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EA and EPPO continue their cooperation for accreditation of plant pest diagnostic laboratories

The development of robust quality management systems and the provision for accreditation are essential for laboratories around the world. Laboratories performing official diagnostics for regulated pests (insects, diseases etc.) need to achieve high quality standards because of the impact of their diagnosis on international trade, on the agricultural sector, and on the environment.

Many laboratories within the EPPO region are already accredited and there is an increase in applications for accreditation among plant pest diagnostic laboratories. It should be also mentioned that the Regulation EU 2017/625 stipulates that official control laboratories in the area of protection and protective measures against pests of plants have until the 29th of April 2022 to become accredited. Accreditation of plant pest diagnostic laboratories is based on ISO/IEC 17025 *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories* with additional guidance being provided in EPPO Standard PM 7/98 *Specific requirements for laboratories preparing accreditation for a plant pest diagnostic activity*. Accreditation is given by national accreditation bodies.

One of the principal aims of the **European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA)** consists of defining, harmonizing and building consistency in accreditation as a service in Europe by ensuring common interpretation of the standards used by its members notably ISO/IEC 17025.

The European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) is an intergovernmental organization responsible for European cooperation in plant protection in the European and Mediterranean region. Under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), EPPO is the regional plant protection organization (RPPO) for Europe. One of EPPO's fundamental roles is to encourage harmonization in all areas of official plant protection action. In this framework, since 1998, EPPO has established a work programme in the area of diagnostics which aims to harmonize procedures across the region by development of Standards. These are developed by involving many national experts and they are approved through a rigorous review and consultation process. These diagnostic Standards include pest-specific protocols for regulated pests as well as more general diagnostic Standards covering topics including quality assurance, accreditation, Interlaboratory comparison etc.

Cooperation between EA and EPPO started in September 2007 on the question of accreditation of plant pest diagnostic laboratories. EA experts participated in EPPO meetings (Workshop on Quality Assurance in December 2007, the Panel on Technical requirements of diagnostic laboratories, in January 2007 and July 2008, Workshop on Flexible Scope 2017) and helped develop and subsequently revise the Standards on accreditation of plant pest diagnostic laboratories. EPPO experts have since attended EA Laboratory Committee meetings.

EA and EPPO have already signed a recognized Stakeholder agreement on 3rd of February 2011 and in the framework of these agreement the two organization will continue the collaboration with emphasis given to the below mentioned areas:

- *EA and EPPO will continue to collaborate in order to promote and harmonize implementation of the revised ISO/IEC 17025 in plant pest diagnostic laboratories. Collaboration can include further development of guidelines by EPPO for the interpretation of criteria of ISO/IEC 17025 in the field of plant pest diagnostic laboratories.*
- *EA will continue to recommend that assessors from Accreditation Bodies take note of EPPO documents when evaluating plant pest diagnostic laboratories, EPPO being a reputable technical organization working for the development of diagnostic protocols to be used in plant pest diagnostic laboratories*
- *EA will recommend that the EPPO expertise network will be used by accreditation bodies to achieve their missions.*

European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA)

EA is the European network of nationally recognized accreditation bodies located in the European geographical area. EA is formally appointed by the European Commission in Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 to develop and maintain a multilateral agreement of mutual recognition, the EA MLA, based on a harmonized accreditation infrastructure.

For further details: <https://european-accreditation.org/>

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European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO)

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