



European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

37/3 Meeting of the Executive Committee

**1 October 2018, 2.00-4.00 PM
Rome, FAO HQ, Room B-318**

Provisional Annotated Agenda

**Forty-First Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)
Budapest, Hungary, September 2019**

(DRAFT)

The assessment conducted on the ECA has highlighted that many member states consider that the added value of the biennial ECA Session could be increased by focusing on fewer topics to allow for more in-depth technical discussions and to stimulate participation of national technical experts. This was successfully implemented during the 40th session of the ECA in September 2017. Following review of potential topics for the 41st session of the ECA, the Executive Committee has identified plant health as the main overarching theme of the 41st session, encompassing related subjects. Based on these recommendations, the Secretariat has developed the following draft annotated agenda for the review of the ECA ExCom members.

This background document focuses on the technical agenda items and does not provide details on all standing points of the ECA agenda. The complete overview of ECA agenda points is given in Annex 1.

Main theme for the Session:

2. Plant health in Europe and Central Asia countries

2.1 Plant health in Europe and Central Asia - introduction

Session one aims to provide an overview on main plant health issues in the regional context. Plants are the foundation of life on earth. They produce the oxygen we breathe and provide more than 80 percent of the food we eat. We use them to make clothes, shelter, medicines, and many other things that are essential to our lives. For nearly half of the earth's population, plants are a primary source of income. Almost every country trades plants and plant products to create wealth and support economic development. Plant health is the key to the sustainable intensification of agriculture aiming at feeding the growing global population. Thus, recognition, advocacy and support for the promotion of plant health is of paramount importance if the international community is to guarantee plant resources for a food secure world based on stable and sustainable ecosystems.

Europe and Central Asia is a vast and extremely diverse region. Many countries in the region have abundant plant resources, as well as strong agricultural sectors. Conducive environmental conditions provide a basis for well-developed plant production in the countries, while international trade of plants or plant products contributes to economic development. In many countries, agricultural production provides food security, employment and livelihoods for a large part of the society. From the food



security point of view, it is critical to minimize pest-related losses in plant production. Estimates of those losses range from 20 to 80 %, depending on the type of plants. According to recent estimates, the value of crop losses globally due to the presence of plant pests and diseases amounts to 450 billion EUR a year¹. For individual farms, especially the small ones, destruction of crops by pests can be devastating.

Plant health is highly relevant to achieving all four regional priorities established by Member Countries in the ECA region. Furthermore, within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, national policies and programmes as well as regional collaboration to enhance plant health contribute to achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals (i.e. SDGs 1, 2, 8, 12, 13, 15 and 17) as well as the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement on climate change.

2.2. Plant pests and diseases in the context of climate change and climate variability, increasing trade and food security

Plant production is facing numerous threats. Plant production is climate-vulnerable and is increasingly affected by natural disasters (flood, drought) and degradation of natural resources (soil degradation, water scarcity) intensified due to unprecedented patterns of temperatures and precipitations. Among others, there is an increasing concern that many pest species are extending their ranges due to the changing climatic conditions, bringing damage to new areas, which threatens the sustainability of agricultural sectors in the region. These impacts extend beyond agriculture, especially to forestry.

Plant pests move between countries and continents, especially with consignments in trade, tourism or food aid. Currently this human-driven movement of pests is likely to occur more than before, as international trade² and travels³ increase their intensities.

Climate change and its variability should be considered as one of the factors enabling the establishment of introduced pests in new areas, as it may create environmental conditions conducive for their development. Also, growing number of climatic disasters (e.g. hurricanes) may foster the movement of pests, affect agricultural and food systems and livelihoods depending on these, and may increase the need for international aid. The impact of climate variability and extremes as well as changes in climatic patterns on risks posed by pests needs further investigation, and countries and relevant scientific institutions are encouraged to cooperate to enhance technical knowledge and better assess those impacts. This analysis would need to consider the implications of changing environmental conditions for plants on related issues such as on food safety, nutrition and agro-biodiversity. Efforts for addressing these climate change and disaster risks are underpinned by international policy drivers such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the past, the ECA region saw numerous introductions of plant pests and diseases from other parts of the world, with immense impacts on food security as well as on economic and social development. As the international trade and climate change are intensifying, the risk of further introductions of pests still exists today. Information on pests posing threats to the region is available from the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO)⁴.

¹https://www.ipcc.int/static/media/files/publication/en/2016/05/Food_Security_RudyRabbingeFAO04042016v3_RR.pdf

²https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/its2015_e/its15_merch_trade_product_e.htm

³<https://www.statista.com/statistics/209334/total-number-of-international-tourist-arrivals/>

⁴<https://www.eppo.int/QUARANTINE/quarantine.htm>



Countries take actions to protect their territories from the introduction and spread of new pests, usually through the establishment of relevant legislation and its implementation by national plant protection organizations (NPPOs). Plant health activities are harmonized and phytosanitary measures are agreed globally under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). It is of key importance that countries maintain sufficient capacities of their NPPOs in order to operate sound and effective plant health systems, enabling them to timely identify and address challenges coming from introductions and spread of plant pests and diseases.

Countries may also consider incorporating elements relating to plant health into their national climate change policy strategies, especially to the adaptation plan, as well as adapt and implement FAO's Emergency Prevention System for Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES)⁵.

For transboundary pests (e.g. locusts in Caucasus or Central Asia), apart from careful monitoring of the pest populations, coordination of activities and information exchange between neighbouring countries is essential to successfully control the pests. Where appropriate surveillance systems are sufficiently implemented, it is important that countries share the information on the status of pests in their territories, as a pest risk reduction measure and a tool to build trust between the countries. Guidance on sharing such information and other national reporting obligations (NROs) of countries under the IPPC is available on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP)⁶.

Given the complexity of environmental impacts on the development of plant pests, as well as impacts of pests on the environment, the effective planning and implementation of actions aiming at the reduction of pest impacts requires good cooperation and information exchange not only between countries, but also with relevant governmental or non-governmental stakeholders within countries to enable their participation and feedback, but also to ensure the distribution of information and building the awareness. Examples of partners for NPPOs in the development and implementation of plant health strategies may include e.g. scientific institutes or universities, extension services' centres, organizations of farmers and organizations of importers or exporters of plants and plant products, as appropriate.

This session aims also to review the mechanism and tools available, both at national and regional levels, to address key issues identified.

The WTO SPS Agreement and the IPPC provide platforms for cooperation among countries on plant health issues. Countries may make the relevant plant health-related information available on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP)⁷ or on the Phytosanitary Resources Page⁸.

FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division⁹ (AGP) promotes sustainable intensification of crop production, with the focus on activities to develop and strengthen national capacities to monitor and to respond effectively to transboundary and other important plant pests and diseases and maintains a number of specific databases/information systems¹⁰ relevant for agricultural production or plant protection.

At the regional level the exchange of expertise and information, as well as work on the development of effective plant health solutions, is supported by regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs)¹¹, such

⁵ http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/news-events-bulletins/detail/en/item/8765/icode/5/?no_cache=1

⁶ <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/information-exchange/nro/>

⁷ <https://www.ippc.int/en/>

⁸ <https://www.phytosanitary.info/>

⁹ http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/agp-home/en/?no_cache=1

¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/information-resources/en/#c68639>

¹¹ <https://www.ippc.int/en/external-cooperation/regional-plant-protection-organizations/>



as the platform to support the scientific cooperation in plant health in the ECA region EUPHRESKO¹² – a network of organisations funding research projects and coordinating national research in the phytosanitary area.

The Commission is requested to discuss current trends and progress made, to review evidence and to make recommendations to the Regional Conference in 2020 for action.

2.3. Impact of global trade and human mobility on the health of agricultural crops and forests in Europe and Central Asia

This topic focuses on the importance of pests (including pathogens) entering the ECA region. There is a wide range of examples that illustrate the potential these organisms have to damage the agriculture and to forestry ecosystems.

The lack of good phytosanitary management in the global trade of live plants is considered the main reason for the rise in the number of introduced pests over the last 25-30 years. Although EPPO monitors the distribution of pests that may potentially be introduced or cause serious damage in the region and the spread of pests already established in the region, the mitigation measures available to reduce and prevent incursions and to manage pests that have already entered Europe are limited. ISPM 36 *Integrated measures for plants for planting*, adopted by the Commission of Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) in 2012, redresses the balance somewhat by emphasizing the roles of the producer of plants and the country of origin in making certain that exported live plants are free from pests of quarantine status for the importing country. Members will be invited to consider the additional inspection and diagnostic techniques needs to enhance the capacity of phytosanitary inspectors to detect new pests at points of entry as well as the continuous training programmes to be put in place to maintain the abilities of the phytosanitary staff to apply state-of-the-art protocols for pest detection and diagnosis.

2.4. Trends and developments in plant health

This session will present and review the main developments observed related to plant health, as basis for recommended analysis and actions. The current environment for the national operations in the area of plant health can be characterized by the following main points:

- increasing and more diversified trade
- structural and operational challenges in the way NPPOs work
- scientific and capacity development and innovation
- impacts of climate change on plant health.

New and existing bio-and digital technologies have the potential to contribute significantly to old and new threats to the plant health. Frontier technologies¹³ such as genome editing, being a cost-effective set of techniques that allows a precise targeted modification of the genome for, *interalia*, plant pest resistance, with accuracy and pace not possible before; and distributed ledger technologies (e.g. blockchain) that bring improved accountability and transparency by tracking the plant health status at each and every step of the food system, including transboundary movements, are some of the examples available today. However, harnessing those and plenty of other technologies, including agroecology for improved plant health and pest traceability require targeted efforts by governments and innovation

¹² <https://www.euphresco.net/>

¹³ OECD, 2016: Frontier technologies have the following characteristics:

- (a) address large-scale economic, social or political opportunities or problems;
- (b) are characterized by rapid rates of technological development and advancement;
- (c) have broad potential impacts across diverse fields;
- (d) carry substantial potential for displacing or leapfrogging existing technologies, or previous technological pathways taken in developed countries; and
- (e) Involve considerable uncertainty about opportunities, risks and future pathways.



system actors to maximize benefits and minimize possible safety and social risks through strategies, adjustment of research and innovation agenda, capacity development and regulatory systems aligned with relevant international agreements.

In this context, the session will consider the draft *IPPC Strategic Framework for 2020-2030*¹⁴, under which the following key development programmes are planned under the IPPC in the years 2020-2030:

1. Harmonisation of electronic data exchange:
2. Commodity and pathway-specific international standards on phytosanitary measures (ISPMs):
3. Management of e-commerce and courier mail pathways
4. Enabling the use of third party entities
5. Strengthening pest outbreak alert and response systems
6. Assessment and management of climate change impacts on plant health
7. Global phytosanitary research coordination
8. Diagnostic laboratory network

When adopted, this *IPPC Strategic Framework* should form the basis for the work of the global plant health community on developing harmonized solutions and guidance on their implementation, as necessary, and for individual countries on the implementation itself. Regions may provide support and a forum for discussions for countries on implementation issues.

2.5. Information item: update on the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) in 2020 and other relevant initiatives

The implementation of the strategies described under point 2.4, aiming at increasing the effectiveness of NPPO operations, requires that sufficient resources are allocated for plant health purposes. Currently, plant health is often not resourced at the level that would reflect its importance, which may be due to low level of awareness on plant health impacts on food systems, the natural environment and the socio-economic development. These considerations have led the proposal to hold an International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) as an international event that could increase the awareness and understanding of plant health issues globally.

At the request of Finland, the year 2020 is expected to be proclaimed the IYPH by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The initiative of IYPH is aiming at strengthening global, regional, and national structures and activities dedicated to the protection of plant health through raising the awareness of the main stakeholders and the public at all levels on relevance of plant health for global issues related to food security, economic development and environmental protection.

Countries are encouraged to contribute to the IYPH initiative by promoting plant health and raising awareness of stakeholders and the general public about its importance. The activities will most likely be coordinated by ministries of agriculture and executed by NPPOs. The activities may include e.g. distribution of advocacy materials, presentations at national and international conferences, workshops etc. NPPOs may need to cooperate with other stakeholders active in the area of plant protection, e.g. scientific institutes and universities, governmental and non-governmental agencies, representatives of relevant industries (e.g. exporters), international organizations, etc.

As the IYPH is forthcoming, countries will benefit from greater knowledge on the topic, its background and scope of this important event in order to be able to contribute to achieving its global success.

3. Advancing gender equality in the region, with special focus on FAO support to rural women in income diversification

¹⁴ <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/governance/ippc-strategic-framework/>



The Secretariat will provide to the Members an update on progress made by FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in advancing gender equality in the region, and on the pilot activities carried out to support rural women in income diversification, entrepreneurship and rural crafts in the framework of the Regional Initiative for strengthening agri-food trade and market integration (RI2) contributing to FAO's Strategic Objective to build more inclusive and effective agri-food systems (SO4) and other related activities in the region.

4. Follow-up regarding the recommendations of the assessment of the European Commission on Agriculture conducted in 2017

The background paper presented to the members will outline proposed actions based on the recommendations from the assessment report of the ECA in 2017. It is expected that the Members will review the Actions and provide guidance for further implementation.

5. Progress made by FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia on the main recommendations of the 40th ECA, in particular on anti-microbial resistance (AMR)

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Annex 1: Draft annotated agenda for the 41st Session of the European Commission on Agriculture

Annotated agenda	
1.	Opening of the Session
	1.1 Scope and purpose of the meeting. Working procedures.
2.	Plant health in Europe and Central Asia countries
	2.1 Plant health in Europe and Central Asia - introduction Proposed discussion topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview on international trade of plants or plant products - Food security and nutrition: Impact of plant pests - Plant health and SDG's (i.e. SDGs 1, 2, 8, 12, 13, 15 and 17).
	2.2 Plant pests and diseases in the context of climate change and climate variability, increasing trade and food security in the ECA region Proposed discussion topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional situation of emerging plant pests in the context of the changing climate - Economic and environmental impacts of plant pests in the context of climate change - The most threatening emerging plant pests in the region and cooperation on plant health activities - Possible regional actions from REU to assist the region's Member Countries in cooperating on plant health issues – including discussing current trends and progress made, reviewing evidence and making recommendations aiming to improve the plant health situation.
	2.3 Impact of global trade and human mobility on the health of agricultural crops and forests in Europe Proposed discussion topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaps in the management of pest risks in the global trade of live plants - The importance of the capacity development on national level
	2.4 Trends and developments in plant health Proposed discussion topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the plant health development programmes
	2.5 Information item: Update on the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) in 2020 and related initiatives
3.	Advancing gender equality in the region, with special focus on FAO support in income diversification
4.	Follow-up regarding the recommendations of the assessment of the European Commission on Agriculture conducted in 2017
5.	Progress made by FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia on the main recommendations of the 40 th ECA, in particular on anti-microbial resistance (AMR)
6.	Election of members of the Executive Committee
7.	Any other business
8.	Date and place of the Forty Second ECA Session
9.	Review and endorsement of the Report of the Commission
10.	Closing of the Session