



First ever International Day of Plant Health: no food security without healthy plants

Investment in innovation and outreach vital to promote plant health, FAO Director-General says

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Rome - As the world marks the [International Day of Plant Health \(IDPH\)](#) for the first time, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has called for more investment in innovation in a field crucial for boosting food security and transforming how our food is produced, delivered and consumed.

“On this very first International Day of Plant Health, we will reflect on plant health innovations for food security,” said FAO Director-General QU Dongyu in his opening remarks, adding that investments are needed in research, capacity development and outreach. “We need to continue raising the global profile of plant health to transform agrifood systems to be more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient and more sustainable.”

Four keynote speakers joined the celebrations to underline the importance of plant health – Finland’s Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, Antti Kurvinen, Zambia’s Minister for Agriculture, Mtolo Phiri, US Under-Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Jenny Lester Moffitt and Argentina’s Permanent Representative to FAO, Carlos Cherniak.

FAO has mapped out several priorities for plant health: fostering development and implementation of the international standards on phytosanitary measures to protect global plant resources while facilitating safe trade; focusing on sustainable pest management and pesticides through promotion of green and digital plant protection; and creating enabling surroundings for plant health by enhancing the health of soils, seeds and pollinators.

The organization has consistently stressed that protecting plant health is a major task and many actors have a role to play. Governments must prioritize plant

health and its sustainable management in formulating policies and legislation; academia and research institutions must deliver science-based solutions; and non-governmental organizations, the private sector and resource organizations should help develop capacities and provide technical and financial support for best practices to prevent and manage plant pests and diseases.

The International Day of Plant Health was established following a decision in March 2022 by the UN General Assembly. Championed by Zambia, it was unanimously adopted in a resolution co-signed by Bolivia, Finland, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tanzania. The Day is a key legacy of the [International Year of Plant Health](#) (IYPH), which was marked in 2020-2021. Following the first IDPH in 2022, FAO will organize celebrations for the Day every 12th of May at global, regional, national and even farm level.

FAO has welcomed it as a positive contribution to addressing global hunger, as up to 40 percent of food crops are lost to plant pests and diseases every year. Protecting plants from pests and diseases is far more cost effective than dealing with plant health emergencies. Once established, plant pests and diseases are often difficult to eradicate and should be controlled through sustainable pest and pesticides management.

The five goals of the IDPH are to: increase awareness on the importance of keeping plants healthy to achieve the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger); campaign to minimize the risk of spreading plant pests through trade and travel, by triggering compliance with international plant health standards; strengthen monitoring and early warning systems to protect plants and plant health; enable sustainable pest and pesticide management to keep plants healthy while protecting the environment; and promote investment in plant health innovations, research, capacity development and outreach.

FAO already works extensively to help curb the spread of [quarantine](#) and [transboundary plant pests and diseases](#), which have increased dramatically in recent years. Globalization, trade and climate change, as well as reduced resilience in production systems due to decades of agricultural intensification, have all played a part.

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