

**European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization**

**20-25872  
C Point 10.1**

**Strategic plan and Work plan for 2021 – 2025**

The current Strategic Plan covers the years 2015 – 2020. Following this Strategic Plan, a new Strategic Plan is developed for the years 2021 till 2025. For the period 2021 – 2025, the Plan is divided in two parts, a part covering the strategic elements for this five-year period and a five-year work plan. The Strategic Plan describes the strategic elements of the development of the work of EPPO and the Work Plan describes more in details what the consequences are of the strategic elements for the work of EPPO over this five-year period. The strategic plan and the five-year work plan will be the basis for developing yearly work plans.

The document consists of a foreword on the current COVID-19 situation, an Introduction (part 1) followed by the Strategic Plan (part 2) and the Work Plan (part 3).

## COVID-19 and its consequences

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that work conditions are unpredictable and may change suddenly. These changes have already had an important impact on EPPO's work, e.g. physical meetings were not possible anymore and had to be replaced by videoconferences. At the moment, we are still in the pandemic situation and we cannot fully predict how the situation will evolve in the region or what the consequences for the work of EPPO will be over the coming year or even years. One thing is certainly clear already, that EPPO will need to increase its flexibility in its way of working in order to continue its activities in the remaining stages of this pandemic. This will also apply in the case of a second wave in one or more member countries, if another major disease outbreak occurs worldwide or on regional level, or any other event occurs with major global or regional impacts.

The COVID-19 pandemic, or other similar events, will have an impact on several aspects of EPPO:

- Ways of working of the Organization - EPPO already had some experience with videoconferences, but this had to be extended to meetings of all Panels and the Executive Committee. It was then realized that not all discussions are easily held by videoconference.
- Ways of working of the Secretariat - also working from home by the EPPO Staff needed changes in the way of working and the equipment needed, and even then, it still has limitations. Ensuring the health of the EPPO staff members is of the highest priority and also essential to guarantee the continuity of the work of EPPO.
- Network - one of EPPO's strengths is its large scientific network of experts in plant health from all over the region, this network is based on personal contacts which allowed EPPO to shift to remote meetings. However, in the long run personal contacts are needed to maintain and develop this network.
- Finances - EPPO already has a reserve but it will have to be reconsidered whether this is sufficient for these kinds of impact. At least, part of the impact can be mitigated by justified flexibility between budget lines within the existing budget with approval of the Executive Committee.

To cope with the consequences of such unexpected situations, careful monitoring of these aspects is important, in the coming months but also in the future, and mitigation measures and improvement of processes will have to be considered (Strategic Objective 5). This is essential to ensure the future of EPPO (Strategic Objective 6) and the high-quality output of EPPO. This also means that this Five-year Strategic and Work Plan may have to be adjusted during these five years depending on the (re)occurrence and impact of such events and possible changes in needs of the member countries.

A cooperative and dynamic approach will be developed and applied to mitigate the risks of this and similar crises in the future in close cooperation with the relevant EPPO bodies and in consultation with EPPO member countries.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. EPPO

The European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) was established in 1951 by 15 member countries. In 2020, it has 52 member countries covering almost all of Europe, and much of North Africa and Central Asia. It is one of a number of Regional Plant Protection Organizations (RPPOs) around the world recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in the framework of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). The aims of the Organization according to the EPPO Convention are:

- a. to support the Member Governments in their aim of assuring plant health, while preserving human and animal health and the environment.
- b. to pursue and develop, by cooperation between the Member Governments, the protection of plants and plant products against pests and the prevention of their international spread and especially their introduction into endangered areas.
- c. to develop internationally harmonized phytosanitary and other official plant protection measures and, as appropriate, to elaborate standards to that effect.
- d. to present the collective views of the Member Governments, as appropriate, to FAO, World Trade Organization (WTO), other RPPOs and any other bodies with related responsibilities.

These aims have remained broadly the same since the Organization was founded, though the terms used and the context in which EPPO operates have changed substantially.

### 1.2. The importance of protecting plant health

Plants are essential to life but vulnerable. Our crops, forests, landscapes and gardens are under threat from a wide range of pests. New and faster trade pathways move more plant species and bigger amounts around the world, increasing the likelihood of biological invasions. With few natural enemies that could be used for biological control and limited host plant resistances, these new threats to plant health can spread fast and cause serious damage to economic production and to biodiversity. Moreover, climate change may influence the capacity of plant pests to establish in areas where they were previously not thought to be able to establish.

National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) need advice on well targeted phytosanitary measures to reduce the risks from movement of pests into areas where they are not established so far, without unnecessary restriction of trade. For the pests which are already present, regulatory authorities and growers need good evidence of efficacy, so they know which products and approaches can be most efficiently and sustainably used for control.

There are physiological limits to the increase in crop yields, and recent signs in some areas that new varieties and agronomic practices are approaching those limits. Minimizing losses due to pest damage, diseases impact and weed competition therefore remains critical for future food security. At the same time, tightening regulation of plant protection products (PPPs) tends to reduce the availability of effective

controls, although biological control and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approaches are increasingly advocated and are continuously gaining in efficiency and contributing to plant health.

Phytosanitary measures are also important to protect biodiversity by managing the risk of introduction and spread of invasive pests including invasive alien plants. Protecting biodiversity includes protecting natural forests and other ecosystems.

Co-ordination of technical advice based on scientific research results by EPPO results in EPPO recommendations which may help member countries to take management decisions to address these problems across the region.

### **1.3. Terminology**

The terms “plant health”, “plant quarantine”, “plant protection” and “phytosanitary” are used in different ways in different countries and organizations, sometimes interchangeably, and sometimes with a clear distinction between them. The EPPO Convention uses the terms “plant health”, “plant protection”, “phytosanitary” and “regulated pest”. The term “plant quarantine” does not appear and “quarantine pest” is defined but not used in the Convention. In the IPPC, the term “plant protection” is used in the name of the Convention itself and in the terms “Regional Plant Protection Organizations” and “National Plant Protection Organizations” which it recognizes. In the EPPO strategy presented here, the term “phytosanitary regulation” is used for the work on Quarantine Pests and Regulated Non-Quarantine Pests (RNQPs) and the term “Plant Protection” is used for the regulatory aspects of authorizing products for plant protection, either for the control of regulated or non-regulated pests. EPPO’s work on Plant Protection focusses on efficacy testing and good plant protection practices.

The term “pest” is used in the sense of the IPPC Glossary of Phytosanitary Terms<sup>1</sup> to mean “Any species, strain or biotype of plant, animal or pathogenic agent injurious to plants or plant products”. It covers both pests (such as insects, mites, molluscs and invasive alien plants) and causal agents of diseases (such as nematodes, fungi, bacteria and viruses), including their potential vectors.

### **1.4. Scope of EPPO’s work**

For the purpose of this strategy, two core areas of responsibility are distinguished:

- Phytosanitary Regulation, including Invasive alien plants;
- Plant Protection Products.

In addition, other areas in which EPPO has significant capability allows the organization to initiate or undertake projects in response to requests from members or external funding. Some of these areas are Information services, Research co-ordination, RNQPs , Efficacy of IPM approaches and Biological control agents.

#### Phytosanitary Regulation (core responsibility)

The main aim is to protect plants and plant products against pests by preventing international spread and their introduction into endangered areas. To achieve this aim EPPO supports its member countries by:

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<sup>1</sup> FAO. 2019. Glossary of phytosanitary terms. International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures No. 5. Rome. Published by FAO on behalf of the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). 35 pp. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

- Development of Standards for diagnostics, risk assessment, surveillance and risk management of quarantine pests<sup>2</sup> which threaten crops, forests, managed and unmanaged landscapes and gardens across the EPPO region and supporting the implementation of these Standards;
- Development of networks, for example between diagnostic laboratories and national inspectorates, to facilitate implementation of Standards;
- Facilitation of Europe's regional participation in global work on phytosanitary regulation.

### Plant Protection Products (core responsibility)

The aim is to assist its member countries in harmonizing the registration and authorization of plant protection products, in compliance with the principles of good plant protection practice as well as the principles of integrated control. To achieve this aim EPPO supports its member countries by:

- Development of Standards for efficacy and sustainable use of plant protection products against pests of plants, and the safety of those products for the plants and cropping systems to which they are applied and supporting the implementation of these Standards;
- Facilitation of the EPPO region's participation in global work on plant protection products.

### Information Services

EPPO provides information services across all of its areas of work, including the website, databases, EPPO Codes for IT systems, monthly "Reporting Service" and the "EPPO Bulletin". EPPO information services cover both its core responsibilities and other areas of work.

### Research co-ordination

One of the functions envisaged for EPPO in 1951 was to "facilitate co-operation in research into all matters concerning the pests and diseases of plants". EPPO is hosting the Secretariat of the Euphresco Phytosanitary Research Funders Network since 2014 and has secured long term sustainable funding for this activity by the EPPO member countries.

### Regulated non-quarantine pests

EPPO has long experience of developing standards for certification of healthy planting material, including certification of freedom from what are now called RNQPs<sup>3</sup> or of presence of those pests only within specified tolerances. This has received less priority in recent years than work on quarantine pests, but the capability remains within the secretariat and within EPPO's networks of experts.

### Efficacy of plant protection products

EPPO has in the past developed Standards on the environmental safety of plant protection products, including safety of insecticides to bees. With the increasing degree of public and political scrutiny of such Standards and the increasing role of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in safety

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<sup>2</sup> A pest of potential economic importance to the area endangered thereby and not yet present there, or present but not widely distributed and being officially controlled (IPPC, 1997)

<sup>3</sup> A non-quarantine pest whose presence in plants for planting affects the intended use of those plants with an economically unacceptable impact and which is therefore regulated within the territory of the importing contracting party (IPPC, 1997)

considerations for registration of plant protection products within the European Union (EU), EPPO has focused on the efficacy of plant protection products and other approaches. Old standards on environmental safety will remain available but will not be updated and this will be clearly indicated on the website.

### Biological control agents

EPPO's missions cover biological control agents in a number of ways.

Biological Control Agents (BCAs) may be used for plant protection, alone or as part of an IPM approach, by augmentative release or classically through introduction to a new area. They are sometimes used against outbreaks of regulated pests, including in situations where there are few other control options. They may pose a potential risk to non-target organisms, including plants, and should therefore be subjected to Environmental Risk Assessment before release. The authorization of the use of BCAs is not harmonized in the EPPO region, many different approaches are applied. EPPO aims at facilitating the authorization process in its member countries by developing a harmonized assessment procedure for BCAs and listing BCAs that have been successfully authorized and applied in member countries.

## 2. Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025

### Strategic Objective 1: Improving Protection of Plant Health

Technical work to protect plant health will continue to be the main activity for EPPO. EPPO aims to remain an authority in this area in order to support its member countries. If EPPO's work is regionally and globally recognized and accepted, it will be of better use for the member countries.

The aspects of EPPO's work within Phytosanitary Regulation (EPPO Working Party on Phytosanitary Regulation) focusses amongst others on horizon scanning, pest listing, PRA, pest reporting and Standard development. This work will continue to advise member countries on pests which should be considered for regulation and to recommend measures including phytosanitary procedures specified in Standards (e.g. on eradication, diagnostics, inspection, surveillance, PRA guidelines, pest reporting). Moreover, the work on Invasive Alien Plants and Biological control Agents will continue. The work on biological control agents will be broadened to also cover biological control of invasive alien plants. The work programme of EPPO should have enough flexibility to focus on what is important for its member countries and to follow new developments and priorities regionally and globally.

In the area of Plant Protection Products (EPPO Working Party on Plant Protection Products), EPPO will continue to develop standards on efficacy evaluation and will also focus on zonal authorization, low risk products and alternatives for chemical plant protection products, minor uses and resistance management, incorporating where applicable new technological developments. EPPO will explore areas of work within IPM where EPPO can contribute to support its member countries, in addition to all the work done by other institutions. If clear tasks are identified by the member countries where EPPO can have added value and experts in IPM are available to work with EPPO, this work will be taken up.

EPPO will continue to develop synergy between the work in the area of Phytosanitary Regulation and Plant Protection Products to enhance the cooperation where useful, e.g in contingency planning, IPM and BCAs.

### Strategic Objective 2: Communication to NPPOs and stakeholders

The availability of up-to-date information is essential nowadays for any area of work and certainly also for the work area of EPPO and its member countries. EPPO has focussed already for many years on collection of information and making it available to its member countries and interested stakeholders. Databases, e.g. EPPO Global Database ([gd.eppo.int](http://gd.eppo.int)), database on Efficacy Evaluation of PPPs, PRA Platform, Database on Diagnostic Expertise, have been developed and made available via the EPPO website ([www.eppo.int](http://www.eppo.int)). EPPO should focus even more on making information available and on effective communication, first of all to the authorities in its member countries, including the NPPOs, but also to other stakeholders in the areas of Phytosanitary Regulation and Plant Protection Products. It is important for EPPO to focus on the needs of our member countries in the area of communication. Moreover, it is essential to receive information from member countries through official communication, e.g. pest reports. EPPO will also encourage this information flow from the member countries to EPPO. Although above all the target group for EPPO's communication are the official authorities in the member countries and other related stakeholders, EPPO will also continue to support its member countries in how they can communicate to operators including growers, foresters and the general public about the importance of plant health and the risks. What was started in the International Year for Plant Health (IYPH) 2020 will be continued.

### **Strategic Objective 3: Maintaining and strengthening relationships**

EPPO will strongly encourage continued availability of experts and involve more experts from the EPPO region in EPPO's work where needed, because their contribution is essential for the work of EPPO to support its member countries. Moreover, by bringing experts together, it also offers them a platform to exchange experience, and increase and widen their expertise and build networks with other experts. Involving more experts from Eastern part of the EPPO region and from North-African EPPO countries is important to ensure that the work is relevant for the whole region. Involving non-EU EPPO countries in the work of EPPO on Plant Protection Products is also important for the same reason. This could be achieved by involving more experts from these countries and by working on Standards that are relevant to them. EPPO covers a large geographic region. This makes representing the whole region and reaching consensus a challenge. EPPO will also encourage exchanges between EPPO member countries.

EPPO will continue to be an active RPPO engaging with other RPPOs and to serve as the co-ordinating body for the European region in matters relating to the IPPC, especially because EPPO's work has many parallels with and can contribute to the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020 – 2030. EPPO will continue and develop further its longstanding relationship with the European Commission (EC) and will continue to develop further its relationship with the Eurasian Economic Commission. EPPO will also strengthen the relationship with European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and work with the EC, e.g. in the area of EU Reference laboratories (EURLs). For plant protection products (PPPs), the relationship with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) will be further developed where useful.

EPPO will continue to work with stakeholder representatives in the area of plant protection products and further explore where collaboration with stakeholder representatives, including NGOs, in the area of Phytosanitary Regulation is useful and acceptable for the member countries.

In the area of research, EPPO will strengthen its relationships with Euphresco and with the Minor Uses Coordination Facility (MUCF), which are both hosted by EPPO, and offer possibilities for synergy.

### **Strategic Objective 4: Building capability to participate in projects**

EPPO will continue to participate in research projects, as long as they are linked to the core work of EPPO and are of benefit for its member countries. When participating in projects, EPPO will make full use of its role as an authority in the Protection of Plant Health, its existing ways of disseminating information and its possibilities to offer a platform for experts to exchange expertise. Hosting the Euphresco network to support coordination and collaboration in the area of phytosanitary research forms an essential part in this and provides synergy with EPPO's work.

Collaborative externally funded projects allow EPPO to secure extra-budgetary resources and make best use of its capabilities. Projects should however not be an important source of funding of EPPO's core work and permanent staff. This would make EPPO too dependent on projects with the risk that EPPO is forced to participate in projects that are not within the core of its work. A good balance should be maintained of project funding and funding by core budget, keeping flexibility and where necessary employing temporary staff. The role of project coordinators within the EPPO Secretariat for external projects will be further developed to manage the EPPO input in projects better, allow better accounting and fit the work for the projects better into EPPO's core work. Moreover, this will increase the transparency of EPPO's contribution to projects and the relation of project work to EPPO's core tasks.



### **Strategic objective 5: Improving processes**

EPPO is a relatively small organization which has flexibility to adjust its way of working when needed. A certain level of governance is needed and needs to be written down in rules and internal procedures as is already done for most of the processes, e.g. the EPPO Staff Rules and Regulations based on the UNESCO Rules. Some more processes have to be formalized to allow for smooth operations and further improve transparency. These can then be shared within the organization, which is essential also in the light of future departure of staff members, but the administrative burden should be kept manageable. This is not only applicable to procedures within the EPPO secretariat, especially for projects, but also to procedures for Panels and Expert Working Groups and for the Executive Committee.

### **Strategic objective 6: Securing the future of EPPO**

EPPO will continue to depend for most of its funding on annual contributions from its member countries. The payment of these contributions is therefore essential for the Organization and member countries are encouraged to pay their contributions in time. EPPO will have to make its role and the benefits of membership clear to its member countries. To secure the future of the organization, salaries of permanent staff should only for a small percentage depend on project funding.

Important for the continuity of EPPO is also the well-functioning of EPPO bodies like the Council, the Executive Committee, the Account Verification Panel, the EPPO Secretariat including the Scientific Staff. Active participation of member countries in these bodies will be encouraged and, where needed, procedures and instructions will be developed or revised.

It is essential for the future of the organization that EPPO Secretariat work timely on transition of the work of staff members that will leave the organization in the coming five years. EPPO will work on transition of their work to other staff members by working with them and by writing down procedures where applicable.

EPPO moved in 2010 into a new accommodation which is a good office for the Secretariat and the projects hosted, and which offers good opportunities to hold meetings. This asset is very valuable and needs to be well maintained and kept suitable for its functions.

### 3. Work Plan 2021 – 2025

#### Work Plan Strategic Objective 1 – Improving protection of plant health

Technical work to **protect plant health** will continue to be the main activity for EPPO, prioritized and guided by the Working Parties on Phytosanitary Regulations (WPPR) and on Plant Protection Products (WPPPP). The work will take account of the technological, economic and social changes, as well as climate changes, which all drive changes in plant health risks and which may also provide opportunities for reducing those risks.

In both areas of work, facilitating data exchange and building trust between regulatory authorities are very important and EPPO can play an important role in this.

In the area of Plant Protection Products the work of EPPO is prioritized and guided by the Working Party on PPPs (WPPPP). EPPO will continue to develop standards which support elements of the new EU approvals regime which are relevant for all EPPO members, in particular **zonal authorization, comparative assessment, minor uses and resistance management**. EPPO will continue to develop and manage databases on extrapolation and resistance. EPPO will explore and identify in what aspects of IPM the organization could have added value and play a role in order to fulfill the corresponding need from EPPO's member countries. The development of a network of experts in this area is important and this may lead to developing standards or collect and share data via a database or a platform.

In the area of Phytosanitary Regulation, EPPO will continue **horizon scanning** to identify new pest risks and pathways which should be considered for risk assessment and management. EPPO will use types of Pest Risk Analysis (**PRA**) appropriate to the needs and to the level of challenge which may be expected in view of the measures recommended by EPPO to its member countries, with a preference for express PRAs where possible. EPPO will continue to perform PRAs for pests, including invasive alien plants. **Commodity PRAs** will help member countries to manage the risks from new and increasing trades. The development of **commodity standards** will depend on the IPPC progress thereupon, and EPPO will continue to contribute to or complement IPPC's work on this.

Enabling member countries to improve **surveillance** for quarantine pest outbreaks and determination of pest status in an area will be a particular focus of attention over the five-year period. To act promptly in the case of a new outbreak, contingency plans are essential, EPPO will develop and test the implementation of **contingency plans** for eradication of outbreaks, including the use of other techniques e.g. use of pheromones.

Work on **diagnostics** is essential in Plant Health and EPPO will continue its work in this area within the existing Panel structure. Diagnostic Protocols (DPs) will be revised whenever considered as needed by the Panels on diagnostic (based on the process established for identifying the need for revision). Where needed, new ones will be developed where possible in synergy with research conducted in the Euphresco network. In the coming years, many DPs will be revised. After this major work, consideration should be given how to continue the work on DPs and what resources should be allocated to this program in the future. EPPO will continue to support further developments on in-field diagnostics, accreditation and enhanced collaboration between laboratories. EPPO will also follow new developments in diagnostics, e.g. on High Throughput Sequencing and Quality Assurance, and contribute by facilitating discussion on the consequences of these developments, by developing or revising Standards and by developing guidance, where needed. The Database on Diagnostic Expertise (including a specific section on validation data) will be maintained and laboratories encouraged to contribute actively to its content.

Regarding EPPO Q-Bank Database (hosted by EPPO since 2019-05-01), EPPO will encourage contribution from experts to the content of the database, as well as enlarging the pool of curators for the database. It is beneficial for all EPPO countries if a good collaboration is established between the EURLs and EPPO and overlap or gaps will be avoided.

EPPO will work with the European Commission and other regional organizations, including RPPOs, on joint projects to collate technical information required to recommend regulation concerning **invasive alien plants**.

The work on **biological control agents** (BCAs) will continue its activities to support its member countries in the authorization of BCAs. It is important to develop contacts with the regulatory authorities in the EPPO member countries. Then their needs will be identified and the outcomes of EPPO's work can be communicated directly to them. The work on BCAs will be broadened to agents targeting invasive alien plants. EPPO will explore what the need of its member countries is in this area and, if needed, do similar work on these BCAs as has been done on BCAs targeting other pests.

Work on **RNQPs** will not have priority within the core work programme but may be undertaken in response to specific and funded requests, for example in relation to the RNQP elements in the new EU plant health regulation (EU/2016/2031). Based on the EU experience with the new Plant Health Regulation that defines and lists RNQPs, EPPO could consider developing recommendations to all EPPO countries for RNQPs.

For all work and in all areas EPPO will aim to respond rapidly to new developments, in particular to changing pest risks, and to identify and overcome any obstacles to rapid responses by EPPO and its members. EPPO will especially keep flexibility to perform work on specific **emerging pests** which may come up and become priority for EPPO's member countries.

## Work Plan Strategic Objective 2: Information sharing and communication

EPPO will keep searching for and manage **information** which is essential for keeping its work up-to-date and make this information available to its member countries and other stakeholders. EPPO's **information services** will continue to be delivered via the website, various databases (such as EPPO Global Database, EPPO Codes, Alert List, Reporting Service and Bulletin).

Making information available in a structured way through **databases and platforms** will be continued and where needed extended. The way in which this will be further developed will be guided by the needs of EPPO's members and other stakeholders and by the needs of the users to have specific or general information available. In all databases and platforms, it will be made clear whether the information is checked by EPPO and EPPO ensures the quality of the information, or if the information is made available through EPPO without a technical check. It is essential that EPPO's member countries make information available to EPPO.

Information obtained for **Horizon scanning** should be analyzed and made timely and in a usable way available to the member countries. Other work on communication will facilitate the sharing among EPPO members of the skills and resources needed to raise awareness of pest risks and the importance of abiding by rules, for example on the import of plants. EPPO will continue to facilitate the adoption among its members of secure electronic data exchange.

For all information, but especially for Pest Reporting and giving Pest Alerts, EPPO is dependent on information received from its member countries. EPPO will encourage member countries to use the EPPO Reporting Platform which enables member countries to **report pest findings** promptly, in accordance with the corresponding fulfilment of international obligations.

**EPPO Codes** are an increasingly important component of databases related to plants and pests around the world. Rapid but controlled creation of new codes and their hierarchical structure reflecting biological taxonomy are particularly valued features and will be continued.

EPPO will update all its **Datasheets on pests** during 2020 – 2024. A strong dynamic link between the datasheets and EPPO Global Database (GD) will ensure that the information in datasheets will be updated along with the information available in GD. This major task can only be done with assistance of experts within the EPPO region and either by additional temporary staff or by permanent staff. In the latter case, the core work programme needs to be reduced to manage this workload.

EPPO will also continue to develop the **database on Extrapolation** for authorization of PPPs and the **database on Resistance** cases to PPPs to provide information to its member countries on developments in plant protection products.

After the IYPH, EPPO will continue to support its member countries in **awareness raising**, e.g. by posters, and in their communication with operators including growers, e.g. by adding more photographs of pests and symptoms, where available, when revising the datasheets.

### Work Plan Strategic Objective 3 – Maintaining and strengthening relationships

EPPO will continue to encourage **applications** from those few countries within the EPPO region which have not yet joined. However, EPPO will also make clear to existing member countries what the **benefit of EPPO membership** are. It is important for members that they can contribute to and benefit from the work of EPPO in a way that is most useful and relevant for them or where they need more support. In this way, EPPO will work on a stable membership.

EPPO will encourage member countries from the **Eastern part** of the EPPO region and from **North Africa** to be more involved in the work of EPPO by direct contacts and organizing meetings in these countries. EPPO will encourage non-EU EPPO countries to be more involved in the EPPO's work on plant protection products. To achieve this, EPPO will contact these countries and encourage them to have their experts participate in Panels and will find out what their needs are in this area of work.

EPPO's activities depend on the willingness of member countries to develop and maintain **expertise** within their services and make that expertise available to EPPO Panels and networks. EPPO will continue to work with members to secure continuing availability of that expertise.

EPPO will continue to be an active RPPO engaging with other **RPPOs** through the annual technical consultation, bilateral meetings and invitations to other RPPOs to workshops and other events. EPPO will seek to share experience with other RPPOs and exchange ideas on ways of working. EPPO will explore possibilities that RPPOs can contribute more actively to IPPC work.

EPPO will continue to serve as the coordinating body for the European FAO region in matters relating to the **IPPC**, including nomination of European representatives on IPPC bodies. The Secretariat will continue to be active in meetings of the CPM and co-operate with the IPPC Secretariat, for example through joint activities. EPPO will encourage member countries to nominate experts for CPM bodies to broaden this participation, which will make it more sustainable and will ensure that the European context and interests are taken into account in the IPPC work.

EPPO will retain a particularly close relationship with the Near East Plant Protection Organization (**NEPPO**) as it develops and grows. Joint events may be organized, where there is sufficient interest across the two organizations.

EPPO has a longstanding relationship with the **European Union (EU)**, and will continue to explore new ways of cooperation and development. This could include specific projects funded partly or wholly by the EU to develop technical standards and systems to underpin EU regulatory regimes on plant health and plant protection products. EPPO will continue to co-operate closely with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in the areas of PRA, surveillance, contingency planning and horizon scanning. This will be done to avoid overlap in work in ways which respect the statutory remit of EFSA as provider of scientific advice to the institutions of the EU. Where appropriate, EPPO will facilitate cooperation with EFSA and the EU Reference Laboratories (EURLs), e.g. by sharing planning of their annual work programmes to ease collaboration and avoid duplication of effort.

EPPO will also continue to develop a relationship with the **Eurasian Economic Commission** in the context of increasing harmonization of phytosanitary regulation between that body's member countries.

EPPO will continue to collaborate with the **Council of Europe**, in its role as Secretariat of the Bern Convention, which aims to conserve wild flora and fauna.

EPPO will continue to work with the Centre for Agricultural Bioscience International (**CABI**) within the terms of the MoU between EPPO and CABI signed in 2018.

EPPO will seek to remain a recognized stakeholder of the **European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA)**, and work with EA to continue the cooperation for accreditation of plant pest diagnostic laboratories.

EPPO will participate in the **OECD Working Group on Pesticides**. EPPO will seek more interaction between EPPO's work on plant protection products and the work of the MUCF, to make full use of each other capacities and expertise.

EPPO Standards on efficacy evaluation of plant protection products, resistance management and safe use of biological control agents are used by the respective industries as well as by regulators. **Industry expertise** has been instrumental in the development of practical standards in these areas. For the work of Panels, EPPO will consider whether and how industry expertise is best engaged in development of EPPO Standards.

## Work Plan Strategic Objective 4 - Building capability to manage projects

Member countries have asked the Secretariat to continue to explore additional sources of funding. There are opportunities for EPPO to take on projects which support the work of members but also secure extra-budgetary resources and optimize the use of its capability.

EPPO will continue to host the **Euphresco** network of plant health research funders, subject to continued commitment from partners and EPPO will aim at increasing the synergy between EPPO's work and the Euphresco network.

Supported by the European Commission, EPPO will continue projects on **EPPO codes** and revision of **EPPO datasheets**. Where users of EPPO codes, including inter-governmental organizations, require significant enhancement of the code lists to meet the needs of their systems, EPPO will ask them to cover the costs of these enhancements.

EPPO will aim to participate in **research projects** when their objectives are in line with the EPPO work plan or relevant to EPPO Standards. Participation will help to ensure that the outputs are useful to member countries and not in conflict with existing Standards. For some projects, an advisory role may be more appropriate than participation as a partner. To fulfil its responsibilities to members, EPPO may participate in more than one consortium bidding for the same research funding. It will explain its responsibilities, capabilities and potential contribution to each consortium which requests EPPO's partnership in a project. Detailed criteria for participation have been developed and are presented in Appendix 1. Flexibility is needed so that the Secretariat can decide to join projects when they come up and a quick decision is needed or has to be taken confidentially, provided that these projects are within the remit of EPPO and contribute to its objectives for the benefit of its member countries. This procedure will be evaluated after several years of application.

EPPO will make the **finances of projects** and how they relate to the core budget more transparent by developing more detailed separate files for their incomes and expenses of projects. This will also make clearer for what percentage EPPO depends for its work on project funding and in how far EPPO needs project income for its work. EPPO will work out how the potential risk of financial dependency will be addressed.

EPPO will work more closely with the **MUCF** hosted by EPPO to support them to make their finances more transparent and build up a reserve to guarantee the financial sustainability of the MUCF and reduce the financial risks for EPPO.

## Work Plan Strategic Objective 5 - Improving processes

It is good practice to review **governance** arrangements from time to time. Where needed EPPO will review its rules of procedures for Panels and Working Parties and review the functioning of its governance bodies like the Council and the Executive Committee to remain an organization that is transparent, well organized and flexible to react to new needs.

The work of EPPO will continue to depend on **national experts** participating in Panels at the cost of the member countries, including attendance at meetings and work throughout the year. This contribution should be acknowledged as much as the financial contribution from members. For Expert Working Groups for Pest Risk Analysis (PRAs), EPPO will pay costs for experts attending meetings. Occasionally EPPO will subcontract work, paying for time and costs of expert input, e.g. for revision of the datasheets.

The number, names, interrelationship and mode of working of **Panels** is kept under regular review by the two Working Parties, especially in the context of needs of member countries, priorities and workload for the EPPO Secretariat and national experts. EPPO will further explore the possibilities of more electronic communication in addition to face-to-face meetings and the most appropriate ways of engaging industry expertise in EPPO's work. EPPO will encourage participation of the most appropriate experts from across the EPPO region, with special emphasis of expertise present in the Eastern part of the EPPO region and in North Africa which is till now not fully used in EPPO's work.

EPPO's **IT strategy** will be reviewed. The review will cover options for adopting an electronic records management system, reducing reliance on paper records for archives, and outsourcing certain aspects of hardware supply and maintenance. EPPO will retain in-house expertise in IT to develop and implement that strategy to be more demand-driven and flexible, especially given the importance of information sharing and EPPO's role in this as described in Strategic Objective 2.

EPPO has well recognized **branding**, including a distinctive logo and website. Design aspects of EPPO's website and other communications will be updated, when needed, with the intention of refreshing them where necessary and ensuring coherence while retaining familiar and valued design elements, especially while databases become more important.

EPPO will work with **Euphresco**, which is hosted by EPPO, to adapt the rules and procedures of Euphresco, to make them more suitable for the Euphresco membership that has developed within the EPPO region and for the increasing membership from outside the EPPO region.

EPPO will encourage more interaction between the staff working for EPPO and for **Euphresco** and the **MUCF**, to make full use of each other's expertise and make all staff employed by EPPO part of a big team.

EPPO will continue to harmonize the way in which **internal rules** and procedures are applied to different areas of work and, as far as possible, to all staff members, for transparency and equal application.



## Work Plan Strategic Objective 6 - Securing the future of EPPO

EPPO will continue to depend for most of its funding on **annual contributions** from member governments. This strategy envisages that increases in those contributions can be kept at or below the rate of inflation, through a combination of careful management of costs and additional funding for specific projects. The sustainability of this approach will depend on continuing prompt payment of contributions and EPPO becoming partner in external projects.

During the past 5 years, **project funding** has become an essential element of EPPO's income to be able to pay for the increased number of permanent staff. Therefore, EPPO will continue to participate in new projects to cover these costs. EPPO should aim at a maximum of 10% of the staff costs (excluding staff that is temporary employed for specific projects).

One of the risks of increasing project funding in order to hold down contributions is that project funding is inherently unpredictable. As part of the strategy to increase external project funding, EPPO will continue to consider the options for flexibility to fund projects from its own resources. Gaps in externally funded projects can then be filled by projects specified and funded from the Special Project Account approved by the Executive Committee. Criteria for such projects have been collated and presented to Council and will be evaluated in 2022.

Three quarters of EPPO expenditure is on **staff salaries** and related costs. Pay and conditions are generally aligned with those of UNESCO. This may cause increases in salaries that are out of EPPO's control. EPPO must pay good salaries in order to attract and retain staff with high levels of expertise from across the EPPO region to live and work in Paris. The package of pay and benefits must be clearly stated when jobs are advertised.

During this workplan, at least two experienced staff members will retire and another two are eligible for **retirement**. Following consultation with each staff member concerned, the DG will prepare for the Executive Committee a succession plan setting out in general terms how EPPO can best ensure continuity and innovation through a period of significant changeover in the Secretariat, as well as the financial consequences and opportunities.

The first five-year term of the current **DG** finishes at the end of 2023. This will be included in the **succession plan** for the whole organization to guarantee a smooth operation of the EPPO Secretariat beyond 2023.

EPPO moved in 2010 into accommodation chosen and fitted out to meet the Organization's needs. A ten-year loan was taken out for the purchase of the **new headquarters** and contributions were sought from member countries for a special account to cover the eventual costs. The loan will expire and be repaid in 2020. Provided all members have made their extra contributions, there will be a surplus in the special account that will be used for renovation of the building and the office spaces, so that the accommodation will continue to serve the needs of EPPO and will maintain its value for the organization, both for its use as well as asset.

## Appendix 1

**Criteria for EPPO's involvement in projects**

**Guidance on criteria to be applied to decide about EPPO's involvement in funded projects and for the selection of consortium to join** (as endorsed by the EPPO Executive Committee in 2020-07) and on follow up evaluation.

Over the last 10 years EPPO has been contacted by different institutes to join consortium preparing bids for EU funded projects or to be part of the advisory board of projects. Criteria were approved in 2014 and have been revised in 2020 based on experience.

**Criteria applied to decide about EPPO's involvement in funded projects**

Before accepting to be involved in a project the following criteria should be fulfilled.

- **Objectives of the project are in line with the EPPO strategy and work programme**

The topic description should include objectives that are in line with the EPPO strategy and work programme (i.e. the interest of EPPO members). In particular, one of the criteria is that the proposed project should have a regional impact and be of horizontal nature. EPPO will usually avoid joining projects focussed on specific pests except when these are important pests for the region (e.g. *emerging pest for which research is needed to make recommendations to EPPO member countries*) or the project although being pest specific also includes horizontal elements (e.g. EPPO joined the Consortium of a project on Wheat Blast which included evaluating RNQP status of cereal diseases) . See also funding scheme below.

- **Outcomes of the project are relevant for EPPO Standards or recommendations**

The Secretariat evaluates if EPPO is very likely to have to integrate the outcomes of the project in its set of Standards or Recommendations (e.g. are diagnostic protocols prepared during the project on pest(s) of concern for EPPO?, is the project about risk analysis process for pests (including plants)...). If this is the case the EPPO Secretariat is entering into discussion with the other partners to participate as a full partner and not as a member of the Advisory Board.

- **Funding scheme**

Projects can be partly or fully funded, in addition overheads may vary from one project to the next. For projects that are only partly funded, the remaining part of the cost will have to be financed through the regular budget of the Organization, it is consequently important to ensure that this is possible and in line with the work programme as stated above.

The timing and conditions of payment are also considered as staff costs for the preparation of the bid (including potential travel costs for preparatory meetings) have to be covered under the regular EPPO Budget.

- **Secretariat's capacity to work on a project**

The time scale of the project will be considered in relation to other projects in progress and the regular calendar of the Organization so that enough staff is available to run the project efficiently while maintaining current core activities. The possibility to recruit fixed term staff with the budget allocated in the project also needs to be considered. Individuals should be from EPPO Countries. Although EPPO is approached for its expertise which is based on existing permanent staff, participating in project is not time neutral. Projects even when in line with the core programme generate additional work (such as project reporting, project management). EPPO is often asked to lead the work package on dissemination and activities in such work packages go beyond regular EPPO activities (e.g. preparation of project dissemination material, dissemination strategies...). It is consequently important that this is taken into account.

In addition, the following issues are also taken into account to decide whether EPPO should be a partner

- **The impacts on EPPO's work if the outcomes of the project need to be integrated into EPPO standards or recommendations and EPPO is not a partner.**

Several projects on diagnostic in particular, were conducted in recent years. EPPO's experience with the preparation of a diagnostic protocol resulting from EU projects is that considerable adjustments have been needed. Additional information was needed which could have been easier to obtain while the project was still running (whereas asking research teams adjustments/further information after the end of the project is difficult as funding is no longer available). Consequently, starting the preparation of a Standard before the end of the project has the advantage of allowing discussions between the EPPO experts and the research teams developing the tests.

- **Dissemination activities which will need to be organized by EPPO.** EPPO has been involved in organizing dissemination activities for two recent projects where EPPO was only a member of the advisory board (QBOL and Q-DETECT). For the three workshops concerned this was done on the EPPO regular budget (both for the technical and administrative support). We believe that this should be partly financed by being a full partner in a project.

### **Selection of a consortium**

The second aspect in the participation in EU projects is the choice of the consortium. When recently asked by the Secretariat about the Horizon 2020 call, the EU Commission indicated that from their perspective, there is not restriction for participation in more than one consortium for an organization. However, in the past years the EPPO Secretariat followed the unwritten practice that EPPO should only compete for a bid in one consortium.

The criteria that have been applied so far to select the consortia to join have been as follows:

- Participation of partners from NPPOs or agencies working closely with NPPOs
- Organizations with a reputation of leading successful consortia
- Organizations which have been regularly involved in consortium management or are regular partners of funded projects.

It should be noted that our current position in the framework of the project calls is that an international organization like EPPO should be involved in some capacity with any project that is in the remit of our activities and when we consider that it is beneficial for our members, i.e. EPPO should be able to offer its participation to more than one consortium. The following message is usually sent to the consortium approaching EPPO

*EPPO as the organisation responsible for international co-operation in plant protection in the European and Mediterranean region has a close interest in the progress of projects. The EPPO Secretariat sees clear advantages from participation in projects which may gain from EPPO expertise, networks and information base. Similarly, if the outputs from research are going to be applied by plant health services and stakeholders across Europe, it is important that they are incorporated into or aligned with the regional standards developed by EPPO. However, as an international organisation, the considerations for the EPPO participation in the different partnerships are rather different from those for researchers and the main factor that has been considered is whether the participation offers benefits to EPPO members.*

It has been decided that whichever consortium wins funding for the topic of the Call, it is a responsibility of EPPO to collaborate with them to try to ensure that the research is well focused at priority risks, and that outputs can be applied in practice to problems faced by EPPO member countries in the fields of plant health and plant protection products.

Participation of EPPO in only one or more than one competing consortium has been considered. It was taken into consideration that if EPPO would only join one consortium it would not have the possibility to participate in other interesting projects and may not be involved in any approved project in the end. By joining more than one consortium EPPO has to answer questions from different Consortia respecting any confidential information which is shared. Joining more consortia is allowed and was preferred by EPPO to increase chances of joining a project and not missing out on another interesting one.

### **Review of EPPO's involvement in project**

At the end of each project a review should be made to:

Identify the benefits of the project for EPPO member countries (e.g. additional Recommendations and Standards prepared, Data enhanced, visibility of the Organization improved).

Review the management of the project:

- Identify if the evaluation of person/months made when preparing the project were appropriate and if no major deviations occurred in terms of workload.
- Review the financial balance of the project to determine if funding was sufficient to deliver the outcomes or if expenses were over estimated. When deviations from the initial budget are identified, highlight the reasons for such deviation and how the project activities have been funded.
- Identify if the deliverables have been prepared on time and met the expectations of the consortium. If not what where the reasons.