

NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON WHEAT RUST SURVEILLANCE THROUGH SMS NETWORK IN TURKEY

25 APRIL 2013, ANKARA-TURKEY

National Workshop on Wheat Rust Surveillance through SMS Network in Turkey was conducted on 25 April 2013 in Ankara, Turkey. The workshop was organized by FAO in cooperation with Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MFAL), Turkey.

The Wheat Rust SMS Reporting System Project started in 2012 as a pilot application in Turkey and a national workshop was conducted in Ankara. The workshop was organized with the objective to reveal the installed updates of the System and also facilitate discussions and evaluation of its functions. The system is designed of a SMS gateway tool, an operation unit and a network of extension offices in provinces and districts as well as research institutes. The system has been established in selected every 5 districts in 5 provinces of Central Anatolia Region in Turkey. The successful use of the System provides an opportunity to carry out a rapid surveillance, warning and information exchange in order to manage wheat rust diseases in Turkey. The establishment of the System is supported by MFAL, FAO, IFAD and the Italian Development Cooperation Program.

More than 70 participants, extension officers of districts and provinces of Central Anatolia Region, researchers, government officials and international experts from FAO, CIMMYT and ICARDA attended to the workshop.

Mr. Mustapha Sinaceur, FAO-SEC Sub-regional Coordinator and FAO Representative in Turkey, Dr. Nevzat Birisik, Deputy General Director of General Directorate of Food and Control, Dr. Alexey Morgounov, Head of CIMMYT Office in Turkey, Dr. Mesut Keser, Head of ICARDA-Turkey, Dr. Birol Akbas, Head of Plant Health Researchs Department of General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policy and Dr. Mevlut Sahin, Director of Central Research Institute for Field Crops opened the workshop, welcomed the participants and emphasized the importance of plant protection and application of modern approaches and tools in saving crop yield and to combat hunger and poverty. It was also noted that the expected world population in the next 40 years would reach 9 billion and that there is a need to double food production. Rust diseases have high risk of reducing yield of cereals. Thus, management of these diseases is necessary and requires effective strategies, contingency planning, integrated management approaches, including use of resistant cultivars and timely interventions in case of emergencies, promotion of international collaboration and support for rapid surveillance systems.

The introduction of the workshop and the detailed developments on Wheat Rust SMS Reporting System, using smart phone and SMS reporting technology was presented by Dr. Fazil Dusunceli, FAO-AGP. He emphasized that the success of survey activities depends on coordination among the institutions, timely surveillance and most importantly rapid communication and information sharing. Thus, effective responses to the epidemics can be managed. The System contributes to rapid information exchange between extension offices and research institutes and provides rapid information flow from districts to headquarters.

Dr. Zafer Mert, Cereal Pathologist, Central Research Institute for Field Crops, presented information about wheat rust situation in Turkey, activities on surveillance of wheat rusts and their methodology and epidemiology. He also gave information on epidemics in the past, the crop loss and the importance of the system for Turkey.

The smartphone application of SMS reporting was introduced by Mr. Christian Scaduto, FODP. Participants had a chance to install the software into their smart phones, test the features of the application and send SMS, which was seen and shown on the map of the System. Later on, participants developed recommendations on the System.

The workshop was very useful and allowed the participants to learn about the updates on the System improvements and sending SMS. It also generated discussion on the implementation of the System, time and frequency of reporting and disease level determination. The recommendations on further improvements were noted. All participants unanimously agreed on the importance of timely monitoring of wheat rusts.

FAO considers that successful implementation of SMS surveillance system in Turkey will serve as an example for promotion of the System in other regions and countries in the world.