_it



- Gaps in the management of pest risks in the international trade of plants
- The importance of capacity development at national levels
- Cooperation opportunities to address common challenges

6. Information item: update on the International Year of Plant Health in 2020 and other relevant initiatives

Increasing the effectiveness of NPPO operations requires the allocation of sufficient resources. Currently, plant health is often not resourced at a level reflecting its importance, which may be due to the low level of awareness of the impacts of plant health. These considerations have led to the proposal to hold an International Year of Plant Health. Year 2020 has been proclaimed the International Year of Plant Health by the General Assembly of the United Nations,¹⁰ with the aim to strengthen global, regional, and national plant health structures and activities through raising the awareness of its relevance for enhancing food security, economic development and environmental protection.

Countries are encouraged to contribute to the International Year of Plant Health initiative by raising the awareness of stakeholders and the public about the importance of plant health through, for example, the distribution of advocacy materials, presentations at national and international conferences, and more. NPPOs may need to cooperate with other stakeholders, such as scientific institutes and universities, governmental and non-governmental agencies, representatives of relevant industries (such as exporters) or international organizations.

7. Advancing gender equality in the region: update on progress made, with special focus on FAO support to rural women in income diversification

The Secretariat will provide an update on progress made by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in advancing gender equality in the region and on activities carried out to support rural women in income diversification, entrepreneurship and rural crafts in the framework of the Regional Initiative for strengthening agrifood trade and market integration, contributing to FAO's Strategic Objective to build more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems.

8. Progress made by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia on the main recommendations of the Fortieth ECA

This agenda item will focus on updates, in particular on a) progress made on antimicrobial resistance and b) follow-up regarding the recommendations of the 2017 Assessment of the European Commission on Agriculture. It is expected that Members will review the progress made and provide guidance for further implementation.

9. Election of Members of the Executive Committee

10. Any other business

11. Date and place of the Forty-second Session

12. Review and endorsement of the Report of the Commission

Closing of the Session

¹⁰ <https://www.ippc.int/en/news/plant-health-in-the-news/>

**FIELD TRIP:**

Relevant field trips are being identified by the Government of Hungary and are planned for the morning of day two.

SIDE EVENTS: proposals for one or two side events are being considered.