

NEED FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND GLOBAL COOPERATION

Communication from Pakistan

Revision

The following communication, received on 15 October 2012, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Pakistan.

1. Stem Rust is an old disease which has the potential to re-appear any time after long dormancy and destroy large fields of wheat in a short span of time. After dormancy of fifty years, the disease is in progression during the last few years and is a potential threat for wheat growing countries. Being a virulent disease, the causal organism (a fungus) keeps itself mutating hence resulting in a sudden resistance breakdown of the commercial cultivars against the new mutant race. Eight different strains¹ of the fungus causing the disease (Ug-99)² have been identified until now. This necessitates sustained surveillance and monitoring of the disease across the affected areas for timely identification of the new mutant form and to effectively develop its management strategy, including developing new resistant germplasm/varieties. Thus identification of new sources of resistance is a continuous practice. Ug-99 could reduce global wheat production by 60 million tons (FAO, Rome) and this may further inflate the prices of other foods.

2. The current challenge of highly virulent pathogens of Ug-99 in wheat growing areas of Africa, West Asia, Middle East, East Asia, South Asia and Central Asia has generated huge levels of global cooperation among these countries to put in place an effective coordinated national surveillance and research system, for which there is a need to allocate adequate resources for concerned nations. While ICARDA, CIMMYT, FAO, Borlaug Global Rust initiative (BGRI) Programme and several other organizations are involved in Ug-99 surveillance, developing Ug-99 resistant varieties, and its multiplication and distribution of seed to poor farmers, the role of IPPC in global surveillance has been minimal due to limited resources.

3. Keeping in view the serious implications of this pathogen on food security and future food prices, the resource allocation by the donor countries and technical assistance for its surveillance and allied research activities is of prime importance and need to be addressed effectively.

4. As a precautionary measure Pakistan has screened its wheat germplasm against the disease and have released resistant varieties during the last couple of years through the breeding programme. A fast track seed multiplication plan of the resistant varieties has been put in practice to ensure the cultivation of disease-free seeds, with the cooperation of BGRI and with the involvement of CIMMYT and ICARDA offices in Pakistan.

¹ <http://rusttracker.cimmyt.org/>.

² *Puccinia graminis f. sp. tritici*.

5. Though Pakistan is already an active partner to the Borlaug Global Rust Initiative (BGRI)³ programme, still there is a need to strengthen the national surveillance and coordination system with the aid of international stakeholders. High level of coordination with BGRI has granted protection to Pakistan against this threat, and Pakistan reiterates its commitment to the BGRI programme as this will not only address the food security issue for the 180 million people of Pakistan, but will also ensure future food security sustenance in this country.

6. IPPC has included this pathogen in the strategic framework as an example of pathogens not previously recorded in those areas and that could have a serious impact on food security. A regular update from IPPC on the status of UG-99 would be useful for Members.

7. One of the main IPPC strategic objectives for 2012-2019 is to "Protect sustainable agriculture and enhance global food security through the prevention of pest spread".⁴ An update on the IPPC activities, especially with reference to UG99, would be useful for the wheat growing countries.

³ <http://www.globalrust.org/traction/permalink/about2>.

⁴ CPM2012/08 Rev1.