

2020 – International Year of Plant Health

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Healthy plants are the foundation of all life on Earth, providing the oxygen we breathe and more than 80% of the food we consume. The cultivation of plants is a main source of income for almost half of the world's population. We use them in light industry, construction, medicine and many other sectors that are essential to our lives. On the other hand, trade in plants and plant products enhances the economic development of the trading countries.

The threat to plant health is a threat to the health and life of people all over the world. According to FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), the number of hungry people in the world increases by 1 billion every 10 years.

Every year, plant pests destroy about 35% of the potential crop yield worldwide. Damage in agriculture and forestry amounts to about 250 billion US dollars.

The world's population is constantly growing and ensuring its food supply is a vital global issue, to the solution of which plant protection activities contribute to a significant extent. According to forecasts of the World Health Organization, by 2050 it will be necessary to double the production of food, feed and products of plant origin. This is possible only through the protection of plants and plant production from diseases, pests and weeds. Today, the main challenge to plant health worldwide is the large number of epidemics caused by new, unknown pests and by pests that in the past were not considered important. Global climate change and the increase in trade routes create conditions for the introduction of pests, which necessitates regular study and analysis of existing phytosanitary risks, the application of new models and innovative solutions with a view to undertaking effective actions to protect agricultural production, forests and parks. In addition to chemical and biological control in the implementation of plant protection measures, FAO emphasizes the role of integrated pest management.

Therefore, recognizing, advocating and supporting the promotion of plant health is of paramount importance for ensuring food based on stable and sustainable ecosystems.

With this in mind, in July 2017 the FAO Conference approved a draft resolution inviting the United Nations General Assembly to consider proclaiming 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). On 20 December 2018 in Rome, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health. The celebration of the International Year is expected to raise global awareness of how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, safeguard biodiversity and the environment, as well as stimulate economic development.

The increase in awareness is expected to have an impact on many spheres of public life:

- . Phytosanitary control through obtaining important information on the occurrence of quarantine and new and unknown pests, studying new pathways of introduction resulting from human activity, and applying timely measures to eradicate and limit their spread.
- . Establishment of phytosanitary partnerships at national, regional and global level.
- . Increasing funding for national and regional plant protection organizations, which are the first line of defense against plant pests and diseases.

. Science – through new technologies for studying pests and developing methods to combat them, including identifying their natural enemies, creating resistant varieties, etc.

. The plant protection industry – developing and applying sustainable and flexible models for combating new pests.

. The environment – greater clarity and predictability regarding the status of local populations and their sensitivity to new species.

. The population – greater clarity regarding the policies and actions of the authorities and engagement with them. In 2020, the eyes of the world will be directed towards international, regional and national plant health organizations.

The Republic of Bulgaria, which is a contracting party to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and an EU Member State, supports the celebration of the International Year of Plant Health – 2020. As the official authority of the Republic of Bulgaria for the implementation of the principles of the International Plant Protection Convention and the phytosanitary measures in trade, the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency (BFSA), together with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, the non-governmental organizations – ARIB, BARZ, producers' associations, scientific institutions and universities, will organize the campaign under the patronage of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

The planned national activities of the campaign include:

. Organizing a Plant Health Conference during the celebration of the professional holiday of the plant protection specialist – 16 January.

. Organizing regional events with practical demonstrations for professionals and operators.

. Participation in specialized exhibitions of Bulgarian producers.. Open Days at the Central Plant Quarantine Laboratory and some regional offices.

. Cooperation with various local and national media, including participation in specialized programs and the creation of a national specialized internet portal on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry for informing about and promoting the events held throughout 2020.

The journal "Plant Protection", in its capacity as a media partner of BFSA, will participate in and cover all events organized and held in the Year of Plant Health in order to ensure broad publicity and awareness on the topic.