

# THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PLANT HEALTH 2020

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

The aim of this document is to provide answers to possible questions made by political and administrative decision-makers and the public about the proposal to declare the year 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH)\_2020.

### ***What is Plant Health?***

Plant health is usually considered the discipline that uses a range of measures to control and prevent pests, weeds and disease causing organisms to spread into new areas, especially through human interaction such as international trade.

### ***Why do we need an IYPH 2020?***

National, regional and global plant health organizations need to raise awareness of the importance and positive impacts of plant health in addressing issues of global importance, including hunger, poverty, threats to the environment and economic development.

### ***Why do we need to raise awareness for plant health?***

In recent years the risks of pest movement and introduction into new areas have increased dramatically. Increased trade in plant commodities and products and the effects of climate change provide easier opportunities for pests, weeds and disease causing organisms to enter establish and spread into new environments. Over the same time period, the human and monetary resources of plant health services and plant protection research and educational services have consistently decreased. To tackle these challenges, it is essential to raise the awareness of the importance of plant health to both decision-makers and the general public.

### ***Whose awareness about plant health needs to be raised?***

***The public*** - to act responsibly when moving plants and plant products (for example: fruits, grains, seeds, woods, etc.) from one place to another.

***Politicians*** - to understand the importance of plant health for food security, the economy and the biodiversity.

***Decision-makers in administrations and institutions*** - to recognize the contribution of plant health to food security and the economy.

***Private entrepreneurs*** - to understand that plant health can help them produce and trade plants easily and more economically.

### ***How does plant health affect food security?***

Productivity of crops grown for human and livestock consumption is increasingly at risk due to the increased incidence of pests, weeds and disease causing organisms. In particular, those pests, weeds and disease

causing organisms which have been introduced into new ecosystems can have devastating effects on food security and the environment. Crop losses due to their introduction can be substantial and estimates for potential losses caused by pests, weeds and disease causing organisms of plants can be as high as 50 percent, globally. Therefore a key factor in any strategy to eliminate hunger must be to keep our plants healthy.

***How does plant health contribute to poverty reduction?***

In most developing countries agriculture is the most important source of income and consequently a significant factor in poverty alleviation. Studies showed that half of the reduction in poverty achieved in selected developing countries during the years under study can be attributed to growth in agricultural incomes. By increasing agricultural productivity through better protection of plants against pests, weeds and disease causing organisms will have direct positive impacts on the income of especially rural populations and consequently assist in reducing poverty.

***In what ways does plant health contribute to the protection of the environment?***

The protection of plants is not limited to agricultural or other cultivated plants, but also includes wild plants in our ecosystems. Plant pests, weeds and disease causing organisms which are introduced into new areas are by definition also considered invasive alien species. Invasive alien species are considered a main factor in biodiversity loss world-wide. By protecting plants from pests, weeds and disease causing organisms and preventing their spread into new areas plant health contributes directly to the preservation of our biodiversity and the protection of our environment. In addition, having better plant health in agriculture reduces the need to use chemicals to control pests, weeds and disease causing organisms. This in turn also contributes to the protection of our environment.

***How does plant health trigger economic development?***

Exports of plants and plant products are for many countries, especially developing and least developing countries, essential to boost the national economy. Trade of plants and plant products is in many cases limited by phytosanitary import restrictions of the importing countries. Plant health therefore plays an important role in levelling the playing field through the harmonization of import requirements at a global level. The International Plant Protection Convention establishes harmonized international phytosanitary standards which facilitate trade and which allow developing countries to trade the primary agricultural products and consequently develop their economies.