



CONFERENCE

Forty-third Session

Rome, 1-7 July 2023

Evaluation of the International Year of Plant Health 2020

Executive Summary

This report highlights the processes put in place to celebrate the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) in 2020 and presents the overall outcomes and challenges of the Year. This report serves as a basis for evaluating the observance of IYPH achievements against the expected outputs identified in the IYPH proposal to the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) in 2016, and in compliance with the FAO Policy on the Proclamation and Implementation of International Years.

The overarching objective of the IYPH was to raise awareness of the importance and impacts of plant health in addressing issues of global importance, including hunger, poverty, food security, and threats to the environment and economic development. It aimed at addressing new and emerging plant health challenges, including the impact of climate change, the significant increase in international trade, the rapid loss of biodiversity, and the new pest pathways such as e-commerce, by developing more efficient national, regional and global policies, structures and mechanisms.

The attention of the Conference is drawn to the importance of the IYPH legacy activities.

Suggested action by the Conference

The Conference is invited to:

- a) endorse the present evaluation report, noting the substantial achievements made at all levels in the context of the International Year of Plant Health 2020;
- b) highlight the importance of plant health to end hunger (SDG 2), reduce poverty (SDG 1), protect the environment and boost economic development, and for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- c) encourage FAO Members and other relevant stakeholders to pursue the momentum of the IYPH by taking concrete actions to address and prevent pest and disease outbreaks and promote sustainable pest and pesticide management, while strengthening monitoring and reporting, and facilitating safe trade; and
- d) continue raising awareness among FAO Members of the importance of ensuring compliance with international plant health standards, investing in plant health innovations, research,

outreach and capacity development and empowering national and regional plant protection organizations.

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I. Rationale

1. The International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) declaration aimed to raise awareness of the importance and impacts of plant health on global issues such as hunger, poverty, and threats to the environment and economic development. The process to reach its adoption at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) was in line with the FAO Policy on the Proclamation and Implementation of International Years.
2. This report summarizes and provides a basis for evaluating the processes, achievements, outcomes and challenges during the observance of IYPH 2020, detailed in succeeding sections, vis-a-vis the expected outputs laid out in the IYPH proposal to the 25th Session of COAG in 2016.

II. Background

3. In April 2016, the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) adopted the first formal initiative, proposed by Finland, to declare 2020 as the IYPH.
4. In December 2018, the UNGA unanimously adopted Resolution A/RES/73/252, which officially declared 2020 the International Year of Plant Health and mandated FAO, in collaboration with the IPPC, to facilitate its implementation.
5. In 2019, FAO and the IPPC Secretariat established the IYPH International Steering Committee (ISC) to guide the development and implementation of the IYPH Action Plan, to stimulate dialogue with partners, and to help mobilize political and financial support for the IYPH. The ISC was co-chaired by IPPC Official Contact Points from Republic of Finland and Republic of Korea and was composed of Permanent Representatives of the FAO Regional Groups and representatives from the following stakeholders/partner organizations: FAO Members, civil society, farmers' organizations, the private sector, FAO technical divisions, research centres, UN agencies and international organizations; geographic and economic groups of countries; regional plant protection organizations; and resource partners. In addition, FAO Regional Offices were invited to attend IYPH ISC meetings as observers.
6. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the IYPH International Steering Committee decided to extend the official IYPH until 1 July 2021.
7. In particular, the IYPH 2020 aimed at focusing attention on:
 - a) the role that plant health plays in addressing the future global food security challenges as well as its contribution to balanced and healthy diets;
 - b) raising the awareness of political decision makers at global, regional and national levels about plant health;
 - c) promoting and strengthening of national, regional and global plant health efforts and their resources considering increasing trade and new pest risks due to climate change;
 - d) informing the public and increasing its knowledge about plant health;
 - e) enhancing dialogue and stakeholder involvement in plant health;
 - f) increasing information about the state of plant protection in the world; and
 - g) facilitating the establishment of plant health partnerships at national, regional and global levels.

III. Action Plan for the IYPH

8. The Action Plan for the IYPH was prepared in collaboration with members of the IYPH ISC to provide a set of guidelines, activities and events to be implemented during the Year.
9. The main activities of the Action Plan included:
 - a) production of communication and advocacy materials;

- b) official launch event of the International Year of Plant Health organized in Rome on 2 December 2019, inclusive of an opening seminar, exhibition and reception;
- c) plant health research coordination activities: coordinated by the European Plant Health Research Coordination (EUPHRESCO) and a report was peer reviewed and published;
- d) maintenance and regular update of the IYPH website;
- e) photo contest launched on the IYPH website;
- f) organization of the World Food Day 16 October 2020 which focused on plant health, by the Office of Communications (OCC) and the IYPH Secretariat;
- g) Side Session on IYPH 2020 at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2020 (HLPF);
- h) regional dialogues, FAO Regional Conferences, and events held in different constituencies/sectors in each region (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Near East, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean);
- i) organization of relevant coordination meetings with partners and participation in different events organized by partners;
- j) nomination and designation of one IYPH Goodwill Ambassador and seven “IYPH Regional Ambassadors”;
- k) organization of the IYPH closing event (postponed) in July 2021 including a Ministerial Segment;
- l) preparations for the establishment of an International Day of Plant Health (IDPH) as part of the IYPH legacy and identification of championing country;
- m) preparations for the International Plant Health Conference (IPHC), also a legacy of the IYPH, co-organized by the IPPC, FAO and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) of the United Kingdom, held in London in September 2022. The conference report was published in February 2023; and
- n) joint participation between the IPPC and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the CBD Fifteenth Conference of Parties (COP 15) in December 2022.

10. In line with the UNGA Resolution, all activities arising from the implementation of the IYPH were met through voluntary contributions. A multilateral Trust Fund was established to pool funds from various donors. These included: Australia, China, Finland, France, Ireland, Kenya, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America, as well as the International Seed Federation and the IPPC allocation for China’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative.

IV. Key Achievements

11. Among others, the following achievements are highlighted:
- a) A total of 680 events in 86 countries were held including:
 - i. high-level launch event for the *FAO Scientific review of the impact of climate change on plant pests* on 1 June 2021;
 - ii. IYPH Webinar on Food Systems and Plant Health, with over 200 participants on 29 June 2021;
 - iii. IYPH Webinar on Climate Change, Plant Health and Biodiversity, with over 200 participants; and
 - iv. IYPH closing ceremony hosted by the FAO Director-General, with over 600 participants.
 - b) over 473 million accounts reached on social media by 1 820 plant health posts shared by FAO;
 - c) between September 2019 and July 2021, an estimated 4.4 billion readers were reached through various media channels;

- d) over 370 million views of the IYPH webpage, IYPH logo used in 33 languages, and IYPH activity book for children disseminated in 14 languages;
- e) over 1 000 submissions for the IYPH photo contest, art and drawing competition for children, video contest, human-interest stories; and
- f) 26 youth groups joined forces in drafting an IYPH Youth Declaration.

12. The IYPH 2020 Action Plan included a focus on the significant impact that climate change can have on the dispersal and epidemiology of pests. Thus, the IYPH ISC commissioned the “Scientific review of impact of climate change on plant pests” which was published in June 2021. The review proposed recommendations to prevent and mitigate plant pest risks in agriculture, forestry and ecosystems. It also contributes to enhancing science-based discussions on how to assess and manage the impact of climate change on plant health. The review was published, along with a summary for policymakers, and provides a scientific basis for assessing and managing the impact of climate change on plant health in phytosanitary policy planning and legal frameworks.

13. The IPPC Secretariat also collaborated with the scientific journal *Nature Plants* to publish in 2020 a study on “Science diplomacy for plant health”, highlighting new perspectives and challenges on global phytosanitary research coordination.

14. In order to promote the IYPH and draw attention to its activities, FAO appointed Mr Diarmuid Gavin (Ireland) as FAO Goodwill Ambassador and two IYPH advocates namely: Rodrigo Pacheco (Ecuador) and Monty Don (UK), with the objective of supporting FAO in raising public awareness on the important contributions of plant health to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 1 (End Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). The advocates were also involved in activities aimed at increasing opportunities for dialogue, participation and access to information as well as motivate relevant stakeholders to take advantage of the IYPH to encourage connections throughout the food chain, gardening, and natural resources conservation.

15. The above-mentioned key achievements summarize the wide-ranging audiences and stakeholders that the global campaign reached. Vis a vis the target objectives in the IYPH proposal to COAG, the IYPH contributed to awareness raising, increased financial and technical resources to the IPPC and improved linkages with research institutions and environmentally relevant institutions. The IYPH activities further contributed to some of the expected outputs identified in the IYPH proposal, however, these target outputs are set out as broad, long-term outcomes and are representative of the entire IPPC community’s collective work, rather than as indicators for the success of the IYPH campaign alone.

16. The final report of IYPH 2020 was published on the IPPC website in November 2021.

V. Challenges

17. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique set of challenges for the implementation of the International Year.

18. The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the IYPH as travel restrictions, worldwide lockdowns and reduced physical interaction among people led to cancellation and postponement of in-person events such as trade fairs, seminars, meetings and conferences. The pandemic caused a reorientation of IYPH communication activities and channels and, for the first time ever, an international year was centred primarily on social and virtual media activities. Due to restrictions caused directly by the COVID-19 pandemic, most events were held virtually, which required some adaptation. However, virtual events did allow for IYPH activities to be incorporated in a cost-effective way and ensured a high number of participants.

VI. Sustaining momentum beyond the IYPH 2020

19. The closing ceremony of the IYPH was held virtually on 1 July 2021, where participants expressed agreement to see the momentum of the IYPH carried forward.

20. The IYPH has been the foundation for intensifying international cooperation and national activities for improving plant health. National, regional and international plant health authorities and stakeholders can sustain the momentum on this foundation and create plant health policies and structures that address the challenges of the future. The IYPH promoted the application of innovative and environmentally friendly approaches in combating plant pests.

21. Following the success of the IYPH 2020, the Forty-second Session of the FAO Conference in June 2021 endorsed the Resolution, proposed by the Government of Zambia and endorsed by the 27th Session of COAG, to establish an International Day of Plant Health to be celebrated annually on 12 May, which was endorsed by the Seventy-sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly in March 2022. The first celebration of the International Day of Plant Health was held on 12 May 2022.

22. The first International Plant Health Conference was rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was held from 21 to 23 September 2022 in London, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as a legacy of the IYPH. More than 500 in-person attendees from over 74 countries and 1 350 online participants provided a scientific, normative and technical forum for discussion of the essential role of plant health for the eradication of hunger and malnutrition worldwide.

23. FAO, governments and all stakeholders are encouraged to continue promoting the messages and themes of the IYPH and to take action in the celebration of the IDPH and for future editions of the International Plant Health Conference.

24. The IPPC will carry on the legacies of the IYPH in line with the implementation of the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030, particularly in building public awareness as well as donor and government investments in plant health initiatives at the global, regional and national levels. These efforts complement the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031 aiming at the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind. Within FAO's Programme Priority Areas, plant health is foreseen to be further incorporated into the One Health approach in support to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.