**Strengthening Cooperation between FAO Regions and HQs in Plant Health**

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**Background**

Plants are under constant attack from pests and diseases that can severely damage crops, forests and other natural resources resulting in crop losses up to 40 percent and losses of USD 220 billion in traded agricultural products.

Healthy plants feed people and animals, contributing to food security for humankind, and plant products are traded to generate income. Healthy plants are critical to achieving the core FAO objectives of food security, zero hunger and poverty alleviation and contribute to reaching the SDGs.

The Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP) promotes Sustainable Intensification of Crop Production. This approach requires the integration and harmonization of all appropriate crop production policies and practices aimed at increasing crop productivity in a sustainable manner. The two key components of AGP’s work are plant production and plant protection contributing that producers can grow productive, healthy plants and crops.

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) was established to help the world protect plants. Over 183 contracting parties (CP) have signed the IPPC. CP meet annually at the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM). The Secretariat for the IPPC is housed in FAO as an article XIV body. The IPPC Secretariat, located in the Agricultural Department, provides a framework for the development of international standards and supports their implementation.

FAO has a unique network of plant production and protection officers in its decentralized offices (RsPPOs), who help respond to pressing national and regional priorities, including working closely with global plant health issues.

**The FAO Plant Health Team**

This ‘’FAO Plant Health Team’’ brings together all these resources and perspectives to build a coherent, effective global programme on Plan Health. It helps FAO member countries in preventing the introduction and spread of plant pests and manage them more sustainably. It significantly contributes to FAO’s mandate and to achieving SO2 (Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable), SO4 (Enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems) and SO 5 (Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises).

**Enhanced Communication, Cooperation and Priority-Setting**

AGP, the IIPC Secretariat and the decentralized offices propose to initiate a process that will lead to a strengthened and more effective global FAO Plant Health Team (PHT). The process shall be initiated during CPM-14 held in Rome 1-5 April 2019. The proposed FAO Plant Health Team meeting will be organized during the week of the CPM-14, on Thursday 4. and Saturday 6. April 2019. ***It is expected that this process will become on-going and will generate the support from supervisors for the time and travel costs of their respective officers.***

**Objectives of the Meeting and Attendance to CPM**

With the declaration of the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) for 2020, FAO has a unique opportunity to strengthen and make its PHT more effective through enhanced communication, identification of synergies, priority setting and joint implementation, synergies with attending the CPM will be exploited:

* Discuss and share priority plant health issues from the sub-regions, regions, and globally.
* Ensure that all members of the PHT know their colleagues, competencies, roles.
* Discuss a communications mechanism to ensure enhanced flow of information and sharing of knowledge.
* Plan and coordinate global activities for the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) in 2020.
* Coordinate work plans and share resources to fully exploit synergies and ensure a common approach.
* Reinforce cooperation between RsPPOs and HQ Officers in AGP and the IPPC Secretariat.
* Learn from the CPM decisions on plant health standards and plant health strategies to enhance implementation.