



European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

37/2 Meeting of the Executive Committee

4 May 2018, 10.00-12.00

Agenda Item 3 – Identification of topics and preparation of the 41st ECA in 2019, incl. strategic thinking on improving modalities, impact and strategic engagement

Introduction

At the 37/1 meeting of the Executive Committee on 15 December 2017, Members noted that 2020 will be the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) and that a related theme could be considered for the ECA 41th session. This background note to agenda item 3 outlines main relevant information for preliminary consideration of the topics.

What is International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) in 2020?

At the request of Finland, the IYPH is going to be held in 2020. The initiative of IYPH is aiming at strengthening global, regional, and national structures and activities dedicated to the protection of plant health through raising the awareness of the main stakeholders at all levels on relevance of plant health for global issues related to food security, economic development and environmental protection.

What is plant health?

Plant health is usually considered the discipline that is related to the prevention and control of pests affecting plants and plant products, including the regulation of imports and exports through a range of measures to prevent and control pests spreading into new areas, especially through international trade, tourism and food aid. The basis for those activities is the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). Plant health usually does not include issues related to the use of pesticides to control pests widespread in the territories of countries.

Plant health-related areas for consideration as preliminary proposals for the topic of the 41st Session of the ECA in 2019

Plant health issues have strong links and impacts on crop production, international trade, environment, economy, communities, food security, rural livelihoods etc. around the globe. Thus, they are relevant to all Regional Initiatives in the REU region.

International agreements

Plant health is regulated by the IPPC, which is recognized by WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) as the only standard setting organization in the plant health area. The IPPC has areas of common interest with other international agreements, especially e.g. with the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer or the Convention on Biological Diversity. A number of countries in the Europe and Central Asia region have identified issues in the area of plant health, relevant for their socio-economic development. Issues covered by international agreements other than IPPC, but related to the plant



health, could be considered by countries at the conference, in search for possible synergies to increase the effectiveness of activities.

Climate change

Pests of plants pose greater threat to food security than ever before, due to changes in global trade that enable the pests to move further and faster than before, and to climate change which creates favourable conditions for pests establishment in new areas. In relation to climate change in the region, natural spread of pests, their spread with international trade, as well possible future spread and impacts of pests under the circumstances of changing climate could be considered by countries.

Food security

For some pests, management options exist to bring invasions under control, possibly even eradicating the pest. For many others, there may be no way to stem the invasion which can affect food security negatively. It is of key importance for countries in the region that national protection organizations have early warning systems in place to increase the effectiveness of actions targeted towards the introductions of pests.

Sustainable agriculture

Spread of pests into new areas may seriously disturb the sustainability of agriculture, threaten the livelihoods of farmers, and increase poverty. Legal, structural, policy and implementation systems are crucial to prevent losses in the REU region in the light of possible introductions of pests from other countries, regions or continents.

Trade facilitation

Trade between countries drives economic development and many countries rely on exporting large quantities of plant products (e.g. fruit and vegetables or timber). Other countries rely on import of plant products such as staple crops to feed their population and need to assure themselves of adequate supplies while safeguarding their domestic agricultural production and their ecosystems from pests. Effective plant health systems need to be in place to prevent imposing barriers in trade.

Forestry protection

Spread of pests is as relevant for trees and forests as for agricultural crops, and can also have as devastating consequences. Vast trade of wood and wood products, as well as movement of wood packaging material, creates enormous opportunities for spread of pests of trees. For many countries in the region, forests are an important element of the environment from many points of view, including wood production, but also climate or livelihoods.

Protection of the ozone layer

Some phytosanitary fumigation treatments are not friendly to the environment, specifically they may deplete the ozone layer. To protect the ozone layer, countries impose bans on the application of such treatments, and the use of environment friendly alternatives is adopted and promoted under the IPPC.



Invasive Alien Species (IAS)

IAS may pose significant threats to the economies and environment of countries as agricultural or forestry pests. Procedures and approaches developed under the IPPC may be utilized for the protection of territories and eradication of IAS in the countries.

Capacities of National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs)

Plant health activities are carried out by NPPOs. Climate change, scientific developments (e.g. development of new diagnostic methods), growing trade and expansion of pests to new areas are among the factors, which make it necessary to constantly monitor and update the capacities of NPPOs to make sure they are sufficient to respond to the needs.

Scientific cooperation

Rapid spread of pests and the need for global solutions to prevent their introduction and spread creates the necessity for experts and scientist to join efforts for better results. Options for regional cooperation could be considered to obtain maximum results with the invested inputs.

Information exchange

In order for countries to take action against the spread of pests, it is essential that information is available on current incidence and distribution of pests, throughout the globe. For many pests, e.g. transboundary pests, such mechanisms have taken place. Options for wider use of this experience could be discussed.