**Moving Forward with initiating a voluntary COORDINATION mechanism for GLOBAL PHYTOSANITARY RESEARCH**

*(Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat)*

1. Introduction
2. Today’s complex plant health issues suggest a well-coordinated, harmonized and multi-actor response from the global community. In this context, science has a crucial role in providing technical solutions, but also in bringing national and international actors closer together to work on forecasting, early warning, enhanced preparedness and implementing preventive measures and outbreak response to phytosanitary issues.
3. One of the IPPC’s key activities is to develop and promote the implementation of internationally agreed, science-based standards in the regulation of plants and plant products as they move internationally. However, efforts to do this have often been constrained by lack of communication between the plant health authorities and the other national, regional and international research funders, policy makers, scientists, industries and professional operators. Plant health issues and their trade sensitive impacts have largely been seen as national issues, which has led scientists working on regulated pests act in isolation from each other.**[[1]](#footnote-1)**
4. Therefore, to facilitate and enhance international research collaboration especially on regulated and emerging pests, a voluntary coordination mechanism for global phytosanitary research would be helpful. Enhanced exchange of scientific knowledge and establishing networks to facilitate discussion and research collaboration on shared priorities were also some of the key needs identified by the G20 Agricultural Chief Scientists at an international workshop organized in November 2019 to promote research collaboration in plant health.
5. This global network would be an agile multi-stakeholder platform. It would bring together the national level (National Plant Protection Organizations, ministries, academia, research institutes, public agencies, industry representatives etc.), the regional level (Regional Plant Protection Organizations) and the international level (FAO and other United Nations Organizations, other inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations) in both developed and developing countries. The mandate of the global research coordination mechanism would be to address research issues of common interest for agriculture, forestry, trade and biodiversity, as appropriate from the phytosanitary point of view.
6. International phytosanitary research coordination would bring many benefits. Working closer together on science-based solutions would help to avoid silos, national discipline boundaries and overlaps in research activities and also to utilize research resources in the most efficient and effective manner. Accelerated development of plant health science through coordinated research would also support phytosanitary decision-making. Better coordination of national efforts could also benefit countries that focus on the same problem at the same time: it would assist in finding synergies amongst national activities, and at the same time avoid duplication of efforts. Sharing of information and knowledge would also benefit those countries that face emergencies of pests that have already become a routine problem in another region. Enhanced collaboration would favor harmonization of scientific practices and eventually of pest regulation policies.[[2]](#footnote-2)
7. Global research coordination mechanism would help narrow the gap between high- and low-income countries with regard to research investments and allow countries to optimize the use of resources to tackle plant health risks. As a consequence, having better access to global research and knowledge on regulated plant pests could further empower national organizations and funding systems. The global network would of course require new IT infrastructure to put in place systems to share information such as reports, recommendations and guidelines and to store and share data from national and international research projects, to communicate the research capacity available in the different countries and to facilitate discussions on research topics to be addressed through the international collaboration.[[3]](#footnote-3)
8. Overall, a voluntary mechanism for global phytosanitary research coordination would accelerate development of science to support global regulatory phytosanitary activities. International research collaboration across nations, institutions and disciplines would lead to higher quality science, efficiencies of resource use, better outcomes and wider adoption of results. Thus, it would also support action at the national level and help protecting the environment, trade and agriculture locally. However, these benefits of collaboration only occur where there is mutual interest and alignment of goals (including a “vision”), effective leadership, facilitation of processes and structures, support for collaboration, and ultimately funding – for both research and collaboration. In addition, the need to develop a balanced portfolio of research work, ranging from strategic to applied research, is essential in creating synergistic collaboration.
9. Further steps to be taken
10. Prior to establishing an international research collaboration mechanism, it is important to conduct an analysis of the existing international phytosanitary research structures and policies. Also, a policy on the research coordination mechanism, alongside with a structure for it, needs to be agreed by the CPM beforehand. Further evaluation is needed to explore the possible administration and governance model of such a mechanism. Collaboration with international plant health research organizations e.g. Euphresco, Phytosanitary Measures Research Group (PMRG) and International Forest Quarantine Research Group (IFQRG), may also provide useful perspectives.
11. Activities to be carried out during the next few years include the following:

– In consultation with the international plant health research organizations, e.g. Euphresco, Phytosanitary Measures Research Group (PMRG) and International Forest Quarantine Research Group (IFQRG), and IPPC stakeholders, gather and compile information on existing international phytosanitary research structures and policies and analyze this information to help understand their mandate, scope and focus and to better understand their impact on phytosanitary matters. Bear in mind the impartiality of information against political and trade biases, and explore how conflicting research articles about pests could be dealt with in a global research coordination mechanism.

– Assess the investments required to setting up the international research coordinating body itself.

* Based on the above, identify the existing gaps and needs that should be addressed by an international coordination mechanism for plant health research.

**–** Develop and agree on a CPM policy and an outline for the structure for the coordination mechanism.

– Establish the voluntary global mechanism for phytosanitary research coordination.

**–** Establish, if appropriate, an international phytosanitary journal for publication of phytosanitary research findings.

1. Recommendations
2. The SPG is *invited* to:

* *Endorse* the current concept note for presentation at the CPM-15.
* *Agree* that an analysis of the existing international phytosanitary research structures and policies and assessment of the investments required for a new mechanism should be conducted in cooperation with IPPC stakeholders (2021).
* *Agree* that the possible coordination models of such a mechanism need to be further explored and discussed (2021).
* *Agree* to establish a CPM policy regarding the voluntary global mechanism for phytosanitary research coordination and a structure for the mechanism (2021).
* *Consider* pros and cons of the establishment of an international phytosanitary journal for publication of research findings, if deemed appropriate based on the findings of the analysis mentioned above.
* *Consider suggesting* the CPM Bureau, in collaboration with the IPPC Secretariat, to propose the relevant budget allocation and resource mobilization needed to implement this IPPC development agenda.

1. Retrieved from the article “Science Diplomacy for Plant Health” published 11.08.2020 in *Nature Plants* journal, Giovani, B. et al. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ref. Giovani, B., Blümel, S., Lopian, R. et al. Science diplomacy for plant health. Nat. Plants 6, 902–905 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41477-020-0744-x [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)