

**Statement by
David Cooper
Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

**International Day of Plant Health
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Theme: Plant Health for Environmental Protection

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Plants make up 80% of the food we eat. They are essential for our health. And the health of plants depends on biodiversity.

Unfortunately, up to 40% of food crops are lost due to plant pests and diseases every year. This affects both agriculture and food security, and heavily impacts the incomes of vulnerable rural communities and economies. Soil-borne pathogens are one of the major biological causes of yield loss, by reducing the quality of fruits and vegetables and contributing to plant mortality.

Agricultural landscapes with low crop diversity and extensive use of chemical inputs tend to reduce biodiversity, including soil biodiversity, and, consequently, destabilize ecosystems. The oversimplification of agricultural ecosystems paves the way for invasive species and pathogenic organisms to prevail.

On the other hand, plants with a greater diversity of microbes in the vicinity of their roots and leaves – the “rhizosphere” and “phyllosphere” -- have greater resilience against pests and pathogens. And the abundance of pathogen-suppressive microorganisms is significantly greater in a diverse crop rotation compared to monocultures. In addition, soil biodiversity can be an important biocontrol agent through other interactions, such as competition, mutualism, and predatory relations with pests and pathogenic species. Moreover, ecosystems with more diversity are more resilient to invasive alien species.

Our planet is facing multiple planetary crises, by which plant health is directly impacted by pollution, water scarcity, climate change, and biodiversity loss. We must reverse these trends.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity at COP 15 in December 2022 aims to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and, by 2030, put biodiversity on a path to recovery.

We need to act now. The conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of biodiversity in agricultural landscapes is critical to achieve sustainability across productive sectors, especially in agri-food systems that rely so heavily on healthy plants.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework contains a target to reduce the impacts of invasive alien species and reduce their rates of introduction and establishment by at least 50 per cent by 2030. Another target aims to ensure the sustainable management of all agricultural areas, through biodiversity friendly practices, contributing to the resilience and long-term efficiency and productivity of these production systems.

Healthy plants can help to end hunger, improve nutrition, reduce poverty, protect biodiversity, and boost economic development. Our health and the health of our planet depend on plants and their ecosystems.

So, this International Day of Plant Health, I challenge you to learn about what you can do to support plant health and what you, your community, and your governments can do to urgently implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

I thank you.