

27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture

Item 4.5: Proposal for an International Day of Plant Health

Introductory notes

Plants are the source of most of the food we eat and the air we breathe, yet their health is often neglected. With globalization and increased international travel and trade, the opportunities for plant pests and diseases to move around the world has grown drastically. The movement of people and goods has radically increased over the past decades, and with it new pathways for pest introduction and spread. New pests and diseases appear now in territories where they had never been seen before, with negative consequences on local ecosystems, agriculture, and food security. Pests are responsible for losses of 20 to 40 percent of global food production, and for trade losses in agricultural products exceeding USD 220 billion every year. What is more, once established in a new area, plant pests are often impossible to eradicate.

As a key legacy for the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) 2020, the Government of Zambia, with the strong support of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures and the IYPH International Steering Committee (ISC), proposed the observance of 12 May as the International Day of Plant Health (IDPH).

While FAO and the IPPC Secretariat, under the guidance of the IYPH ISC have been continuously engaged in promoting the IYPH throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, a renewed effort is necessary to ensure a lasting legacy of the current international year and sustain the effective operation of global, regional and national plant protection organizations in promoting plant health

The IDPH will provide continuity to the efforts made throughout the IYPH 2020 and continue to raise awareness among the public and policy makers of the key role of plant health in tackling hunger, poverty, threats to the environment and economic development.

This is why the Committee is invited to:

- Review the proposal by the Government of Zambia to establish the observance by the UN system of 12 May as the International Day of Plant Health (IDPH), and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.
- Endorse the draft Conference Resolution, as contained in Appendix A, and submit the proposal for approval by the 165th Session of the FAO Council (December 2020) and adoption by the 42nd Session of the FAO Conference (July 2021).

Jingyuan Xia, Director, Plant Production and Protection Division, NSP