

## **27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture – Written Correspondence Procedure**

### **Item 4.5 – Proposal for an International Day of Plant Health**

#### **Secretariat response to written questions from the Committee**

The Secretariat appreciates the wide support to the proposal for an International Day of Plant Health (IDPH) as tabled by Zambia, and the endorsement of the related draft FAO Conference Resolution by Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, European Union and its 27 Member States, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Thailand, United States of America, and Zambia. The Secretariat also appreciates the support for this initiative by the Commission for Phytosanitary Measures (CPM), the CPM Bureau, the International Steering Committee of the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) and the International Seed Federation.

The Secretariat notes Argentina's proposal to include a new paragraph in the said resolution to recognize the importance of access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture as a form of developing crops resistant to pests and changing climatic conditions.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat, hosted at FAO, are strong advocates of the importance of plant health globally, and its primary role in achieving a world free of hunger and malnutrition.

The proclamation of 12 May as IDPH would represent a key legacy of the IYPH, and continue creating awareness of the importance of plant health in reaching the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The IDPH would help decision-makers and civil society understand the importance of protecting the world's plant resources, thus encouraging governments to take action and allowing citizens to have a better understanding of the issue.

The Secretariat applauds the commitment of some countries and stakeholders in taking part in the IDPH implementation, especially in the current contingency when the global community gathers to coordinate efforts to stop the massive spread of new and dangerous diseases.

The Secretariat recognizes that protecting global plant resources from pests via capacity development, international cooperation and standard setting in the phytosanitary area is essential to strengthen plant health efforts at all level. In particular, the implementation of globally recognised standards and policies contributes to minimizing the environmental risks posed by plant pests and diseases and their management. The IDPH would continue promoting the importance of the IPPC and its International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) to combat plant pests and diseases, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as a means to contribute to the protection of the environment.

As requested, FAO will undertake a comprehensive assessment of the proposal against the criteria adopted by the UN ECOSOC and the 38<sup>th</sup> FAO Conference in 2013 for the proclamation of International Years. While no minimum funding requirements are envisaged from the United Nations prior to the Day being declared, all funds for the Day have to be mobilized from extra-budgetary sources. A proposed budget for the first IDPH in the range of approximately USD 120 000 was reviewed by the IYPH International Steering Committee, which is in line with expectations from the Secretariat and may be varying depending on the evolution of the current global pandemic.

It is suggested that, once the IDPH is proclaimed, the IPPC Secretariat appoints an IPPC project manager responsible to coordinate the planning and implementation of activities with relevant FAO divisions, members and stakeholders; additional part-time consultants may also be involved based on budget availability.