联合国粮食及农业组织 | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations | Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture | Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций | Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura | منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة

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Update on the International Year of Plant Health in 2020

I. Background

1. Plant health is usually considered the discipline that uses a range of measures to control and prevent pests, weeds and disease-causing organisms from spreading into new areas, especially through human interaction such as international trade. Consequently, a key factor in any strategy to eliminate hunger and rural poverty must be the protection of plants from pests and diseases. The productivity of crops grown for human consumption is increasingly at risk due to the incidence of pests, especially weeds, pathogens and pests belonging to the animal kingdom. Crop losses due to these pests can be substantial. Experts from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimate that invasive pests are damaging as much as 40 percent of all food crops globally each year.

2. In particular, pests that have been introduced into new ecosystems can have devastating effects on food security and the environment. A pest epidemic of enormous proportions due to the introduced *Spodoptera frugiperda* (Fall Armyworm) is just underway in Africa, and the recent introduction of *Fusarium oxysporum* f.sp. *cubense* Tropical Race 4 (Panama disease) into Latin America threatens the entire banana production in the Americas. The vast increase in the international trade of agricultural commodities, as well as the effects of climate change, epitomizes a dramatic increase in the risk of pest introductions. New pathways and disturbed ecological conditions set the perfect conditions for future pest epidemics of major proportions.

3. While pest risks are increasing globally, national efforts to combat these risks are surprisingly decreasing. Resources committed to plant health are reduced, often significantly so, in most countries. Plant health research, taxonomical and diagnostic services are diminishing on national levels. Plant

protection services worldwide are facing more and more risks, with fewer resources available. Already in 2004, the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization declared a "State of Emergency" for plant health.

4. To address these challenges, Finland thought it would be necessary to raise public awareness about plant health and its benefits for the global society by declaring the year 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). IYPH would serve as a trigger to make national, regional and international plant health systems stronger and more responsive to face the plant health challenges of the future. It would also create a stimulus for better and more environmentally sound agricultural production and for research in plant pathology and entomology.

5. Based on these considerations, the Government of Finland proposed in 2015 to declare 2020 as the IYPH, and the proposal immediately found track in the international plant health and agricultural community. In December 2018, 95 countries co-sponsored a United Nations resolution to that effect, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations – a truly uniting proposal co-sponsored equally by developed, developing and the least-developed countries from all continents!

II. Objectives and expected outputs of the IYPH

6. The International Plant Protection Organization (IPPC), an Article 14 body of FAO, has been at the forefront in combatting the international spread of pests. Consequently, the IPPC has also been heavily involved in the efforts to declare the IYPH 2020. Under IPPC, guidance objectives and anticipated outputs were developed for the IYPH 2020. In 2016, the main objective of the IYPH had been adopted at the Eleventh Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM)[1] as "*to raise awareness of the importance and impacts of plant health in addressing issues of global importance, including hunger, poverty, threats to the environment and economic development*".The specific objectives, as adopted by the IPPC, are:

a. raising the awareness of the public and political decision makers at the global, regional and national levels about plant health;
b. promoting the strengthening of national, regional and global plant health efforts and their resources in light of increasing trade and new pest risks caused through climate change;
c. educating the public and increasing its knowledge about plant health;
d. enhancing dialogue and stakeholder involvement in plant health;
e. increasing information about the state of plant protection in the world; and
f. facilitating the establishment of plant health partnerships on national, regional and global levels.

7. The main aim is that these objectives would, in particular, translate into such outputs as:
i. more political and other decision-makers know about plant health;
ii. the public is aware about plant health;
iii. increased resources for plant health at all levels;

[1] Report of CPM-11, page 131; https://www.ippc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2016/07/Report_CPM-11_2016-07-19_withISPMs-revised.pdf;

iv. strengthened capacity development activities in plant health;
v. strengthened plant health disciplines;
vi. strengthened public/private partnerships on plant health at all levels; and
vii. plant health partnerships are established at national, regional and global levels.

III. Benefits to governments, stakeholders and the international community

8. By achieving these objectives and outputs, it is expected that national governments, administrations and especially national plant protection organizations will benefit. These benefits will especially increase the knowledge of the public and of stakeholders about plant health, and they will translate into a much better cooperation by the public and stakeholders with administrations and into an increased visibility of plant health in governmental policy and resource mobilization. In turn, this will improve the status of plant health in many countries and worldwide.

9. Professional stakeholders – such as producers, traders, universities and research institutes – will also benefit from the IYPH 2020. For professional stakeholders, improved trade opportunities and better governmental plant health policies will be of particular benefit. It will result in increased international market access and better legislation that minimizes stakeholder burdens. Educational stakeholders, such as universities and research institutes, may benefit from increased plant health research activities and better curricula in plant protection.

10. The IYPH 2020 will not only benefit professional stakeholders and governments and their agencies. In fact, the IYPH 2020 will have profound impacts on the successful realization of the Agenda 2030 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Plant health contributes to a number of the SDGs, and effective plant health policies and good plant health conditions are of paramount importance for reaching the goals set by the global community for 2030. Plant health specifically contributes to the realization of the following SDGs:

SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere

11. Trade is a critically important part of most national economies. Trade in plants and plant products and the earnings from this trade stimulate economic growth and bring well-being and prosperity to rural communities and agricultural sectors. The main pathway for the global introduction and spread of pests is through international trade. Minimizing production losses from pests and reducing pest control costs and side effects are important to maximizing returns for farmers and small holders. Access to export markets can be simplified by preventing the spread of pests to new areas, eradicating newly established pest populations, and creating recognized pest-free areas, pest-free places of production and pest-free production sites. By protecting plants against pests, plant health organizations are helping to increase agricultural productivity, improve rural incomes and reduce poverty. Thus plant health is especially relevant to the realization of target 1.1 of SDG 1: "*By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day*".

SDG 2 – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

12. A sufficient and sustainable food supply is necessary for increasing food security and eliminating hunger, but achieving this has been difficult for many countries. One threat to food security is invasive pests, which cause losses of as much as 40 percent of all food crops globally each year. Using science, technology and regulations, plant health organizations are helping to slow the spread of damaging pests into new areas. They are also fighting back against pests that are destroying food crops and other resources that are critical to long-term food security. Humankind's formidable challenge to increase food production by 50 percent to meet the projected demand of the world's population by 2050 is only possible through better and more effective plant health. Since plant pests affect directly the availability of food and its nutritional quality, the IYPH will have positive impacts on almost all of the SDG 2 targets.

SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

13. As climate change impacts are felt more widely, more frequent extreme weather events have the potential to increase the rate of natural, wind-borne spread. The climate is often a limiting factor for pests in terms of both their survival and fecundity. As climates modify, plant and pest ranges will change, and pest impacts have the potential to increase significantly. By preventing the spread of plant pests into new areas, plant health organizations are helping to preserve the variety of species within a given ecosystem. Including climate change predictions into the pest risk analysis considerations of regulators and establishing contingency plans for potential pest arrivals are essential tools to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change induced pest outbreaks. Thus, the IYPH will strengthen countries' ability to realize targets 13.1 and 13.2 of SDG 13.

SDG 15 – Protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manage forests; combat desertification; halt and reverse land degradation; and halt biodiversity loss

14. Awareness has increased of the importance of invasive alien species (IAS), which can and do have significant and devastating impacts on terrestrial, marine and freshwater environments, agriculture and forests. Plant health policies address environmental concerns as they relate to plant biodiversity and emerging problems associated with invasive alien species that are plant pests. Continuing concern with climate change and protecting forests and the environment compel plant health authorities to be aware of the potential for pest distribution and impacts to change with the changing climate. Governments' policies to minimize harm to forests and the environment, climate change and the spread of invasive alien species must be matched with the need to maintain sustainable food production in order to ease poverty and feed the populations.

15. The IYPH will raise awareness about the effects of plant pests on ecosystems and especially biodiversity loss and will therefore have direct relevance to target 15.1 of SDG 15. Since plant pests are in many cases also IAS, and IAS are considered as one of the major drivers for biodiversity loss, the IYPH will also contribute to the achievement of target 15.8 of SDG 15: "*…. introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species*".

IV. Programme

16. The UN resolution from 2018 declaring the year 2020 as the IYPH included provisions that the organization of the IYPH 2020 is to be undertaken jointly by FAO and the IPPC. Consequently, FAO and the IPPC established in June 2019 an IYPH International Steering Committee (ISC). This Steering Committee confirmed previous plans about an international IYPH programme. This programme consists of the following international activities:

- IYPH launch events in New York and Rome (2 December 2019);
- a ministerial-level fifteenth Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-15) (30 March to 3 April 2020 in Rome);
- the International Plant Health Conference, hosted by Finland (5 to 8 October 2020);
- World Food Day focused on plant health (16 October 2020, subject to approval by the FAO Director-General);
- photo contest and exhibition (during one of the 2020 events); and
- closing event in Rome (December 2020 or January 2021).

17. Besides these international events, The IYPH ISC expects that thousands of events promoting plant health will be conducted on regional and national levels around the world. FAO and the IPPC will monitor activities undertaken on regional and national levels and will undertake an evaluation of the IYPH 2020 in 2021.