**12 May “International Day of Plant Health”**

**Message of the Ministry of Agriculture of the State of Eritrea**

The UN, on March 29, 2022, decided for the observance of 12 May as the International Day of Plant Health (IDPH). The IDPH, by enhancing global awareness on plant heath can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect biodiversity and the environment, and boost economic development.

This year the International Day of Plant Health is being remembered worldwide, as well as in Eritrea, for the second time, under the theme “Plant Health for Environmental Protection”. Plant health and the environment are closely linked. Without healthy plants the world is unthinkable to live in. Healthy plants provide us the oxygen that we breath in, the food that we eat, the ecological service that we get, etc. The combined effect of human activities and climate change, however, is putting an enormous pressure on the environment, plant health, agriculture, and the food systems that we depend on. It is there fore critical that global effort is needed to combat these challenges.

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), working under the aegis of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN, is a global treaty for protecting plant resources (including forests, aquatic plants, non-cultivated plants, and biodiversity) from damage by plant pests and for facilitating safe trade through common and effective action. To achieve these objectives, the IPPC has put in place over 40 International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs), which member states can use for the movement of plant and plant products in international trade. It is known that Eritrea is a member of the IPPC since 1995.

In the Eritrean context, plant pests cause serious damage to crop production. Particularly, some plant pets like leaf minor *(leaf minor or Tuta absoluta*) on vegetables, fall army worm on cereals, and fruit fly on orchards, which were introduced to Eritrea recently, can be mentioned in this regard. Furthermore, the frequent outbreak of desert locust in Eritrea is successfully controlled by the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with concerned Zoba administration, defense forces, farmers and DLCO. More efforts and organizational efficiency are needed, however, to prevent the introduction of quarantine pests.

The Ministry of Agriculture is making every effort to join hands with FAO, the IPPC and other plant health communities to share experiences and knowledge to combat any pest threats to crop production. The MoA takes the opportunity of the International Plant Health Day to reiterate its commitments to strengthen its collaborative efforts with the international plant health community in general, and with the IPPC in particular, to meet the challenges faced by plant pests.