



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
PLANT HEALTH

2020

Open letter by the drafting committee of the youth declaration on Plant Health

#PlantHealth #IYPH #ZeroHunger
#ForNature #OneHealth
#FoodSecurity



Dear Reader,

Plant health is being increasingly affected by the global spread of pests and diseases. Climate change and globalization, especially growth in international travel and trade, are increasing the risk of pest and disease dispersal. According to estimates of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), plant pests and diseases destroy up to forty percent of global crop production annually, with losses totalling over USD 200 billion each year. This has devastating consequences for livelihoods and incomes, especially for groups that are marginalised or vulnerable to these risks, such as smallholders and family farmers. Unhealthy plants can also lead to biodiversity loss and potentially catastrophic consequences for the future of our planet, placing future generations at risk.

By agreeing in 2015 to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community committed to achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but, in the words of António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, “we are seriously off-track”.¹

The General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2020 the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH), mandating FAO and the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) to promote the Year globally. As youth representatives in our respective organizations, we responded to the call by the IYPH International Steering Committee to draft a Youth Declaration on Plant Health, through which we reaffirm the importance of taking global action to protect plants from pests and diseases. We encourage all stakeholders to recognise that implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – particularly SDGs 1, 2, 8, 12, 13, 15 and 17 – requires the inclusion of plant health considerations as well as the involvement of global youth in these considerations.

We invite all stakeholders to join us in promoting the importance of plant health, particularly through science and evidence-based international standards, such as those produced under the aegis of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). The International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) are sustainable, multilateral normative tools, among others, to protect global plant resources while facilitating safe trade. Through this Youth Declaration, we highlight the contribution of plant health in combating the adverse effects of climate change, in supporting food security and in sustaining local communities, while being aware that research coordination, training and investments are necessary to ensure plant health is protected.

By signing the Youth Declaration on Plant Health, we encourage all stakeholders to consider plant health in research and innovation, in specific academic curricula, and in courses to train global youth. Training should also be provided to professionals in relevant sectors. Ongoing efforts should be taken to ensure the general public is informed of the latest techniques and most advanced technologies for protecting plant health. Through our combined efforts, perseverance, persistence and expertise, our contribution to plant health will have a durable positive impact on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the Youth Declaration on Plant Health, we identify seven thematic areas for action and we invite you to read the Declaration, sign it and share it in your respective networks, and join the global effort to protect plants.

¹ UN News. 2019. Progress toward sustainable development is seriously off-track [online] Cited 12 May 2021. (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/11/1050831>).

PREAMBLE

Protecting Plants, Protecting Life

We, young people from 26 organizations, with the purpose of supporting the role of plant health in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development² Goals (SDGs), guided by the missions and objectives of our respective institutions, with the intention of improving the conditions of marginalized groups and those vulnerable to risks, in the spirit of leaving no one behind and in the pursuit of ensuring a sustainable future for all life on Earth, inspired by the message of the International Year of Plant Health, addressing all governments, organizations, private sector entities, academic and research institutions, civil society organizations and citizens all of nations, demand that the comprehensive and transformative actions set out in this declaration be implemented globally in accordance with standing international commitments.

We reaffirm that plants are the foundation for all life on Earth, including human life in all its dimensions, with particular attention to the progressive realization of every person's right to an adequate standard of living. This includes an adequate access to food in the context of national food security, as recalled by Article 25 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Articles 2 and 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Therefore, protecting plants means protecting life.

Today, young people everywhere are realizing that younger generations are likely to be the most affected by the consequences of climate change, such as extreme weather events, persistent global loss of biodiversity and the unprecedented spread of diseases among humans, animals and plants alike. We must remember that the Earth is not given by our parents but borrowed from future generations. We must therefore work collectively to ensure its sustainability.

We highlight the importance of involving young people in decision-making processes in all fora, particularly in those contexts where younger generations are often marginalized, despite being the most affected by a failure to achieve the SDGs. We acknowledge that actions negatively affecting global and local ecosystems are often a consequence of decisions taken outside of appropriate inclusive, multilateral and cooperative fora.

Youth inclusion is key to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly when addressing the contribution of plant health to SDGs 1, 2, 8, 12, 13, 15 and 17. We are prepared to contribute our innovative ideas, passion and energy to ensure the planet's resources – especially plants – are sustainably safeguarded. These are the foundations of a path leading to a better, peaceful and inclusive future for everyone.

We share the principles of the Charter of United Nations when addressing these pressing matters, particularly those expressed in Article 55 on “higher standards of living” to create “solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation”.³ Similarly, we are inspired by the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations declaring 2020 the International Year of Plant Health stating that “sustaining plant health protects the environment, forests and biodiversity from plant pests, addresses the effects of climate change, and supports efforts to end hunger, malnutrition and poverty and boosts economic development, and that the protection of plant health from pests is a key factor in strategies to eliminate hunger and rural poverty”.⁴

It is in this spirit that we set forth this Declaration of our shared visions, commitments and recommendations.

² The Agenda was set by the Resolution 70/1, Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

³ Charter of the United Nations, Chapter IX – International Economic and Social Co-operation, art. 55. (<https://legal.un.org/repertory/art55.shtml>).

⁴ United Nations. General Assembly resolution 73/252. International Year of Plant Health, 2020, A/RES/73/252. (<http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/252>).

YOUTH DECLARATION ON PLANT HEALTH

1 The connection of plant health to climate change, food security and One Health

- ◆ Noting that plant pests and diseases may pose a serious threat to food security by damaging crops, thus reducing the availability of food and increasing its cost, we *call* for attention to the importance of plant health to environmental, human and animal health. As such, we call for specific phytosanitary measures to be included in the One Health approach by 2030;
- ◆ We *advocate* for political, corporate and civil commitment towards raising current environmental standards, particularly on plant health, and also in the light of better mitigating the impact of and adaptation to climate change, considering that its transboundary effects increase the risk of food insecurity, biodiversity loss, soil degradation and desertification globally, affecting marginalised groups and those vulnerable to risks the most. Therefore, we encourage all leaders and stakeholders to develop a unified phytosanitary agenda in line with IPPC standards to be implemented by states by 2030;
- ◆ We *demand* more scientific research on the impact of climate change on plant health and protection, with particular attention to current and potential pest dispersal, but also to recommendations on mitigation initiatives, solutions for integrated agricultural management systems, and soil remediation and improvement methodologies, also noting that the promotion of plant health in urban areas in general may lead to a reduction in pollution while fostering sustainable local food systems. Therefore, we *promote* enhanced phytosanitary research, and call for establishment of a mechanism for global phytosanitary research coordination to accelerate collaboration and efforts in high-quality science, to align goals and to optimize the use of resources, and overall *encourage* stakeholders to implement innovative strategies by 2030;
- ◆ We *request* the inclusion of an indicator on plant health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, noting that existing indicators account for plant health only implicitly and instrumentally to other purposes. We *reaffirm* the importance of acquiring reliable, consistent and accurate data on the state of plants in the world by 2030.

2 Biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and pest management

- ◆ We *call* for the strengthening of plant health through the use of sustainable agricultural practices that promote food security and sovereignty as well as shared societal prosperity and the banning of harmful subsidies for monocultures and pest management practices undermining global plant health and food chains – as stated in FAO’s *The State of Food and Agriculture 2016*;

- ◆ We *encourage* the strengthening and monitoring of early warning systems for plant pests and therefore call for the establishment of a harmonized alert system to prevent and mitigate the introduction of invasive alien species across borders that may alter ecosystem balance, outcompete endemic and vulnerable plant species and affect biodiversity hotspots;
- ◆ We *call* for a coordinated implementation of global strategies to promote and help build capacities around integrated pest management practices and to steer away from using long-lived chemicals that contaminate our soils, water and bodies;
- ◆ We *call* for the urgent transformation of agricultural and pest management practices to more sustainable practices, in the interest of safeguarding indigenous and rural livelihoods, particularly threatened by the spread of pests and diseases into their territories;
- ◆ We, aware of the tight linkages between plant health, trophic systems and planet health, *call* also on the private sector and governments to raise ambition for biodiversity-preserving investments and activities, and to radically transform extractive practices eroding our natural and plant resources, the backbones of life on Earth, for instance by promoting sustainable finance principles in line with IPPC principles by 2030.

3 Indigenous peoples and local communities that offer plant protection strategies

- ◆ We *call* for a stronger recognition, protection and promotion of local and ancestral systems of knowledge, cultures and languages that encompass ancestral methodologies and knowledge to safeguard plant systems, plant diversity and plant health;
- ◆ We *reaffirm* the duty of all stakeholders – nationally and locally – to contribute in preserving indigenous knowledge systems, classification schemes and local languages related to plant health through adequate mechanisms, which will need to be identified on a case-by-case basis.

4 People vulnerable to risks and their significance in maintaining plant health

- ◆ We *demand* that governments at all levels foster the active inclusion of women and girls in decision-making processes around the management of natural and plant resources;
- ◆ We *defend* land tenure rights and seek prior and informed consent from Indigenous peoples and local communities’ landowners for a just management of the landscape;

- ◆ We *reaffirm* the importance of existing seed banks in supporting plant health and encourage their expansion and accessibility for groups that are marginalised and vulnerable to risks. We particularly note the relevance of storing local seeds and neglected and underutilized species (NUS), which often represent the sole means of subsistence in many rural communities;
- ◆ We strongly *encourage* the international community and all stakeholders to acknowledge the pivotal role of women in small-scale agriculture and family farming and their contribution to plant health, particularly in preserving local cultures and sustaining NUS continuation, and take the necessary actions to ensure the necessary legislation is in place to protect their rights and ensure equitable opportunities;
- ◆ We *urge* governments to include a comprehensive and coherent rights-based approach to plant health policies and initiatives at the national level in full alignment with the principles of intergenerational equity and gender-responsiveness, ensuring the full and effective participation of young people, women, Indigenous peoples and local communities by 2030.

5 Global phytosanitary regulations, responsible economic growth and trade

- ◆ We *highlight* the relevance of harmonised phytosanitary measures for the international trade of plants and plant products and stress the importance of complying with international plant health standards produced under the aegis of the IPPC;
- ◆ We particularly *emphasise* the importance of enhanced international cooperation to strengthen phytosanitary capacities globally, regionally and nationally. Therefore, we invite the relevant international organizations to implement the necessary reforms to foster biodiversity conservation and environmental health;
- ◆ We *demand* the private sector's full transparency by further improving their current reporting mechanisms on agricultural value chains, in close cooperation with local, national, regional and international authorities to implement agricultural practices promoting plant health and biodiversity sustainably by 2030;
- ◆ We *ask* all actors involved in the international trade of plants and plant products to commit to the full application of the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures, which safeguard plant resources globally while facilitating safe trade;
- ◆ We *encourage* the contracting parties to the IPPC to include the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures in their respective national legislations as well as to continue participating actively in dialogues in the global plant health community;
- ◆ We *invite* the governments that have not yet signed or ratified the IPPC to consider joining the dialogues in the global plant health community through formal adherence.

6 Strengthened plant health education, capacity building and development

- ◆ We *call* for a transformative shift in education that addresses the linkages between plant health and biodiversity loss, with the purpose of creating solutions for sustainable agriculture and effective prevention of plant pests and diseases. We particularly *stress* the need to focus on the importance of plant health for food security and sustainable development across formal and informal education systems;
- ◆ We *encourage strongly* young people to participate and engage in current local, national, regional and international dialogues on plant health with their respective expertise, positions and experiences contributing to any solutions that promote plant health in connection with food security, climate change, sustainable agriculture and safe trade, as well as any other relevant topic;
- ◆ We *highlight* the necessity for the sustainable implementation as well as the improvement of national phytosanitary capacity while recognising the differences of each national context;
- ◆ We *call* for a global effort on knowledge transfer and incentives supporting smallholder farmers in the transition to sustainable agriculture methods;
- ◆ We *urge* all stakeholders to integrate plant health research into all phytosanitary training programmes by 2030.

7 Redirecting capital flows, funding and mobilization of the private and public sectors to support healthy plants

- ◆ We *highlight* the need to continue funding plant quarantine systems and pest risk management applications at the national level by the international community, particularly in favour of those countries that may be lacking the necessary resources to preserve plant health at the national level;
- ◆ We *invite* donors to increase their levels of contribution to programmes promoting plant health, particularly in relation to prevention of plant pests and diseases and to coordinated scientific research to that end, with the aim of continuing to improve phytosanitary capacities at the national level, ensuring adequate staffing and provision of equipment;
- ◆ We *demand* that funding for protection of plant health increase three-fold by 2030.

As representatives of international youth organizations, we make this statement and propose the aforementioned overarching principles in order to leverage our voices of concern and call, in an organized manner, for transformative action across all sectors.

SUBSCRIBING ORGANIZATIONS

- ◆ Agriwin Company Ltd
- ◆ Baho Nanjye Mbeho Company Ltd
- ◆ “El Estuario” project
- ◆ Forestry & Citrus Research Company (FACIR)
- ◆ Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN)
- ◆ Habitat World
- ◆ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Youth Network (IYN)
- ◆ Jamaica 4-H Clubs
- ◆ Lipu – Birdlife Italia (Lega italiana protezione uccelli)
- ◆ Réseau National des Jeunes Ruraux pour le Financement Inclusif de l’Entreprenariat Rural (RJRFIER)
- ◆ Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum (RYAF)
- ◆ “Save Our House” project
- ◆ SDG 2 Constituency, Major Group for Children and Youth
- ◆ Stewardship Agribusiness Incubation Center (SAIC)
- ◆ Talent Upgrade Global Concept
- ◆ The Institute of Genetics, Physiology and Plant Protection (IGPPP) of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova; Center of Plant Protection
- ◆ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Major Group for Children and Youth
- ◆ University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Agriculture
- ◆ WHYFARM
- ◆ World Food Forum – powered by global youth
- ◆ World Food Programme (WFP) Youth Network
- ◆ Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD)
- ◆ Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger
- ◆ Youth Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- ◆ Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL)
- ◆ Youth Sensitization, Development in Agropastoral and Marketing Cooperative Society (YOSDAMAC)

DISCLAIMER

The IYPH Youth Declaration was encouraged by the IYPH International Steering Committee (IYPH ISC), which was in charge of guiding and advancing the implementation of the IYPH action plan. The youth declaration is one of the legacies of the IYPH. The idea of the declaration is to unite the voices of those both young and young-at-heart in bringing forward their views on the role of healthy plants in achieving the SDGs, in expressing their ideas for concrete actions on how to achieve plant health globally and to involve young people in raising awareness of the topic.

By coming together as 26 organizations representing various backgrounds, we aim to structure the voice of children and young people and best represent your interests and concerns.

We are happy to know your thoughts about this declaration and you may contact us at ippc@fao.org. We invite you to share this declaration widely across your networks and encourage you to adopt these principles as guidance for a sustainable and responsible relationship with plants and natural entities on Earth.