
EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (ECA)**Forty-first Session****Budapest, Hungary, 1-2 October 2019**

**Towards the International Year of Plant Health in 2020: Protecting Plants,
Protecting Lives****Side Event 2****Tuesday, 1 October 2019****12.00 – 13.00 hours****A side-session meeting room****Background/objective**

In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2020 as the **International Year of Plant Health (IYPH)**. The year is a once in a lifetime opportunity to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development.

Plants are the source of the air we breathe and most of the food we eat, yet we often do not pay much attention to keeping them healthy. This can have devastating results. For example, FAO estimates that up to **40 percent of food crops are lost to plant pests** and diseases annually. This leaves millions of people without enough food to eat and seriously damages agriculture - the primary source of income for rural poor communities.

Plant health is increasingly under threat. **Climate change**, and human activities, have altered ecosystems, reducing biodiversity and creating **new niches where pests can thrive**. At the same time, international **travel and trade** has tripled in volume in the last decade and can **quickly spread pests and diseases** around the world causing great damage to native plants and the environment.

As with human health, **protecting plants** from pests and diseases is far **more cost effective** than dealing with full-blown health emergencies. Indeed, plant pests are often impossible to eradicate once they have established themselves and managing pests is time consuming and expensive. Thus, prevention is critical for avoiding the devastating impact of pests on agriculture, livelihoods and food security.

The IYPH thus emphasizes **protection and prevention**. Everyone has a role in doing this. For example, **travellers** must avoid taking plants and plant products with them. People in the **transportation industries** need to make sure pests and diseases do not stow away on ships, airplanes, trucks and trains. **Governments** should increase their support to national and regional plant health organizations that are the first line of defence.

Because of the strong links between plant health and environmental protection, the IYPH also encourages **environmentally friendly** ways of dealing with pests - such as through integrated pest management. This ecosystem approach combines different management strategies and practices to grow healthy crops and minimize the use of pesticides. Avoiding poisonous substances when dealing with pests not only protects the environment, it also protects pollinators, natural pest enemies, beneficial organisms and the people and animals who depend on plants.

The objectives of this side event are to:

- Increase awareness of the importance of plant health towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030.
- Demonstrate the relevance of national, regional and global plant protection organizations.

- Showcase European members plans to scale up plant health in 2020.
- Create synergies in view of ensuring that IYPH is organized successfully.

The side event is also linked to two FAO Regional Initiatives: Improving agrifood trade and market integration; and Managing natural resources sustainably, under a changing climate.

Key messages/expected outcomes

- It is risky to bring plants and plant products across borders as this may spread plant pests and diseases.
- Make trading in plants and plant products safe without setting up unnecessary barriers.
- Keep plants healthy to protect the environment and biodiversity.
- Protect, manage and restore terrestrial and marine environments to keep plants healthy.
- Invest in plant health organizations and phytosanitary research and development.
- Healthy plants are crucial for ending hunger and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) provide guidance and lead global efforts to ensure plant health.

Language: The language of the side event will be English.

Provisional Agenda

Moderator: Mr Avetik Nersisyan, Standard Setting Unit Lead, IPPC Secretariat

12:30-12:40	Welcoming remarks	Jingyuan XIA , IPPC Secretary
12:40-12:45	Video message from the Goodwill Ambassador for IYPH for the Region of Europe	TBD
12:45-12:55	Key note address	Mr Ralf Lopian , NPPO of Finland and Chair of the IYPH ISC
12:55-13:05	Key note address	Mr Roman Vagner , European Commission
13:05-13:25	Plant Health priorities in Europe	Mr Piotr Wlodarczyk , Agricultural Officer, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
13:25-13:40	IYPH: an opportunity to scale up plant health at all levels	Mr Mirko Montuori , Governance and Public Information Specialist, IPPC Secretariat
13:30-14:00	Discussion	

Side event coordinator: Mr Mirko Montuori, Governance and Public Information Specialist, IPPC Secretariat