

28th Session of the Committee on Agriculture

Proposal for an International Day of Potato

Potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L.) is one of the world's five most important crops. It is cultivated in over 150 countries, across all continents, on over 20 million hectares, and it is regularly consumed by billions of people.

Potato plays an important role in food security and nutrition, and serves as the source of a vast industry of various processed products. Potato is a healthy source of carbohydrate, antioxidants and nutrients, and can be promoted as part of a balanced diet.

Small-scale farmers depend on sustainable potato cultivation to generate income, protect the environment and create social equity.

Potato is genetically diverse; there are over 5 000 hybrids, varieties and landraces of potatoes, many of which are restricted to the Altiplano region in Latin America.

Potato is one of the key staple crops that would benefit from advocacy initiatives towards realizing its potential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely: SDG 1 – no poverty, SDG 2 – Zero Hunger, SDG 8 – decent work and economic growth, SDG 12 – responsible consumption and production, SDG 15 – life on land, and SDG 17 – partnerships for the goals, to achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

Recognizing the global importance of potato, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2008 as the International Year of the Potato, to raise awareness of the need to promote research and development of sustainable production in low- and middle-income countries. The Government of Peru, with the strong support of the Kingdom of Belgium, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Ireland, and Provinces of Canada, proposed the observance of 30 May as the International Day of Potato (IDP).

The IDP will increase global awareness of critically important issues related to sustainable production and stable value chains, including water and fertilizer availability. Annual celebrations could involve various initiatives such as development of advocacy materials, technical publications, and documentaries; conducting festivals, establishment of field demonstrations, webinars and other international, regional, national events, and the promotion of regional or global networks.

Additionally, each year, the IDP will focus on key plant production and protection issues, including outbreaks of dangerous pests and diseases, innovation and green technologies for potato production, storage, processing and marketing, nutritional values and the promotion of recipes of potato-derived cuisine.

The Committee is invited to:

- *review* the proposal by the Government of Peru to establish the observance by the UN of an International Day of Potato (IDP), and provide guidance as deemed appropriate; and
- *endorse* the draft Conference Resolution, as contained in Annex A, and submit the proposal for approval by the 171th Session of the FAO Council and adoption by the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference for subsequent submission to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

Mr Jingyuan Xia, Director, Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP)