

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PLANT HEALTH 2020 – ADVOCACY DOCUMENT 1

The following document provides background information and justification for the proclamation of an International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) in 2020.

National Plant Protection Organizations are encouraged to use this background information when informing political decision makers and other stakeholders about the IYPH 2020 initiative.

It can be attached to or included in national memos or press releases. It can also be translated and placed on NPPO or Regional Plant Protection Organization websites.

The advocacy document is provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland. It does not reflect any positions or views of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations or the International Plant Protection Convention.

INITIATIVE FOR AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PLANT HEALTH IN 2020

The need for national, regional and international plant health initiatives

Any strategy for eliminating hunger and rural poverty must include protecting plant health from pests and diseases. The productivity of crops grown for human consumption is increasingly at risk due to the incidence of invasive pests. Crop losses due to these pests can be substantial. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations estimates that invasive pests are damaging as much as 40 percent of all food crops globally each year.

When pests are introduced into new ecosystems, they can have devastating effects on food and feed security and the environment. A pest epidemic of enormous proportions is underway in Africa due to an introduced fruit fly and the fall armyworm, while olive tree disease is affecting some parts of Europe, to cite few examples.

The vast increase in the international trade of agricultural commodities, internet trade and travelling passengers as well as the effects of climate change are dramatically increasing the risk of pest spread and are helping to set the perfect conditions for future pest epidemics of major proportions.

However, efforts to combat these risks are declining. Many countries have significantly reduced resources committed to plant health research, taxonomical and diagnostic services. In 2004, the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization declared a “State of Emergency” for plant health due to the decreasing scientific basis in the phytosanitary field, faced with the increasing challenges to plant health.

To address these concerns, we must raise national, regional and global awareness about plant health and its beneficial effects on food security, poverty reduction and environmental protection. That is why we are calling for an International Year of Plant Health. Through awareness, we hope to strengthen national, regional and international plant health infrastructures and prevent further losses to agricultural production and biodiversity for the benefit of mankind.

All countries will benefit from an International Year of Plant Health. Our plan for 2020 is to mobilize governments, industries, civic organizations, scientists, and the public to work together in protecting the world’s plants against the spread of devastating pests, encourage scientific innovation for addressing pest threats, promote responsible practices that reduce pest spread, and increase public and private sector support for more sustainable plant health strategies and services.

An International Year of Plant Health in 2020 will have enormous impetus for the realization of FAO’s mandate to fight hunger, malnutrition and rural poverty. It will also stimulate better and more environmentally sound agricultural production. Mankind’s formidable challenge to increase food production by 50% to meet the projected demand of the world’s population by 2050 is only possible through better and more effective plant health.

The International Year of Plant Health will help us meet that challenge by bringing together people from developed to developing countries and from agricultural to industrialized societies in a common effort to protect plant health and more fully support national, regional and international plant health systems.