



**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE
EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON PLANT HEALTH AWARENESS RAISING
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 22 JANUARY 2018**

1. Welcome and introduction of the participants of Member States and stakeholder representatives.

Representatives of 26 Member States with technical and/or communication experts, the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO) and – by audio connection - the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) were welcomed as permanent members of the Expert Group.

In addition, stakeholders were represented by EUROPATAT, European Nursery Association (ENA) and European Forestry Stock Association (EFNA), the European Palet Producers Association (FEFPEB), European Farmers Representatives COPA-COGECA, Ornamental Traders Association (UNION FLEURS) and the European Shipping Council (ESC).

2. Commission's objectives and expectations for the Working Group

The Commission explained the background for the creation of the expert Group: the proposal by the Maltese Presidency and the conclusions and request from the Council Working Party for Chief Officers for Plant Health (COPHs).

The Commission's objective is to foster knowledge sharing between Member States for implementation of national or regional awareness raising campaigns in the plant health sector.

EFSA explained its objective and initiatives regarding communication on science in the plant health domain, e.g. with references to its portal, special workshops and 2 video's on *Xylella*.

EPPO presented its existing activities in the awareness raising domain, e.g. with the poster for sea/airports and its templates for information sheets on specific diseases. EPPO also announced that an EPPO Standard on awareness raising on plant health is currently being developed.

3. Case study 1: sector sensibilisation for the risks of *Xylella fastidiosa* in the Union.

The Commission provided a general overview about the risks posed by *Xylella fastidiosa* for the Union territory and the legal obligations for Member States as regards awareness raising activities as part of Decision (EU) 2015/789. The communication activities at EU level were presented, including the high-level conference of Paris organised in December 2017, together with the French Authorities, to raise political awareness.

EFSA presented its communication activities on *Xylella fastidiosa*, including the conference

organised in Mallorca in November 2017 on research mapping.

Presentations were also given by a country where *Xylella* is present (France) and 2 countries (Portugal and Malta) where *Xylella* has not been found, for setting the scene for the discussion. They presented their communication activities in place as regards *Xylella fastidiosa*, involvement of stakeholders, and other ongoing initiatives aiming at raising awareness between different target groups about the risk posed by *Xylella fastidiosa*.

From stakeholders' side, Copa-Cogeca and ENA provided an overview of their ongoing activities among their member organisations, presenting the communication needs of operators. Suggestions to improve the current existing tools (like transparency on import interceptions from the EUROPHYT database) and to increase communication through an EU observatory on plant health with stakeholder's involvement were made. Moreover, it was also stated that not all nurseries and neither all traders and retailers are aware of the main plant health risks.

There was a broad support about the need of sharing good practices at EU level to avoid duplication of efforts and resources.

4. Case study 2: trade sensibilisation for the risks of wood packaging material in international trade

The European Commission gave a presentation on the current situation of the use of wood packaging material in international trade and on the interceptions on non-EU harmful organisms from trade partners, especially China.

Germany presented the actions taken to manage the phytosanitary risk of wood packaging material in trade, referring to the national provisions concerning import and export. Moreover, an overview of the communication activities was given, underlining the importance of public events such as the Green Week in Berlin and specific targeted actions toward traders, to raise awareness and consciousness on this phytosanitary risk.

Slovenia gave a presentation on their national activities towards trade sensibilisation for wood packaging material and highlighted the importance of EU activities in helping to pass the message as regards this phytosanitary problem. In fact Slovenia does not have a specialized communication office; for the activities and material for sensibilisation it mostly relies on what the EU and EPPO are doing.

During the presentation from FEFPEB support was expressed to the current emergency measures targeting China, although the effectiveness of those measures to reduce interceptions is questionable.

The differences in the implementation of ISPM15 rules within Europe (i.e. ISPM15 requirements for coniferous wood from Portugal but not from other Member States) represent a challenge for traders; the lack of harmonization is considered a weak point. Stronger legal actions against mark falsification are required. Wood is a renewable material that has a crucial role in the preservation of the environmental resources.

The ESC representative highlighted the need to deal with dunnage wood, because there are no clear rules on how it should be used. Awareness measures should include dunnage wood too.

Portugal made a remark on how strict are the requirements for their industry dealing with wood packaging material. Falsification of marks is a matter of high concern and it has a link with repaired wood pallets.

Portugal suggested the possibility to rediscuss a possible extension of the ISPM15 mark obligation to all Member States.

The Commission noted the remarks but suggested to discuss the technical issues with Plant health experts in the dedicated fora.

The Commission also informed on the ongoing discussion with China and on the importance of enforcement actions to avoid fraud. An exchange of views took place on how awareness raising activities could improve compliance with EU import conditions, rather than carrying out import inspections on wood packaging material arriving with all types of unregulated commodities.

5. Conclusions and next steps

It was concluded that the participation to the meeting was lively and satisfactory. For the 2 study cases it had been demonstrated that there is already a whole set of useful communication exercises. The importance to identify meticulously the audience in advance of the start of the communication campaign is called essential.

Participants were invited to send possible further comments by 22 February.

Next steps:

- the Commission will make the report available to all Member States and stakeholders;
- the Commission will develop a template for the collection of communication campaign examples;
- the Commission will investigate on how to create a platform for awareness raising in plant health where the examples can be posted;
- a further reflexion on next steps will be organised in advance of a following meeting of the Expert Group before the summer break 2018.