

NGIA hails 2020 as International Year of Plant Health

22 February 2019 Nursery and Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) has welcomed the announcement by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) that 2020 will be the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH).

Announced by the UN General Assembly in Rome last year, the initiative will generate awareness among communities and governments about the importance of healthy, safe and productive plant crops.

NGIA National Biosecurity Manager John McDonald will join the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Steering Group to spearhead a calendar of events to celebrate IYPH in 2020.

Mr McDonald said the Steering Group would put the spotlight on plant industries and the need for a robust national and international plant health system.

“Plant health is top of mind for every grower, every day,” Mr McDonald said.

“The FAO has estimated that 40 per cent of global food crops are lost every year due to plant pests and disease.

“As the providers of young and mature plants into the food, fibre and foliage supply chains, the nursery industry is pleased to see this important issue on the global agenda.”

With Australian horticulture valued at almost \$9 billion, NGIA works with industry and government to fend off and prepare for exotic plant pests and diseases like Citrus Canker, Tomato Potato Psyllid and Xylella Fastidiosa.

“Known as one of the world’s most devastating plant diseases, Xylella is a bacteria that spreads by imported plants and insects, potentially infecting more than 350 plant species,” he said.

“Funded by Hort Innovation using industry levies and funds from the Australian Government, a number of biosecurity programs are underway to protect against, and prepare for, exotic plant pests and disease.

“One of these programs has resulted in the appointment of a standalone Xylella coordinator and a number of industry preparedness workshops, to help keep this devastating disease out of Australia.”

Mr McDonald said the Australian nursery industry was doing its part to secure a stronger, more sustainable future for growers.

“Our industry has a number of best practice schemes for growers to implement on farm, such as BioSecure HACCP, a program that supports high health plant production.

“It’s the first ever approved third party biosecurity scheme in Australia, which enables growers to mitigate biosecurity risks on farm and streamline their interstate trade across the country.”

Mr McDonald encouraged all Australians to join them in acknowledging the vital role that plants play in boosting our health and wellbeing during 2020.

“We look forward to engaging in the global conversation that IYPH will create around plant health and biosecurity,” he said.

“It’s a great opportunity to share the positive story of plants and their contribution to healthier, happier and more sustainable societies.”

Media contact Sophie Keatinge on 0430 938 515 or sophie.keatinge@coxinnall.com.au.