

The Caribbean Plant Health Directors (CPHD) Forum - Protecting Plants, Protecting Life for the past 15 years

Forty percent (40%) of food crop losses annually are as a direct result of attack by plant pests. These losses are exacerbated by rapid changes in the climate as well as international travel and trade that facilitate the movement of harmful pests across borders. The CPHD, understanding these global challenges, particularly for small island developing countries such as those within the Caribbean, remains steadfast in safeguarding the region's agriculture and environments from new and existing plant pests, enhancing safe intra and extra-regional trade of agricultural products, and most importantly improving the health and lives of our Caribbean people.

This year, as the CPHD Forum commemorates its fifteenth year of operations, the Forum joins the international community in celebrating the International Day of Plant Health. The United Nations designated 12 May the International Day of Plant Health to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect biodiversity and the environment, and boost economic development.

*“Without plant production, there will be no food for humans or feed for animals,”
reminded IPPC Secretary Osama El-Lissy*

During this milestone year of the Forum and in celebration of the International Day of Plant Health a series of events will be hosted, and projects completed which further seek to build an awareness of the importance of plant health and improve phytosanitary capacity in the Region.

As such, the Forum, in collaboration with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and The Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA), will host a technical webinar entitled, **“The Russia/Ukraine Conflict – Potential Impact and Implications for the Caribbean Region”**, on Friday, May 13th, 2022. The webinar will be centered on the impact for regional agriculture and plant health, and the implications for intra and extra regional trade.

Additionally in 2022, the Forum will update the Regional Priority Pest List (RPPL) for the Caribbean. The – Working Group (RPPL) – is charged with objectively determining the top 10 priority pests for the Caribbean Region. These are plant pests with the potential to cause significant damage to crop production and the flora of the Caribbean and are either not yet present in the Caribbean or if present, are of limited distribution. The results of this working group will not only enable countries and regional partners to more effectively allocate scarce resources to manage pest threats, but ultimately assist the region to have a more synchronized approach towards preventing the introduction of invasive plant pests in the Greater Caribbean Region (GCR).

“Making the public more aware of the role of plant health and the ways we need to act urgently to curb the risks of plant pests and diseases, as well as understanding how to restrict the spread of invasive pests will make a significant contribution to global food security,” said Osama El-Lissy, Secretary of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

To strengthen our preparation and response to potential pest incursions, emergency response plans were developed for several of the priority pests identified by the RPPL TWG. Starting in May 2022, and continuing over the next two months, several countries across the region will be conducting tabletop simulations to test these emergency plans using a stakeholder engagement approach. Stakeholders are expected to gain a greater understanding of what is involved in reducing the impact a plant pest can have and what role they can play in mitigating the impact of such emergencies.

The Forum is also in the process of developing an online trade interception data management and analysis tool; **the Caribbean Biosecurity Interceptions System (CBIS)**. This tool, which is scheduled to be completed before the end of the year, will allow for the analysis of noncompliance issues encountered in trade over time with an aim of measuring and calculating pest risk in a more meaningful way. This will ultimately enhance and ensure safer agricultural trade for the Caribbean Region.

The CPHD recognizes that we are now facing a new global environment as it relates to plant health, one with geopolitical unrest, pandemics and climate change. To ensure that CPHD remains focused, relevant, and impactful in addressing and advancing its plant health agenda for the Caribbean region, it is embarking on the development of a multiyear strategic plan to guide its efforts.

The CPHD forum wishes to emphasize to its members and stakeholders that we all have a role to play in protecting our planet and plant resources. Please help us to **protect the Caribbean plants from pests, as it is far more cost effective than dealing with plant health emergencies.** Once established, plant pests are often impossible to eradicate, and managing them is time consuming and expensive, particularly for resource scarce regions like the Caribbean. The safe trade of healthy plants and plant products across borders form the basis of a robust food value chain and is a key component in the fight against world hunger.

“Sustaining plant health promotes food security and nutrition while protecting the environment and biodiversity, and boosting livelihoods and economic growth, in the context of global challenges, particularly climate change,” said Jingyuan Xia, Director of FAO’s Plant Production and Protection Division

About the CPHD

The Caribbean Plant Health Directors Forum is a collaboration of National Plant Health Services Regional and International Organizations, Government entities, Universities and Reference Laboratories with the common purpose of - safeguarding the plant resources of the greater Caribbean Region (GCR) from the threat of quarantine pest - improving plant health through the control and management of existing pests, and - expanding production and trade of agricultural commodities; in order to increase food security, protect the unique environment and enhance the quality of Life and economic wellbeing of the people of the countries and territories of the Greater Caribbean Region.

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