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# Veterinary and Phytosanitary Regulation Department

## Plant Health Directorate

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### I. BACKGROUND

The Plant Health Directorate is the National Plant Protection Organisation set up within the Veterinary and Phytosanitary Regulation Department within the Parliamentary Secretariat for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights and under the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change (MSDEC) to prevent the introduction into the community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products or their spread within the Community, in line with the Community's plant health regime, as established by Council Directive 2000/29/EC of 8 May 2000 on protective measures against the introduction into the Community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products and against their spread within the Community and its amendments. The general principles are based upon provisions laid down in the International Plant Protection Convention concluded at the United Nation Food and Agriculture Organisation and, in the World Trade Organisation Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

The Plant Health Directorate is also responsible to monitor the market of propagation material in the Maltese territory with the aim of having available in circulation high quality propagation and planting material. The Directorate also deals with plant variety rights and the conservation of plant genetic resources. The Plant Health Directorate also deals with services to the public in relation to soil and water testing.

### 2. INTRODUCTION

As in previous years, in 2015 the Plant Health Directorate (PHD) continued to implement measures for the prevention and spread of harmful organisms within the community.

The PHD persisted with its monitoring and inspections in Malta, Gozo and Comino to further control the spread of the Red Palm Weevil pest, also with the eradication of this pest through the felling of palm trees.

In 2015, the PHD also continued with its endeavours to continue following preventive steps for an effective control strategy against the *Tuta Absoluta* pest and the Fig Tree Borer and strictly monitor any outbreak of pests. Monitoring inspections and lab testing on citrus trees in Gozo and local nurseries were carried out in order to monitor the Citrus Tristeza Virus. In 2015, the Directorate has notified to the Commission new pests (*Apate monachus* on carob trees, TSWV on peppers and *Spilococcus mamillariae* on cactus plants).

During 2015, the PHD carried on with implementation of the project on conservation varieties through EAFRD (M214) which was finalised by December 2015.

### 3. LEGISLATION

In 2015, the Directorate has consulted stakeholders and registered MOR's on a number of EU Directives, and Decisions that have been adopted during this year which were transposed directly.

- LN 293 of 2015 - Plant Quarantine Act (Cap 433)  
Plant Quarantine (Harmful Organisms) (Amendment) Regulations, 2015  
Government Gazette of Malta No. 19,474 dated 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2015
- LN 294 of 2015 - Plant Quarantine Act (Cap 433)  
Seeds of Agricultural Plants and Vegetables (Amendment) Regulations, 2015  
Government Gazette of Malta No. 19,474 dated 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2015
- LN 375 of 2015 - Plant Quarantine Act (Cap 433)  
Examination of Varieties of Agricultural Plant Species (Amendment) Regulations, 2015  
Government Gazette of Malta No. 19,503 dated 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2015
- LN 376 of 2015 – Plant Quarantine Act (Cap 433)  
Examination of Varieties of Vegetable Species (Amendment) Regulations, 2015  
Government Gazette of Malta No. 19,503 dated 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2015
- LN 428 of 2015 - Plant Quarantine Act (Cap 433)  
Seeds of Agricultural Plants and Vegetables (Amendment No. 2) Regulations, 2015  
Government Gazette of Malta No. 19,516 dated 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2015

### 4. EU AFFAIRS

#### EU Reporting Obligations

Malta submitted the following reporting obligations to the EU:

- 2012/756/EU Commission Implementing Decision of 5 December 2012 as regards measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Union of *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *actinidiae* Takikawa, Serizawa, Ichikawa, Tsuyumu & Goto .
- 2013/413/EU Commission Implementing Decision of 30 July 2013 authorising Member States to provide for derogations from certain provisions of Council Directive 2000/29/EC in respect of potatoes, other than potatoes intended for planting, originating in the regions of Akkar and Bekaa of Lebanon.

- Commission Decision 2007/365/EC and amendments on emergency measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Community of *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus* (Olivier).
- Commission Implementing Decision EU 2015/226 of 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015 amending Implementing Decision 2012/535/EU as regards the definition of susceptible wood and measures to be taken in demarcated areas (notified under document C(2015) 645. Commission Implementing Decision of 26 September 2012 on emergency measures to prevent the spread within the Union of *Bursaphelenchus xylophilus* (Steiner et Buhrer) Nickle et al. (the pine wood nematode).
- Council Directive 2000/29/EC and amendments on protective measures against the introduction into the Community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products and against their spread within the Community.
- Council Directive 2007/33/EC of 11 June 2007 on the control of potato cyst nematodes and repealing Directive 69/465/EEC.
- Commission Regulation 1756/2004 on reduced frequency inspections.
- Commission Implementing Decision 2012/270/EU of 16 May 2012 as regards emergency measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Union of *Epitrix cucumeris* (Harris), *Epitrix similis* (Gentner), *Epitrix subcrinita* (Lec.) and *Epitrix tuberis* (Gentner) amended by Commission Decision 2014/679.
- 2013/92/EU Commission Implementing Decision on the supervision, plant health checks and measures to be taken on wood packing material actually in use in the transport of specified commodities originating in China.
- Commission Decision 2012/138/EC on emergency on emergency measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Community of *Anoplophora chinensis* (Forster).
- Council Directives 93/85/EEC and 98/57/EEC and their amendments re: Brown rot and Ring rot.
- Commission Implementing Decision 2013/780/EU of 18 December 2013 providing for a derogation from Article 13(1)(ii) of Council Directive 2000/29/EC in respect of bark-

free sawn wood of *Quercus* L., *Platanus* L. and *Acer saccharum* Marsh. originating in the United States of America (notified under document C(2013) 9166).

- Commission Decision 2002/499/EC and Decision 2002/887/EC and amendments on authorising derogations from certain provisions of Council Directive 2000/29/EC in respect of naturally or artificially dwarfed plants of *Chamaecyparis* Spach, *Juniperus* L. and *Pinus* L., originating in the Republic of Korea and Japan respectively.
- Commission Implementing Decision (2011/787/EU) of 29 November 2011 authorising Member States temporarily to take emergency measures against the dissemination of *Ralstonia solanacearum* (Smith) Yabuuchi et al. as regards Egypt.
- Commission Decision 2003/63/EC and amendments 2005/649 Commission Decision (potatoes from Cuba).
- Commission Directive 2008/61/EC and amendments (material for research).
- Commission Decision 2004/200/EC on measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Community of Pepino mosaic virus.
- Commission Decision 2002/757/EC as amended by Commission Decisions 2004/426/EC & 2007/201/EC on provisional emergency phytosanitary measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Community of *Phytophthora ramorum* Werres, De Cock & Man in 't Veld sp. nov. (notified under document number C(2002) 3380).
- Commission Decision 2003/248, 2003/249 and subsequent amendments in Chile and Republic of S Africa and if so the information on quantities of plants imported pursuant to this Decision; and a detailed technical report of the official inspections and testing referred to in point 5 of the Annex.
- Commission Decision 2007/433/EC on provisional emergency measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Community of *Gibberella circinata* Nirenberg & O'Donnell.
- Commission Decision 2005/51/EC authorising Member States temporarily to provide for derogations from certain provisions of Council Directive 2000/29/EC in respect of the importation of soil contaminated by pesticides or persistent organic pollutants for decontamination purposes (notified under document number C(2005) 92).

- Commission Decision 2004/416/EC of 29 April 2004 on temporary emergency measures in respect of certain citrus fruits originating in Brazil.
- Commission Implementing Decision (2012/697/EU) of 8 November 2012 as regards measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Union of the genus *Pomacea* (Perry) (notified under document C(2012) 7803).
- Commission Implementing Decision (2014/422/EU) of 2nd July 2014 setting out measures in respect of certain citrus fruits originating in South Africa to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Union of *Phyllosticta citricarpa* (McAlpine) Van.
- Commission Implementing Decision (2015/789/EU) of 18 May 2015 as regards measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Union of *Xylella fastidiosa* (Well and Raju) (notified under document C (2014) 5082) .

## 5. MULTILATERAL, INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Plant Health Directorate continued to respond to questionnaires, documentation, working documents, protocols, standards and take part in consultations on draft standards and other items circulated for members' opinion by the International Plant Protection Convention Office (IPPC), the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO), the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), the European and Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

The Plant Health Directorate continued to participate in a number of national committees including the Scientific and Technical Committee, Farm Advisory Service Registration Board, Plant Protection Board, the Food Safety Commission, the National Accreditation Board, The Red Palm Weevil Commission and had various consultations with EU Affairs and MEPA

### Parliamentary Questions

During 2015, the Plant Health Directorate received thirty-four (34) Parliamentary Questions. These mainly focused on carob trees and *Apatte Monachus* pest; felling and cutting of trees; palm trees and red palm weevil; fig and mulberry trees; fruit trees; *Tuta Absoluta* on tomatoes; importation and storage of agricultural products; Micropropagation centre; dead trees; tree embellishment; staff and advertising.

Twelve (12) of the PQ's received were not relevant to the PHD.

### Website of the Plant Health Directorate

In 2015, the Plant Health Directorate's website was revamped in liaison with the CIO's office in an exercise to migrate all present websites to new ones. The process of updating all the website's contents and information is in its final stages.

## **6. Monitoring and Control Unit**

### **Monitoring and Surveys**

As in previous years, in 2015, the Plant Health Directorate continued its programme of annual surveys/monitoring to assess the local situation with respect to emerging pests. The monitoring and testing of certain quarantine and harmful organisms is also regulated by Council Decisions and Directives.

During 2015 a total of 78 surveys/monitoring plus monitoring of other harmful organisms that arise from time to time were carried out in relation to the following areas of diagnosis – virology, bacteriology, mycology, entomology, and nematology covering approximately 1352.07 hectares during which a total of 2,302 samples/traps were collected as indicated in Annex 1. These samples were then forwarded to the Plant Health Diagnostic Laboratories for analysis.

### **Control of Red Palm Weevil**

The control against the Red Palm Weevil ensued as in previous years. Continuous monitoring and inspection of palm trees, felling and monitoring of pheromone traps was carried out in Malta, Gozo and also Comino. Such monitoring and control measures resulted in the pest still being active but under control.

### ***Tuta Absoluta***

As in the previous years, in 2015 the Plant Health Directorate continued with its efforts to control the *Tuta absoluta* pest. The dissemination of information and further education about this pest continued through direct contact with tomato growers during the monitoring inspections for *Tuta absoluta* in marketplaces, greenhouses and fields. However unfortunately, in June and July tuta absoluta was very active in the summer tomato crop resulting in a number of open field tomato crops having very low quantity of quality tomato production or none at all.

### ***Fig tree Borer (Hypocryphalus scabricollis)***

Monitoring of local fig trees was ongoing during 2015, with inspections carried out in open fields following reports by farmers. Information and control measures were disseminated through information leaflets and direct contact with growers during inspections or through customer care. An Action Plan for the control of this borer was drawn up.

## **7. SEEDS AND OTHER PROPAGATION MATERIAL**

### ***Production and marketing of plant material by nurseries and suppliers***

During 2015, sixty (60) annual/follow-up inspections and five (5) palm inspections were carried out by the SPMU together with the Surveillance and Inspectorate Unit (SIU) on plant

material being produced and/or marketed in the Maltese Islands. The SPMU also carried out seventeen (17) field inspections in connection to the production of cereal and fodder plant seeds. Registration of new seed sellers with the PHD was held by SIU following inspections. Together with these inspections, the members of the SPMU also took part in the pest survey program. The necessary administrative work was carried out such as updates to databases, registration of new producers/sellers, etc. The SPMU also worked on the checklists and forms for its inspections, checklists with critical control points, templates of inspection reports and notifications for inspections at registered sellers/producers' premises which needed some updates.

The SPMU carried out technical/administrative duties and when appropriate, was in communication with other PHD units and relevant stakeholders mainly on the following topics in 2015:

### ***Common bunt***

The SPMU continued to work on the following issues in connection with the fungal disease common bunt - possible treatment and control on wheat, information provided by EU Member States and other countries/entities on the standards and any treatments of grain applied by such countries. Visits to all registered local cereal seed producers and sellers were carried out and common bunt was found in one sample that was submitted for seed purity analysis. The necessary actions were taken and advice was provided to the cereal seed producer in order to limit the possibility for the disease to spread. Wheat plant samples were collected from a field and sent for health analysis. Common bunt was not found to be present.

### ***Seed potatoes***

Communication was held between the SIU, MCU and SPMU regarding problems encountered with introduced seed potatoes at the end of 2015, possible causes, correlation with national legislation provisions and labelling/origin/varieties in question of such potatoes.

### ***Importation of plant material***

Checks were held in connection with the importation of various varieties of seeds of vegetables. Checks of varietal names in the EU Common Catalogues were carried out and updates on varieties that are in the process of being registered were also done. Information was also provided in cases of consignments of seeds exceeding two kilograms, the use of vegetable varieties for rootstock production, and seeds of varieties to be used for trials. The SPMU carried out work on a seed importation case where labelling of the varieties seemed to be fraudulent. The case was analysed seriously, varieties found in the package were compared and research about the country of origin was done. All information was submitted to the SIU.

### ***Registration of varieties***

Communication continued with the relevant PHD units and a local supplier on the registration of a squash variety in the national and EU Common Catalogue of varieties by such local supplier. Communication was also held with the Italian authorities with regards to distinctness, uniformity and stability testing supposedly being carried out in Italy on this particular squash variety and with the third party interested in registering the variety.

### ***Local onion trial***

Communication was held between the SPMU and the Diversification and Competitiveness Directorate (DCD) about the local onion varietal selection trial. Various meetings were also

held between the two entities about the production and marketing of local onion seedlings. Photos of the status of the field trial were taken and a decision on the continuation of the trial was evaluated after reviewing the OECD guidelines and the events that happened. It was decided that the past trial is stopped. The SPMU discussed the way forward on the local onion varietal selection trail which shall once again start next year and on the production/marketing of onion seedlings by DCD. The SPMU provided information on the national legislation on the marketing of vegetable propagation and planting material excluding seeds.

### **Local seed production**

The SPMU gathered all reports of each local seed producer and trader that were issued by the SPMU after conducting seed purity tests in connection with Agri-Environmental Measures 3 (AEM3) of the Rural Development Programme from 2009 onwards. Comparison was made between the annual seed purity results and the standards stated in the Legal Notice 331 of 2010 on the production and marketing of seeds of agricultural plants. The SPMU carried out visits at local cereal and fodder plant seed producers that sell seeds at national level. The basis for these visits is to gather information and knowledge on the local cereal and fodder seed production and on the fungal disease known as common bunt. During these visits, the SPMU provided relevant information to the seed producers.

The SPMU communicated with the producers/sellers of cereal seeds that: had seeds of the weed *Lolium temulentum* in the samples they submitted for seed purity testing by the SPMU, and also mentioned the Legal Notice on seeds; had the seed purity levels (2014) less than that specified in the national Legal Notice; and those that needed to indicate the variety and the category of the seed, when testing for seed purity. This was done by a signed letter and an email of the scanned letter. The scanned copy was saved in the SPMU internal files.

### **Organic seed**

The SPMU held discussions with AD on the establishment of the Maltese organic seed database, the information that needs to be collected in connection with Chapter 7 & especially Article 51 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 889/2008 and the stage reached by the national Legal Notice on organic production and labelling of organic products (in which there is a reference to the PHD's role on the seed database). Searches were made by the SPMU on the internet in order to collect information on how organic seed databases of other EU Member States are and the SPMU commenced the drafting of the Maltese database of seed and seed potatoes obtained by the organic production method available on the Maltese territory as per the above mentioned Regulation.

The SPMU reviewed communications between AD and a particular local importer regarding the importation of organic seeds in Malta for personal use.

### **Trade licenses**

The SPMU continued working on the issue of trade licenses and organized an internal PHD meeting as well as a meeting with the Environmental Health Directorate regarding the topic.



### ***Fruit trees***

The SPMU was in frequent communication with the Surveillance and Inspectorate Unit (SIU) on the present situation on the labelling, controls, certification and marketing of citrus propagation material/trees belonging to various categories (especially CAC) that is obtained from other EU Member States and that is available on the Maltese market. The findings of the annual inspections by the SPMU and SIU were discussed. The SPMU reviewed all communications that were sent to the local suppliers by the SIU on the above matters. The SPMU continued communication with the Agriculture Directorate and the SIU regarding the labelling and certification of citrus trees which are being marketed at the government nursery. Queries also arose with regards to citrus trees being sold as ornamental plants without any certification and with the problem that these could also be infected with harmful organisms. The SPMU provided to the SIU the requirements to be met by these trees in accordance to the national legislation on the marketing of propagation material of ornamentals.

### ***Agri-environmental-measures and rural development funds***

As regards the PHD EAFRD project funded under measure 214 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 on the support for the conservation of genetic resources in agriculture, the SPMU carried out a lot of administrative and technical work. More information is found in this report. (please vide 12. Projects)

The SPMU reviewed the draft letter that shall be sent by the Paying Agency to all farmers that have applied for financial aid under agri-environmental measure 3 of the Rural Development Programme. The SPMU is involved in seed purity testing with respect to this measure.

One application for the registration of old trees was emended by a farmer during 2015 in connection with agri-environmental measure 9 of the Rural Development Programme that provides financial aid on old fruit trees that are in danger of genetic erosion. The SPMU updated the form and guidelines that are used for the registration of old fruit trees with the PHD mainly in connection with agri-environmental measure 9 of the Rural Development Programme.

### ***Seed Testing Laboratory***

In 2015, the Seed Testing Laboratory continued seed testing for purity determination. This is being carried out in connection with the use of high quality local seeds of cereals and fodder plants for which financial aid is being given to local farmers under agri-environmental measure 3 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. During the same test, the presence of the fungal disease, common bunt is checked for. The number of samples received by the laboratory during the year 2015 was 134 commencing from July to November of 2015, with the same amount of tests carried out.

### ***Characterisation of Fruit Trees***

During 2015 various visits were carried out at different locations for the characterisation of local Citrus and Babinella trees. 2 visits were carried out at San Anton Gardens, 2 visits were carried out at a privet garden in Siggiewi, another 2 visits were carried out at Santa Venera and another 2 visits were carried out at SVDPN for the Babinella plants. During these visits, branches, flowers, leaves and fruit samples were collected and characterised according to the CPVO protocols. Another visit was also carried out at Rabat where a Fig tree was located and various branches were collected for further micropropagation.

## Tissue Culture Lab

### Micropropagation of Ornamental plants

In 2015, micropropagation of ornamental plants, namely Boston ferns and African violets, was continued which necessitated regular transfers. During this year, a total of 235 Boston ferns and 384 African violet plantlets were produced and acclimatised in the glass house. Attempts at *in vitro ex situ* conservation of local tulips and orchids was terminated this year while regular globe artichoke transfers were carried out between March and July, however this project has also been terminated. Various trials were once again carried out on seeds belonging to the locally grown *Galletta*, green leopard plant (*Farfugium japonicum*). Such trials proved moderately successful as most seeds failed to germinate, however 2 seeds did germinate. The trial therefore moved on to the multiplication and rooting stages and an acclimatisation trial was carried out on a total of 40 plantlets. Such project will be continued during the coming year.

### Micropropagation of Fruit trees

A trial on the multiplication of the fig tree, *Ficus carica*, was carried out. Unfortunately such trial was not successful as all 47 buds utilised were infected with bacteria. Further trials will therefore be carried out during the following year.

### Sanitation of local varieties

Clonal selection and sanitation of local citrus species through somatic embryogenesis was continued throughout the year 2015 at the Tissue Culture Lab. The trials which had commenced on three local lemon varieties and three local orange varieties in the year 2013 were continued as was the trial which had commenced during the year 2012 on three local lemon varieties. The aim of such trials was to attempt to valorise local citrus varieties. During this year trials on acclimatisation of the citrus plantlets obtained through somatic embryogenesis was continued, however the quantities of available plantlets decreased as production of somatic embryos ceased. During the year a total of 310 lemon plantlets were transferred from the above-mentioned lab to the glasshouse for acclimatisation. As reported in scientific papers, the orange trees have proven to be more difficult to work with so much so that a total of 2 orange plantlets were transferred to the glasshouse for acclimatisation.

As part of the project, training has been carried out both in Malta by a Spanish expert in the field of citrus sanitation via micro-grafting as well as in Palermo by an expert in the field of citrus sanitation via somatic embryogenesis. Following discussions during such training the project will be continued during the following year.

## 9. LABORATORIES

### Lab quality systems

#### LIMS – Laboratory Information Management System:

No further discussions were held on the LIMS system in 2015.

### Plant Health Diagnostic Unit

The diagnostic laboratories within the Plant Health Directorate are responsible for the detection and identification of plant diseases caused by plant pests and pathogens with special reference to Council Directive 2000/29/EC and the Plant Quarantine Act and its amendments. Diagnostic techniques implemented in the laboratories are in accordance with EU Directives and EPPO standards where applicable.

During 2015 the EAFRD first floor laboratory extension was completed and the laboratory furniture was assembled. All of the laboratory equipment ordered as part of the EAFRD project, were delivered, even though some are not yet commissioned. The laboratories are now equipped with a modern Real-time PCR technology, Growth chamber, a new biological safety cabinet and a new chemical storage cabinet, for the safety storage of volatile chemicals. Some minor works are still required, and these are envisaged to be completed by the first half of 2016. The mycology, nematology and entomology section have now been structurally assimilated within the premises in Lija.

Considering the increase in the amount of samples to be tested at the PHDU, it was necessary to issue a tender document for the outsourcing of diagnostic testing, to meet up with the testing requirements for newly emergent organisms, falling under the EU emergency measures. In 2015 tender Ref.73/2015 of MSDEC/AGRIC/398.2014 for the diagnosis of Plant Pests and diseases was published. The only bids received for this tender document was that of entomology testing and no bids were received for bacteriology, virology and other testing. It was therefore necessary to make another re-issue, e-Tender MSDEC Advert 131/2015(a) – Tender for Diagnosis of Plant Pests and Diseases and this e-tender is still under evaluation.

In 2015 a total of 1825 samples were received at the lab and a total number of 1794 were tested in relation to the following areas of diagnosis – virology, bacteriology, mycology, entomology, and nematology. Some samples that were delivered in 2015 are still pending for testing. A more detailed breakdown of the number of samples collected and tested in relation to the target organism and the number of positive or suspect samples detected can be found in Annex 1.

## **9. LABORATORIES**

### ***Laboratory management and quality management system***

The laboratories within the PHD gathered and compiled information for a Government Laboratories Survey as requested by the Management Efficiency Unit (OPM). The Survey is intended to capture the available data regarding the services provided by government-owned laboratories on the Maltese Islands.

The draft Cabinet memo and draft Legal Notice pertaining to the introduction of Fees on Laboratory Services provided by the Plant Health Directorate were updated during 2015. Further discussions will be carried out in 2016 on the possible introduction of such fees.

During 2015, the ISO/IEC 17025 Gap analysis document prepared for the plant health diagnostic laboratories in 2012 was updated to reflect the current situation, for eventual accreditation of the diagnostic laboratories.

## Soil and Irrigation Water Laboratory

The main aim of the Soil and Irrigation Water Laboratory is to provide a service to farmers and the general public through the testing of soil and irrigation water in support of fertiliser planning and irrigation control.

In 2015, the laboratory received a total of 658 samples which consisted of 508 soil samples and 150 water samples and conducted a total of 3270 tests. These tests include routine and non-routine analysis for various nutrients and characteristics of soil as well as irrigation water quality.

### 10. ADVISORY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Four press releases were published during 2015:

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic addressed</u>
PR 150058	14 <sup>th</sup> January, 2015	Press Release concerning The Olive Quick Decline Syndrome (OQDS) ( <i>Xylella Fastidiosa</i> )
PR 150314	17 <sup>th</sup> February, 2015	Press Release regarding the insect pest found of carob trees and grapevines, <i>Apate Monachus Fabricius</i> , 1775
PR150633	25 <sup>th</sup> March, 2015	Plant Health Directorate: Guidelines for the use of palm fronds on the occasion of Palm Sunday
PR 151746	30 <sup>th</sup> July, 2015	Notice regarding palm fronds used by fishermen during <i>Lampuki</i> season

A video clip about *Xylella Fastidiosa* was produced and aired consecutively on the three top local TV stations and also uploaded on social media for wider audience coverage informing the general public about this type of bacteria and also advising not to bring back plants when travelling abroad. *Xylella Fastidiosa* has been causing devastation in Italy primarily on olive trees and has been affecting other parts of Europe. Relative leaflets have also been printed accordingly to further enhance such campaign.

This awareness campaign ties with and compliments the EPPO Don't Risk it Campaign launched in the previous years about the risks involved when travelers bring back plants or any plant material which could be infested without any visible signs, posing a risk to our local plants. A contract entered with the Valletta Cruise Terminal displaying the EPPO Don't Risk it poster is still ongoing and will still be for the coming year.

### 10. ADVISORY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

During 2015, the Plant Health Directorate continued to assist farmers and the general public on a number of phytosanitary issues. Most queries are resolved by the telephone, by email and others investigated on site and samples taken if and when necessary.

Two press releases were published during 2015:

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic addressed</u>
	February	Press Release on <i>Apate monachus</i>
	March	Guidelines for palms to be used during Palm Sunday (Ħadd il-Palm)
	April	Guidelines on the enforcement actions in relation to the import of plant material from Italy and the risk of entry of <i>Xylella fastidiosa</i>
	October	Information on fig tree action plan and project

A number of leaflets, communications and articles on Nisget Artna magazine on plant health, pests and diseases of local importance were also updated and published during this year as part of PHD's continuous dissemination of information.

The Directorate also took on board the EPPO don't risk it campaign, in order to create awareness amongst passengers/travellers about the possibility of transmission of pests and diseases in personal luggage.

PHD Officials also participated in a number of radio programmes with regards to (i) *Apate monachus* (ii) Potato Scab (iii) Tuta absoluta (iv) Red Palm weevil / fishing season (v) *Xylella fastidiosa* risk with plant material brought by passengers

During 2015, the Plant Health Directorate has organised informative talks, meetings and presentations on plant health in general as part of ongoing awareness, informative and educational campaigns. The PHD also liaised with Local Councils for a more effective dissemination of information. PHD also took part in events organised by Nature Trust and Ekoskola by disseminating presentations and information to students regarding plant pests and risks.

Five (5) students from MCAST carried out a work experience within the various units of the Plant Health Directorate.

Six (6) University students and one (1) student from Sixth Form also carried out their summer work experience with the PHD.

## **10. ADVISORY AND INFORMATION SERVICES**

Assistance and supervision was given by the Soil and Irrigation Water Lab officials to third parties and a student who used the facilities of these laboratories in order to conduct soil testing in preparation of EU/local projects and dissertations.

A group of students from MCAST visited the Soil and Irrigation Water Lab. A general overview of the work carried out in such laboratory was given by lab officials.

An MCAST and a Sixth Form student carried out work experience at the Soil and Irrigation Water Lab for a period of time.

The Soil and Irrigation Water Lab hosted a foreign student as part of an interchange programme for a period of time. Hands on training were given by lab officials. Another foreign student visited the Soil and Irrigation Water Lab as part of an internship programme.

Officers at the Soil and Irrigation Water Lab carried out considerable amount of work in relation to the adjudication of Tenders and Quotations for the Project on the Study and Sustainable Conservation of Varieties of Local Plants.

## **12. PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY CENTRE MANAGEMENT**

### **FACILITIES MANAGEMENT**

In 2015, several maintenance works and services were carried out at the PBC premises (*Tal-Kmand, Lija*) related to the upkeep of the laboratories, offices, glasshouses and ancillary equipment.

Throughout the year routine work such as general cleaning, cleaning of benches and pots, application of pesticides and fertilisers, weeding, pruning and propagation were carried out in the glasshouses, screen houses, shade house, mother block and outdoor areas. Routine works for the up keeping of the PBC grounds formed also part of the work carried out, including general cleaning and maintenance, caring of the various plants and trees situated around the premises, weeding and cultivation of fields. A continuous production of herbaceous indicator and indexing plants for virus diagnosis was continued throughout the whole year. The production and upkeep of herbaceous indicator mother plants which are kept for seed collection was also continued during 2015. Cucumbers and tomatoes were sown to be used for mechanical transmission. *Phaseolus vulgaris*, *Chenopodium quinoa* and *Chenopodium amaranticolor* were also sown in 2015.

Ornamental plants were continually cared for with regular applications of insecticides where necessary to control pests. Continuous conventional propagation of various ornamental plants was also carried out within the glass house. Other work consisted in the acclimatisation of plantlets. In all the following plantlets were transferred from in-vitro lab 235 Ferns, 312 Citrus plantlets, 42 Farugium japonicum and 384 African violets transferred from the Tissue Culture laboratory amounting to 973 plantlets.

The screen houses containing healthy and infected plants/trees required regular irrigation, pruning, weeding, application of pesticides and drenching with fungicides for the control of pests and fungal diseases. During this year one of the healthy screen houses was divided into two as part of the EAFRD project which was implemented throughout 2015.

## **SALE AND DONATION OF PLANTS**

In 2015, the PHD sold a total of 8 plants amounting to €49. In addition, a total of 535 ornamental plants were donated to various entities of the Ministry, governmental organisations and other non-governmental organisations. Moreover, 179 plants were lent to various governmental and non-governmental organisations for the various activities held throughout the year.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT WITHIN THE PBC**

During 2015, the Risk Assessment which had already commenced within the PBC continued to be implemented and monitored as necessary as in previous years.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Various consultation and periodical meetings between Director General VPRD, Director PHD, FMMU, contractors, mechanical and electrical engineers, project manager, project administrator and architects took place in 2015 regarding ongoing works on the new building and visitors' centre in connection with the project on the conservation of local varieties through the EARFD. (Please vide 11. Projects). Other meetings, consultations and coordinating of work regarding the preparation for the publication of various tenders in connection with the EAFRD project also took place during 2015.

Works regarding the upgrade of the Climatic Control of the Propagation Facility at the PBC have continued in 2015. Following the installation a new system, replacing the previous one, purchasing of a PC and installation of the required software, the glass house was equipped with the automation of the shading system and the shading net was also replaced. The installation of a closed loop system has commenced during 2015. This upgrade was made during through the EAFRD Project.

During 2015, an energy performance certification was obtained for the new building at the PHD. Works were commissioned to Ing Therese Attard following a call for quotations. The rating of the new building was 71 with a B class grade. Recommendations were given by the engineer to improve the buildings' rating.

All construction works related to Lab Extension including finishing works were concluded during 2015. Works included repair of all damages that were done during the construction period such as vinyl flooring in the DCU laboratory.

Works on the waterproofing at the lab extension was done. These included removal of old membrane and apply new liquid membrane which is also heat reflective.

Lab furniture which was stored at Ghammieri was transferred to PHD. This furniture was at first stored in the anti-room of the glasshouse. Furniture was assembled in the Lab extension and new seed lab at the new building.

FMMU staff were involved both in the drafting of tender documents, tender specifications and in the evaluation process. These tenders were part of the EAFRD project.

## **14. OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE**

### **Services for Laboratory Diagnosis**

During 2015, PHD officials were involved in drafting of specifications and adjudication of a tender for laboratory testing services in the diagnosis of plant pests and diseases. Two tenders were issued in 2015 and published in the Government Gazette, as detailed hereunder:

- MSDEC Advt. No. 73/2015 - Tender for the Diagnosis of Plant Pests and Diseases to the Plant Health Directorate
- MSDEC Advt. No. 131/2015 - Tender for the Diagnosis of Plant Pests and Diseases to the Plant Health Directorate (e-tender)

### **Plant Health Management System**

In 2015, the Plant Health Directorate embarked on the development of a Plant Health Management System to store and manage data collected during the project “Study and Sustainable Conservation of varieties of local plants”. This system was developed with facilities to manage the catalogues of the trees, plants and vegetable crops of genetic importance that are being carried out by the PHD. The Plant Health Directorate also requested a system with separate modules that will enable extraction of the latest information from the Farmer Registry and the Nitrates Registry when carrying out controls for commodities to check harmful organisms. A separate module in the system also caters for registered activities (MORs).

During the setting up of the Plant Health Management system, PHD officials were involved in establishing the specific requirements of such a system, discussions with the supplier, training and testing of the system during 2015.

## **14. OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE**

### **Procurement**

The following is a list of tenders as published on the Government Gazette during 2015:

#### **Tenders/Quotations published during January 2015:**

- Advt. No. MSDEC 7/2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of one fume cupboard, one biosafety cabinet, one cupboard for the storage of chemicals, one ice making machine, one analytical balance and one balance table for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants



- Advt. No. MSDEC 8/2015. Supply and delivery of trees to be used as biological indicators or as rootstocks for grafting of sanitised plants for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants
- Advt. No. 9/2015. Purchase of environmentally friendly field equipment for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants
- Advt. No. 10/2015. Grafting service for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants
- Advt. No. 11/2015. Services of two handymen for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants
- Advt. No. 12/2015. Technical expertise on diagnostic testing for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants
- Advt. No. MSDEC 14/2015. Upgrade of a plant growth room and a plant thermotherapy room using environmentally friendly materials at the Plant Biotechnology Centre, Hal Lija for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 15/2015. Services of an educational material creator and coordinator for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- A stationery request form was filled and sent to PHD Administration Unit stating the average stationery required by SPMU for the coming six months.

**Tenders/Quotations published during February 2015:**

- Advt. No. MSDEC 17 /2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of an Ultra Freezer for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants

### **Tenders/Quotations published during March 2015:**

- Quot. No. MSDEC 8 of 2015. Technical expertise on In Vitro Propagation and Plant Acclimatisation Techniques for the Project on the Study and Sustainable Conservation of varieties of local plants
- Quot. No. MSDEC 9 of 2015. Services of Expert on Geographic Information System (GIS) at the PBC Lija
- Quot. No. MSDEC 10 2015. Supply and delivery of chemicals and consumable for diagnosis for the Project on the Study and Sustainable Conservations of varieties of local plants.
- MSDEC Advt. No. 26/2015. Supply and delivery of trees to be used as biological indicators or as rootstocks for grafting of sanitized plants for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.

### **Tenders/Quotations published during April 2015:**

- Quot. No. MSDEC 15/2015. Supply and laying of granite to external staircase for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Quot. No. MSDEC 17/2015. Supply and delivery of testing kits for diagnosis.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 18/2015. Service of a receptionist for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 38/2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of equipment for a seed testing laboratory receptionist for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Quot. No. MSDEC 33/2015. Technical expertise on invitro propagation and plant acclimatization techniques for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of local plants.
- Quot. No. MSDEC 36 of 2015. Supply of a backdrop for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants
- Quot. No. MSDEC 37 of 2015. Supply and delivery of two rotary cultivators and a

trailer for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants

- Advt. No. MSDEC 39/2015. Supply and installation of galvanized steel railings for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 40/2015. Technical expertise on laboratory accreditation for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 41/2015. Design, printing and delivery of leaflets, billboards, booklets and the design and logo and website for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 42/2015. Supply, delivery and installation of labels and information panels for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 43/2015. Conduction of confirmation test for various viruses on citrus plants for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 44/2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of seed germination chambers for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 45/2015. Supply and laying of culverts and imprinted concrete for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 46/2015. Technical expertise on identification, inventorying and conservation of plant genetic resources for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 47/2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of LED screens, interactive projector, blue-ray DVD player, and energy efficient touchscreen computers for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 48/ 2015. Repair and point of existing wall for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.

- Advt. No. MSDEC 49/2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of laboratory furniture for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 50/2015. Supply and installation of an automatic drip irrigation system for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 51/2015. Supply, installation and commissioning of closed loop air conditioner for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.

**Tenders/Quotations published during May 2015:**

- Quot. No. MSDEC 38/2015. Supply and laying of granite to external staircase for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants
- Quot. No. MSDEC 45 2015. Supply and delivery of chemicals, consumables and other items for the project on the study sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants (May 2015)
- Quot. No. MSDEC 46 2015. Services of two handymen for the project on the study sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants (May 2015)
- Quot. No. MSDEC 47 2015. Supply, installation and commissioning of PA system handymen for the project on the study sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants (May 2015)
- Quot. No. MSDEC 48 2015. Supply and delivery of field equipment for the project on the study sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants (May 2015)
- Advt. No. MSDEC 60 2015. Technical Expertise on diagnostic testing for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 61 2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of equipment and supply of chemicals for the germination/purity/viability testing for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 62 2015. Grafting service for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.

- Advt. No. MSDEC 63 2015. Technical expertise on identification, inventorying and conservation of plant genetic resources for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 64/2015. Technical expertise on lab accreditation for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 65/2015. Supply of environmentally friendly mulch, pots and potting material for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 66/2015. Supply, installation and commissioning of new shading material system for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 67/2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of photovoltaic system for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Quot No. MSDEC 52 2015. Catering service for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants
- Advt. No. MSDEC 71 2015. Technical expertise on quality assurance and quality management in seed sampling and testing and lab accreditation.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 72 2015. Supply, delivery and installation of environmentally friendly office furniture for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 74 2015. Supply of software for interactive white boards for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 75 2015. Upgrade of the insect screen house and the Plant Biotechnology Centre, Hal Lija for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 73 2015. Diagnosis of plant pests and diseases to the Plant Health Directorate.

### **Tenders/Quotations published during June 2015:**

- Quot. No. MSDEC 62 2015. Supply and delivery of a multifunctional colour laser printer for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Quot. No. MSDEC 63 2015. Supply and delivery of publications for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 83 2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of LED screens, interactive projector, blue-ray DVD player, and energy efficient touchscreen computers for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.(June 2015 2nd issue)
- Advt. No. MSDEC 84 2015. Supply and commission of network equipment for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 86 2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of an environmentally friendly kitchenette, reception, media centre and conference hall furniture for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of local plants.

### **Tenders/Quotations published during July 2015:**

- Advt. No. MSDEC 95 2015. Upgrade of the insect screen house at the Plant Biotechnology Centre, Hal Lija for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 98 2015. Technical expertise on quality assurance and quality Management in seed sampling and testing and lab accreditation.
- Advt. No. MSDEC 67 2015. Supply and delivery of publications for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants
- Advt. No. MSDEC 102 2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of seed laboratory equipment and the supply and delivery of containers for seed conservation for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.

- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 69 2015. Supply and delivery of two rotary cultivators and a trail for the project for the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 70 2015. Supply and delivery of publications for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 71 2015. Supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of one cupboard for the storage of chemicals, one set of calibration weights and one anti-vibration platform for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 73 2015. Services of a Receptionist for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of local plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 74 2015. Services of Expert on Geographic Information System (GIS) at the Plant Biotechnology Centre, Lija for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.

**Tenders/Quotations published during August 2015:**

- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 75 2015. Catering service for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 76 2015. Supply, delivery and installation of kitchenette furniture for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 77 2015. Supply and delivery of sofas and table for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 78 2015. Supply, delivery and installation of storage cabinet and cupboard for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 79 2015. Supply and delivery of display boards for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.

- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 80 2015. Supply and delivery of office and conference chairs boards for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 81 2015. Supply, delivery and installation of reception furniture for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 83 2015. Supply and delivery of heat benches, pipes and other equipment for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 84 2015. Supply and delivery of ultra violet water sterilizer and pumps for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Advt. No MSDEC 108 2015. Supply, delivery and installation of an office partition for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Advt. No MSDEC 109 2015. Supply, installation and commissioning of a storage room for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Advt. No MSDEC 110 2015. Supply, construction and finishing of water culvert partition for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.

**Tenders/Quotations published during October 2015:**

- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 89 2015. Construction and finishing of a water culvert for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 90 2015. Supply and commissioning of a real-time PCR solution for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.
- Quot No MSDEC Quotation 91 2015. Supply, installation and commissioning of closed loop air conditioner for the project on the study and sustainable conservation of varieties of plants.



### **Tenders/Quotations published during November 2015:**

- Advt No. MSDEC 398/2014 (131/2015). Diagnosis of plant pests and diseases to the Plant Health Directorate

## **4. OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE**

### **Human resources development**

A number of officials within the Plant Health Directorate attended courses, both locally and abroad in a wide range of topics.

Technical staff also attended a number of courses and meetings specific to the area under their responsibility, these included courses organised by Better Training for Safer Foods (BTSF) under DG SANCO.

In-house training relating to the Plant Health Malta Official Register (MOR) was organised during 2015.

### **Procurement**

During the year 2015, the Plant Health Directorate

- Issued a number of tenders/quotations for services and/or purchase for all types of materials, equipment, stationery and general items and
- made requisitions for all procurement needs.

Throughout, all processes were carried in line with Government Financial Regulations and Public Procurement Regulations

Statistical information regarding tenders, quotations and Direct Orders processed during 2015:

<b>Statistical information pursuant to calls for tender, quotations and Direct Orders processed</b>	
Tenders	46
Quotations	77
Direct Orders	15

### **Revenue**

During 2015, the Plant Health Directorate had a total income of € 18899.40 from laboratory testing, sale of plants, import inspections and internal inspections, and issuance of export and re-export phytosanitary certificates.

## **Customer Care**

As in the previous years, in 2015 the PHD continued with its endeavours to assist the general public, stakeholders and handling of customer complaints. Generic queries and calls were redirected to respective sections for feedback and advice and dealt with as necessary in a prompt and effective manner.