Info note on the international year of plant health in 2020

**I. Background**

1. The purpose of this info note is to describe the rationale to proclaim an International Year of Plant Health in 2020 (IYPH 2020) and the progress made towards the IYPH 2020 proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
2. Plants are essential for life, making up 80 percent of the food we eat and the oxygen we breathe. Healthy plants feed people and animals, contributing to food security for nations and communities; and any surplus can be traded to generate income.
3. Plant pests are responsible for the loss of 40 percent of global food crops and trade losses exceeding $220 billion in agricultural products annually. They leave millions without food to eat, and can negatively impact the livelihood, source of income of rural poor communities and national economies.
4. The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) provides a framework to protect the world’s plant resources from the harm caused by pests and diseases. As such, the IPPC is the leader in the global effort to promote and maintain plant health. Through the development of international standards and programs that enable their implementation, the IPPC creates a fairer trading system for all countries, whether they trade a little or a lot, and helps countries less able to protect themselves from the impacts of plant pests to produce food, protect valuable natural ecosystems and increase their ability to trade.
5. A majority of countries depend on trading large quantities of plants and plant products, such as grain, fruit and vegetables or timber to sustain their economies. Yet trade can introduce and spread plant pests that threaten natural plant resources, managed crops, biodiversity and forest production. Facilitating safe trade in a way that prevents the spread of plant pests and avoids unjustifiable technical barriers is central to the objectives of the Convention.
6. For example, the annual value to Mexico from exports of fresh avocados to the USA exceeds $1 billion. From the initial application of pest free areas in 5,000 ha in 1997, to the subsequent establishment of a systems approach program in over 125,000 ha today, 23,000 owners of orchards (80 percent with average of 5 ha) have overcome the poverty endured by generations. The development of phytosanitary measures to minimize the risk of international movement of three weevils and a moth, which were later adopted as international standards, is credited with removing an import barrier in place for 82 years and providing growers and packers with a decent living at home – significantly reducing the migratory flow to the US.
7. At the 10th Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-10)[[1]](#footnote-1) in 2015, Finland proposed to establish an International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) in the year 2020. The proposal received strong support from the CPM-10, which decided to pursue the proclamation of the IYPH in 2020 under the leadership of Finland.
8. CPM-11 (2016)[[2]](#footnote-2) adopted the scope of “plant health in the context of IYPH” and the IYPH objectives, and established an IYPH Steering Committee (IPPC IYPH StC) to secure the IYPH proclamation and start developing programme, roles and responsibilities.
9. CPM-12 (2017)[[3]](#footnote-3) encouraged IPPC contracting parties to provide extra-budgetary contributions to enable promotional activities to support the IYPH proclamation process and to propose potential IYPH events and activities.
10. In July 2017, the 40th Session of the FAO Conference adopted the proposal by Finland[[4]](#footnote-4) and the FAO Director-General submitted the relevant resolution to the Secretary-General of the United Nations with a view to have a resolution on the matter adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
11. CPM-13 (2018)[[5]](#footnote-5) agreed to a skeleton of IYPH programme events and their associated estimated costs as developed by the IPPC IYPH StC. It also urged contracting parties to provide extra-budgetary contributions to enable promotional activities to support the IYPH proclamation process and to propose potential IYPH events and activities.
12. Finland is expected to table a draft resolution to proclaim IYPH to the UNGA Second Committee by 17 October 2018. This will be discussed under agenda item *26: Agriculture development, food security and nutrition*. The resolution should then be available for download at the following links: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/second/73/documentslist.shtml> and <http://www.un.org/en/ga/73/resolutions.shtml>. FAO LON and the IPPC Secretariat expect to receive copy of the draft resolution before it is presented. The draft resolution is expected to stick to a language that is internationally agreed (i.e. consistent with the IYPH resolution adopted by the FAO Conference in July 2017). A final decision on the proclamation of IYPH by the UNGA is expected to be taken by early December 2018, when the UNGA plenary session will adopt the report of the UNGA Second Committee.

# II. Activities to promote the proclamation of the IYPH in 2020

1. The activities to promote the proclamation of the IYPH at the UN General Assembly have been primarily focusing on creating awareness amongst stakeholders about the IYPH proposal. Presentations were given at a number of occasions, including the IPPC regional workshops and international conferences, such as the International Congress of Plant Pathology in Boston.
2. In addition to the PR activities carried out, the Government of Finland has prepared a draft resolution, which has been tabled to the UN General Assembly Second Committee. In order to promote the proposal the Embassy of Finland to the UN in cooperation with the IPPC Secretariat are planning to hold a reception for UN ambassadors at the end of October 2018.
3. In order to solicit support for the proposal at the UN General Assembly the Chair of the IPPC IYPH StC has contacted official contact points of all the IPPC contracting parties and transmitted an information package developed by the IPPC Secretariat and IYPH StC[[6]](#footnote-6). The purpose of this communication was to request national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) to contact their Foreign Ministries and UN Permanent Representations with a view to urge them to support the IYPH proposal once it is discussed at the UNGA.
4. Involvement of IPPC partners in the IYPH promotional activities has been initiated in the context of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures[[7]](#footnote-7), the IPPC IYPH StC (e.g. through the participation of the International Seed Federation), and the meeting of Public Information Officers of the biodiversity-related conventions among others. The G-20 Group of Agriculture Ministers also supported the IYPH initiative in their final declaration on 28 July 2018[[8]](#footnote-8). Further consultations with relevant FAO divisions and international organizations are planned as soon as IYPH will be proclaimed by UNGA.
5. To ensure better planning and establishing a coordination mechanism between the IPPC Secretariat, FAO relevant divisions/Regional Offices, Regional Plant protection Organizations (RPPOs) and other external partners, a coordination meeting will be organized during the CPM-14 in April 2019 to allow all partners to share their plans and agree on a reporting and information exchange mechanism.

# III. Activities of FAO/IPPC for 2020

1. The 4th meeting of the IYPH StC was held at FAO Headquarters in Rome April 2018[[9]](#footnote-9). One of the main issues discussed was the future planning of FAO/IPPC activities for the IYPH 2020 once the year has been declared by the UN General Assembly. The FAO management stressed that a new steering committee will be established by FAO after the IYPH proclamation agreed to. This new FAO IYPH Steering Committee will be composed mainly of Rome-based permanent representatives to FAO as well as stakeholders selected by FAO. In this context, the IYPH StC stressed that it is important that the new FAO Steering Committee builds on the experience and work plan being developed by the IYPH StC. It was agreed that the Chair and the Vice-chair of the current IPPC IYPH StC should be members of the FAO Steering Committee in order to ensure that the new FAO Steering Committee takes into account the planning and considerations, which have been done up-to-now. A proposal to this effect should be made by the CPM to FAO. The IPPC IYPH StC also recommended that the current IPPC IYPH StC should continue its work and function as a technical advisory body to FAO for the IYPH 2020.
2. In April 2018, CPM-13 agreed to the skeleton of IYPH flagship global events led by the IPPC Secretariat and their associated estimated costs proposed by the IYPH StC. The adopted skeleton programme consists of:

- IYPH launch events in New York and Rome (December 2019);  
 - a photo contest / exhibition;  
 - a Ministerial-level CPM in Rome (April 2020);  
 - an International Conference on Plant Health (second half of 2020);  
 - the World Food Day focused on Plant Health (16 October 2020);  
 - an IYPH closing event in Rome (January 2021).

1. The organization of these events requires substantial activities from NPPOs, the IPPC Secretariat as well as the CPM and its subsidiary bodies. The organization of the ministerial-level CPM is expected to commence as soon as possible after the official adoption of the IYPH at the UNGA. It is important that ministers in CPs get the dates for CPM-15 (2020) early into their calendars to block the relevant days and to ensure wide ministerial participation. Considering that the planning of CPMs has been in the competence of the CPM Bureau and the IPPC Secretariat, it is suggested that the CPM-Bureau and the IPPC Secretariat commence planning of CPM-15 as soon as possible. This would also include interaction with different FAO units and divisions responsible for protocol and security. In addition, it may be of advantage if the CPM-15 (2020) is officially opened by a Head of State. The CPM-Bureau may want to consider who could open the CPM-15 and ways to secure the participation by a Head of State.
2. With regard to the International Plant Health Conference, the IYPH StC discussed its possible programme and decided that it should be as broad as possible. The IYPH StC did open a discussion on the OCS about a detailed programme. A proposal was made for a detailed multi-day programme consisting of multiple concurrent symposia. The proposal was reviewed by the IPPC Strategic Planning Group (SPG) meeting in October 2018.[[10]](#footnote-10)
3. With regard to activities carried out by NPPOs and stakeholders under the umbrella of the IYPH 2020, it should be noted that all national and regional activities will be carried out under the programmatic responsibility of the organizers. There is the possibility for NPPOs to manage the planning process on a national level by setting up national programme committees, which would include wide stakeholder participation. This would ensure that the plant health related activities are focusing on “plant health” as defined in the original CPM decision on the IYPH. To encourage this, the CPM Chairperson will write a letter to each NPPO requesting them to set up a national IYPH coordinating committee after the adoption of the IYPH proposal by the UNGA.
4. In addition, every year a number of regular plant health related meetings are held in every country (e.g. annual meetings of scientific societies and professional organizations, trade shows, and agricultural fairs). To achieve greatest possible outreach NPPOs were encouraged to incorporate plant health components into all of those events and meetings. The possible components of such a strategy may be that in the beginning of 2019 NPPOs and their national IYPH programme committee establish a calendar of plant health related events and consequently contact all organizers of these events.
5. As for each International Year, FAO will develop a communication handbook and action plan. This handbook will be essentially the communication guide for the entire IYPH. The handbook will be developed by the FAO “Office for Corporate Communication and Outreach” (OCCO) in consultation with the IPPC Secretariat and the FAO IYPH StC. The IYPH communication work plan[[11]](#footnote-11), which was revised in the IPPC IYPH StC April 2018 meeting, should serve as a draft to the communication handbook.
6. With regard to financial matters, the IYPH StC had been informed previously that according to FAO procedures “an International Year will not be proclaimed unless full financing (which in principle should be based on voluntary contributions) …. [is] confirmed”[[12]](#footnote-12). With the adoption of the FAO resolution that criterion appears fulfilled, because FAO adopted the IYPH so financing must have been secured. This in fact means that here is no specific need to demonstrate to the UNGA that funds are secured.
7. The IYPH StC further estimated the costs of the IYPH by establishing a skeleton programme of flagship events during 2019/2021 and costing them in a general manner. It considered that the total budget for IYPH activities (2019 - 2021) should be at a minimum of 600 000 USD.
8. There are currently approximately USD 265 000 in the IPPC trust fund or other funds that have been pledged for the IYPH. In addition, during SPG in 2018 Finland pledged a substantive contribution to organize the International Conference, which will be made official once the IYPH is proclaimed by the UNGA. Additional voluntary contributions are needed to implement the skeleton programme of events and other activities at the national and regional level.

1. CPM-10 report: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/81242/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CPM-11 report: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/82487/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. CPM-12 report: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/84387/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ref. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mt134e.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. CPM-13 report: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/85963/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Available at <https://www.ippc.int/en/news/prompting-action-towards-an-international-year-of-plant-health/> and <https://www.ippc.int/en/iyph/iyph-toolbox/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ref. CPM-13 side session on IYPH: <https://www.ippc.int/en/news/cpm-13-side-session-on-the-2020-international-year-of-plant-health-held-at-fao-hq/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ref. <https://www.ippc.int/en/news/g-20-group-of-agriculture-ministers-supports-the-ippc-ephyto-and-the-initiative-of-an-international-year-of-plant-health-in-2020-iyph-2020/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Report of the 4th IPPC IYPH Steering Committee: <https://www.ippc.int/static/media/uploads/iyph/2018/05/17/Report_IPPC-IYPHStC_Fourth_Meeting-2018-05-16.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The 2018 IPPC SPG report will be available here: <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/governance/strategic-planning-group/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See above link to IPPC IYPH StC report [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. FAO, C 2013/LIM/15 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)