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Update on the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) Implementation

Executive Summary

This paper provides an update on the implementation of the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH 2020) since its official launch on 2 December 2019 and the current programme of work, action plan and initiatives during 2020. This paper includes the latest developments following the COVID-19 outbreak and the immediate IYPH-related actions that the IPPC community and FAO have undertaken to support the ongoing efforts in preventing the pandemic to spread further. The IYPH Secretariat and International Steering Committee have been working continuously to ensure continuity, regular updates and input to all stakeholders during the current global sanitary crisis.

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I. Background

1. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed 2020 the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) by a unanimous vote (UNGA Resolution A/RES/73/252). The overall objective of the IYPH 2020 is to raise the awareness of the public and political decision makers at the global, regional and national levels regarding the contribution of plant health towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular: ending hunger, reducing poverty, protecting the environment, boosting safe trade and economic development. In proclaiming the IYPH 2020, UNGA requested FAO and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) to facilitate the implementation of the Year.

2. FAO established the IYPH International Steering Committee (ISC) in collaboration with the IPPC, with one Member representative from each of the seven FAO Regional Groups, two representatives of the IPPC contracting parties, and seven representatives from various non-state stakeholder groups. The IYPH ISC provides overall guidance and assistance on the implementation of the International Year, and has been meeting regularly since its establishment in June 2019. The IYPH Secretariat supports the work of the IYPH ISC and is composed of four FAO units: IPPC Secretariat, Plant Production and Protection (NSP), Office for Corporate Communication – Outreach Branch (OCCO) and Partnerships and UN collaboration (PSU), have been cooperating to implement the IYPH Action Plan and supporting IYPH Communication Plan.

II. Major activities and initiatives since the official launch of the IYPH

3. The IYPH was launched at FAO headquarters on 2 December 2019 by the FAO Director-General. The international community has been responding extremely well to the implemented initiatives, such as the issue of a two-euro coin by Belgium and a commemorative coin by Italy with the IYPH visual identity, as well as over twenty countries committing to printing an IYPH stamp and the establishment of IYPH national steering committees to raise awareness.

4. The IYPH visual identity has been translated into over thirty languages worldwide and is being used by many stakeholders globally in accordance with the guidelines provided. The IYPH website has been launched along with a communication toolkit inclusive of various publications and a Trello board for social media. Three IYPH videos have been produced and the official IYPH promotional video of the launch has been translated into ten languages, with widespread use on social media. An international photo contest on plant health has received hundreds of submissions from professional photographers and amateurs alike.

5. Nearly 300 events, ranging from national to global ones, have been planned during 2020 by the IYPH Secretariat, as well as other stakeholders. In the first trimester of 2020, the IYPH Secretariat published over 20 articles in various newspapers and magazines and participated in a number of public events.

III. Action plan for the remainder of 2020

6. The COVID-19 outbreak has forced the IYPH ISC and Secretariat to reassess the Action Plan and postpone some major events.

7. The abrupt interruption of IYPH activities and initiatives led to the proposal to extend some of the IYPH global activities into 2021. The 15th Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-15) and its Ministerial Segment have been postponed until further notice. The International Plant Health Conference (IPHC), planned to be held in Helsinki from 5 to 8 October 2020, has also been postponed to 28 June to 1 July 2021, in combination with the IYPH closing ceremony. A High-level Conference on Fall Armyworm Control, which was due to take place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire in April 2020, has been postponed to the second semester of 2020 and may be held virtually. Other initiatives, such as the luncheon to be hosted during the High Level Political Forum 2020 in New York, are still pending confirmation.

8. The IYPH communication plan has been adapted and several planned activities and initiatives are now being implemented through virtual means, such as webinars and increased web and social

media posts, a planned global campaign for travelers, an art and drawing competition, as well as boosting of the IYPH discourse within FAO internal channels and across stakeholders globally. Among the upcoming communication initiatives are the publication of Human-Interest Stories in relation to plant health, the IYPH Activity Book for children, an animation for widespread digital use and the nomination of IYPH Goodwill Ambassadors and influencers to further promote the IYPH objectives globally.