



# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

## Thirty-fifth Session

**Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, 2-4 March 2020**

**The International Year of Plant Health 2020 (IYPH 2020)**

### Executive summary

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2020 the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). The IYPH is a unique opportunity to draw attention to the serious threat of plant pests and diseases to global food and nutrition security and economic development and to promote plant protection activities and highlight the importance of international collaborative work on preventing the spread of pests and diseases. The IYPH will bring technical and scientific knowledge required for the successful battle against plant pests to the different levels of stakeholder engagement. IYPH activities aim to induce policy-makers, the private sector, academia and civil society to contribute to the global battle against plant pests and to adopt sustainable plant protection practices.

### Suggested actions by the Regional Conference

The following recommendations are made to the Regional Conference:

1. To take note of the IYPH;
2. To recognize the importance of plant health and the key role of FAO and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in protecting plant health;
3. To take note of the actions that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has taken in the period leading up to the IYPH and the actions planned for the IYPH 2020;
4. To encourage relevant institutions in member countries to actively participate in the activities planned in the IYPH;
5. To encourage countries to sustain a lasting legacy for IYPH 2020, including supporting the establishment of a World Plant Health Day;
6. To urge governments to invest more in plant health capacity development, research and outreach. Governments should also strengthen the plant health institutions and provide them with adequate human and financial resources; and
7. Governments and partners to strengthen technical capacities and improve infrastructure of plant health institutions.

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## **I. Background**

1. In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2020 the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). The year is an important opportunity to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment and boost economic development. Recently, FAO estimated that up to 40 percent of food crops are lost annually due to plant pests and diseases, seriously damaging agriculture and leaving millions of people suffering from food insecurity and malnutrition.
2. The IYPH aims at emphasizing the importance of plant protection and of preventing the spread of plant pests and diseases. The IYPH will highlight the role played by national plant protection organizations (NPPOs), scientific and research institutions, private sector firms, national, regional and international non-profit organizations to protect agricultural production from losses caused by pests and diseases. In addition, the IYPH wishes to acknowledge the importance of applying innovative, environmentally friendly approaches in combating plant pests and diseases.
3. The IYPH specific objectives are to:
  - a) raise public and political decision-makers' awareness and improve knowledge at the global, regional and national levels of plant health;
  - b) promote and strengthen national, regional and global plant health efforts and their resources in light of increasing trade and new pest risks caused through climate change;
  - c) enhance dialogue and stakeholder involvement in plant health;
  - d) increase information about the state of plant protection in the world; and
  - e) facilitate the establishment of plant health partnerships at national, regional and global levels.
4. In this context, FAO and the IPPC Secretariat will organize many events at the regional and national levels in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region, including conferences, exhibitions, awareness campaigns, interviews and contests.

## **II. FAO actions**

5. FAO and the IPPC Secretariat established the IYPH International Steering Committee (ISC) to guide the development and implementation of the IYPH action plan, to stimulate dialogue with partners, and to help mobilize political and financial support for the IYPH. The IYPH ISC has up to 18 members, including seven representatives from the seven FAO regional groups, plus seven alternates, two members of the IYPH Technical Advisory Board (TAB) (chair and vice-chair), and seven representatives from United Nations (UN) agencies and international organizations. Geographic and economic groups of countries, regional plant protection organizations, academia, international agricultural research organizations, civil society organizations, global farmer organizations, the private sector, and resource partners also have representatives on the ISC. In addition, FAO regional offices are invited to attend the IYPH ISC meetings as observers. The IYPH ISC held its first meeting on 14 June 2019 at FAO headquarters in Rome and since then it has been meeting regularly to oversee the implementation of the IYPH Action Plan.
6. FAO and the IPPC Secretariat also established the IYPH TAB to serve as a pool of knowledge and expertise, working on technical publications, assisting in the development of

- communication materials, serving as programme committee for the International Plant Health Conference (IPHC) to be hosted by Finland from 5 to 8 October 2020, and developing proceedings coming out of the IPHC.
7. Furthermore, FAO and the IPPC Secretariat have also established the IYPH Secretariat, composed of representatives of four FAO divisions/units, to support the activities of the IYPH ISC and TAB, as well as the implementation of the IYPH Action Plan.
  8. The total budgeted resources for 2020 activities are approximately USD 1 million. All activities are funded through extrabudgetary contributions received via the IPPC Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) and the IPPC allocation for China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative. Additional funding is being sought to cover all proposed activities in 2020.
  9. FAO and the IPPC Secretariat have organized a worldwide photography contest from 2 December 2019 to 15 June 2020. The contest is open to both amateur and professional photographers worldwide. Further information on the photography contest and other awareness raising initiatives is available on the IYPH website<sup>1</sup>.
  10. The FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (RNE) has promoted the use of the IYPH visual identity in many events co-organized with partners, including the IPPC regional meeting in Beirut, Lebanon; training on the Fall Armyworm in Taif, Saudi Arabia; the Inception workshop in Damascus, the Syrian Arab Republic; and the training on International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures in Khartoum, the Sudan. In addition, the FAO Regional Office is contributing to the 13th Arab Congress of Plant Protection under the topic "Plant Health for Secure and Safe Food", organized by the Arab Society for Plant Protection, to be held in Hammamet, Tunisia, from 1 to 6 November 2020.
  11. RNE is planning to establish an IYPH regional coordination committee, which will include representatives from the regional office, regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs) – particularly the Near East Plant Protection Organization (NEPPO), regional representatives of the IPPC Standards Committee (SC) and Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC), in addition to other experts and partners.
  12. During the IPPC annual regional workshop held in Beirut, Lebanon, the participants and the FAO Regional Office proposed the following activities to promote the IYPH in the region:
    13.
      - a) Promotion of IYPH in different countries: It was proposed to launch the IYPH by projecting the IYPH logo on national monuments, such as at the Pyramids at Giza, Egypt; Raouche Rock in Lebanon; Hassan Tower in Morocco; the Great Mosque of Kairouan in Tunisia; the Burj Khalifa in the United Arab Emirates; and the Kingdom Centre in Saudi Arabia.
      - b) Nominate an IYPH ambassador from NENA region: the ambassador will be a public figure, such as an actor, singer, composer or journalist.
      - c) Organize regional conferences aimed at establishing a regional network to face transboundary plant pests and diseases: Different stakeholders will be invited, including NPPOs, experts, researchers and private sector companies involved in phytosanitary activities.
      - d) Organize regional workshops on plant health themes: these will include workshops on electronic phytosanitary certification (ePhyto).
      - e) Organize regional capacity development programmes on emerging pests: these will include training on inspection, surveillance and diagnosis of some of plant pests and diseases that

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<sup>1</sup> Ref. IYPH website: [www.fao.org/plant-health-2020](http://www.fao.org/plant-health-2020).

are prevalent in the region (i.e. Red Palm Weevil, Fall Armyworm, *Xylella fastidiosa*, Huanglongbing and water hyacinth amongst others).

- f) Liaise with FAO country offices to organize side events at FAO regional and national conferences and workshops in 2020.
- g) Develop videos and communication materials on plant health issues, such as the risk of carrying fruits and vegetables in passengers' luggage or the role played by consumers in reducing the risk of fruit fly spread.
- h) Coordinate and organize booths at exhibitions and fairs to distribute awareness materials and present on the importance of plant health to protect agricultural investment, such as the SAHARA Expo 2020 in Cairo (September 2020), the AgraME Dubai (March 2020), and the *Salon International de l'Agriculture au Maroc* in 2020.
- i) Develop a paper on the innovations concerning plant health during the regional innovation meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The paper would explore cutting-edge technologies used to combat plant pests and diseases, including early warning, geospatial and multispectral satellite images, precision agriculture, and web-based extension tools and other agriculture artificial intelligence.
- j) Promote articles in newspapers and magazines, and conduct interviews on television and radio channels highlighting plant health issues.

### III. Expected outcomes of the IYPH

14. Five major outcomes are expected from the observance of IYPH:

- a) increased awareness of the importance of plant health in contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The IYPH will bring about an increased awareness of the importance of plant health towards achieving the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda. Plant health directly contributes to seven SDGs, especially SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals);
- b) promotion of knowledge, research and partnerships on plant health at national and regional levels. It is expected that national and regional plant protection organizations (NPPOs and RPPOs) and other relevant institutions in the field of plant health will continue to play their essential roles to ensure recognition of the IPPC's role and the successful implementation of the IPPC strategic framework for 2020-2030;
- c) recognition of the importance of plant health by people. Throughout 2020, citizens should become aware of plant health risks, and contribute to minimizing them through appropriate actions.
- d) Sustainable support to plant health issues. As a legacy of the year, the objective of FAO and the wider IPPC community and is the recognition of the importance of the IPPC and plant health; ensure , that those involved in protecting plant health have the tools and capacity to carry out their roles and that the IPPC is given sustainable support, both in financial and human resources;
- e) advocate for the establishment of the World Plant Health Day to be commemorated by the United Nations family every year; and

15.

Major activities and events at the global level may be replicated regionally and nationally, including by organizing side events at FAO Regional Conferences, investing in educational activities, issuing promotional materials and holding open house and institutional events.