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Follow-up on the International Scientific Consultation and High-Level Meeting on Red Palm Weevil Management

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) jointly organized a Scientific Consultation and High-Level Meeting on Red Palm Weevil (RPW) Management in Rome, Italy, from 29 to 31 March 2017.

2. The Scientific Consultation was held during the first two days of the event and brought together stakeholders involved in the management of the RPW, *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*. National authorities, international experts, scientists, private sector representatives and non-governmental organizations held comprehensive technical discussions on the current global situation and challenges facing the effective management of the pest and options for improving pest management programmes. In addition to the state-of-the-art on current global RPW research programmes, the consultation covered advances in combating RPW using different integrated pest management (IPM) methods.

3. Participants also discussed the Framework Strategy for Eradication of the RPW drafted by a team of international RPW experts from FAO, CIHEAM, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the Near East Plant Protection Organization (NEPPO). They reviewed and agreed to implement the national, regional and global components of the framework strategy, as outlined below:

- National programmes will consider the spread of the RPW and eradication of this pest will be supported by the framework strategy. A charter will be drafted for cooperation and coordination of efforts at regional and interregional levels to support the integrated and sustainable management programmes to control the RPW, reduce its devastating effects on the environment and food security and alleviate its socio-economic impact on rural communities.

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- A Regional Programme for RPW management will be established to create an enabling environment for cooperation and coordination and to assist member countries of the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region in improving their management strategies and programmes. The Regional Programme will be hosted by the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (RNE) with the support of CIHEAM, NEPPO and member countries.
- A Global Platform for RPW will be established to strengthen coordination, information, experience and knowledge-sharing at global level. The platform will be established with the support of FAO, CIHEAM, IPPC and other partners and member countries, and will be hosted at FAO headquarters.

4. The High-Level Meeting held on the last day of the event was opened by the Director-General of FAO and the Secretary-General of CIHEAM in the presence of His Excellency the Minister for Environment, Water and Agriculture of Saudi Arabia and His Excellency the Minister for Agriculture of Mauritania (<http://www.fao.org/news/audio-video/detail-audio/en/?uid=12090>). The ministers, government representatives and other participants were briefed on multi-disciplinary and multi-regional strategy, which included implementation of cross-border phytosanitary standards.

5. The ministers, government representatives and other participants were briefed on the outcomes of the Scientific Consultation and the proposed strategy that had been reviewed and agreed.

6. FAO stressed that the RPW as global threat which demanded a global strategy to eradicate it. Moreover, the RPW problem requires all governments to be active participants and pledge their commitment and cooperation to stop its spread and eradicate it in the affected countries. It was noted that the main message from the International Scientific Consultation on RPW Management was positive, in that the RPW can be controlled and defeated by joint efforts at global and regional levels and that FAO was committed to coordinating the global efforts to stop and eradicate the pest. FAO will coordinate the global efforts to stop and eradicate the pest. (more details on the meeting could be found on the event website on following link: <http://www.fao.org/food-chain-crisis/how-we-work/plant-protection/red-palm-weevil/scientific-consultation-and-high-level-meeting-on-red-palm-weevil-management/en/>)

7. The High-Level Meeting agreed to the proposed Framework Strategy and three components for Eradication of the RPW to fight the pest.

8. A Trust Fund was proposed for governments and partners to commit resources for the implementation of global, regional and national initiatives supporting the implementation of the Framework Strategy for Eradication of RPW. The Trust Fund will facilitate the cooperation and coordination of efforts at regional, interregional and global levels for supporting the integrated and sustainable management of programmes to control the RPW and reduce its devastating effects on the environment and food security, and its socio-economic impact on rural communities. FAO member countries and other partners are invited to contribute to the Trust Fund.

9. The Trust Fund was proposed to consider three major thematic areas: (i) research; (ii) capacity development; and (iii) transfer of knowledge and technology (i.e. South-South Cooperation). It will ensure involvement of all relevant stakeholders, especially farmers and young professionals in the implementation of the Strategy.

II. FAO ACTIONS

10. Further to the Scientific Consultation and High-Level Meeting on RPW Management, FAO has carried out the following actions:

- The first RPW Steering Committee Meeting was held in Cairo, Egypt (22 to 24 May 2017). The outcomes of this meeting were reviewed and the report of the Scientific Consultation and High-Level Meeting was finalized along with an agreed structure and content of a manual on RPW

best management practices, and a proposed matrix for follow-up actions. The manual is being prepared for publication and expected to be published by June 2018.

- A web page on the RPW was created (<http://www.fao.org/food-chain-crisis/how-we-work/plant-protection/red-palm-weevil/en/>) and is regularly updated.
- The final report of the Scientific Consultation and High-Level Meeting was made available to all participating countries (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-bu018e.pdf>). A concept note for the RPW eradication Trust Fund, shared with all countries, covered all technical aspects of establishment of the Trust Fund and implementation of the Framework Strategy for Eradication of the RPW.
- Responses already received from some countries show the interest and commitment for establishing the RPW Global Platform and RPW Regional Programme for the NENA region.
- FAO supported the establishment of the Global RPW Management Platform through an Interregional Technical Cooperation Facility (TCPF).
- FAO RNE and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) signed a Letter of Agreement for the development of a strategic framework on date palm value chains in the region, for presentation at the next AOAD ministerial meeting in May 2018.

11. FAO RNE has established a technical date palm working group to:

- guide and assist the member countries for the development of the date palm value chains in the NENA region to support small-scale farm holders, sustainable use of the natural resources, date palm pest and disease management, use of by-products and building resilience to climate change;
- identify key stakeholders on date palm value chains in producing countries and engage them in a technical consultation regarding main challenges and opportunities for improving and expanding the value chain of date palm products in the region with attention to gender and youth dimensions;
- establish a regional strategic framework to guide concerted efforts to develop the value chain of date palm products in the NENA region; and
- prepare the participation of FAO in the Khalifa International Date Palm Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates in March 2018, where FAO will participate with two thematic papers, one of which on the Framework Strategy for Eradication of the RPW.

12. A Scientific Meeting on Research and Development Aspects of the RPW Management is agreed to be held, with the participation of FAO, at the CIHEAM Bari Institute in July 2018.