

Media statement

04 February 2020

South Africa celebrates the International Year of Plant Health 2020

The year 2020 has been internationally recognised and declared as the International Year of Plant Health – a year to celebrate plant health under the slogan of “**Protecting Plants, Protecting Life.**”

South Africa joins countries in the world to celebrate plant health as part of recognising the importance of plants to our health, animal health, environmental care and biodiversity; socioeconomic, agriculture and rural development.

In April 2016, the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) adopted the first formal initiative to declare 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). In December 2018, subsequent to the adoption of the resolution by the 40th Session of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Conference in July 2017, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2020 the International Year of Plant Health and mandated FAO and IPPC to facilitate the implementation in collaboration with the government, private sector and civil society.

The IYPH 2020 celebration activities at country level will be premised on the six key messages:

1. Keep plants healthy to achieve Zero Hunger and the UN Sustainable Development Goals
2. Be careful when bringing plants and plant products across borders
3. Make trading in plants and plant products safe by complying with international plant health standards
4. Keep plants healthy while protecting the environment
5. Invest in plant health capacity development, research and outreach
6. Strengthen monitoring and early warning systems to protect plants and plant health

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) would like to make a clarion call and encourage the agricultural fraternity, community members, research institutions, government departments, schools, churches, academic institutions and the entire citizenry to note 2020 as International Year of Plant Health and fully participate in this initiative through internalising the IYPH through their activities. The DALLRD will customise the IYPH activities through various events or activities such as the Budget Vote, Arbor Days and World Food Day, MINMEC, farmers' days and other departmental events.

The IYPH 2020 emphasises **prevention and protection** and believes that everyone has a role to play in preventing the spreading of pests and diseases of plants and plant products.

To all international travelers and traders, please avoid unauthorised importation of plant and plant products and declare plants and plant products at the ports before entering the country. At national level, all people must refrain from moving regulated host plants and plant products from quarantine to non-quarantine areas without removal permits. Farmers are advised to adopt sustainable pest management practices as part of taking care of the health of plants. Ensuring plant health is a shared responsibility amongst all of us.

For updates on international events, please visit: www.fao.org/plant-health-2020

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