

Plant health

1. At a glance

The current EU rules on plant health aim to protect European agriculture and forestry by preventing the entry and spread of foreign pests. A recent evaluation of these rules criticised their **failure to tackle an increased influx of new plant pests and diseases**, which is largely a result of trade globalisation. In addition, due to climate change many of these pests and diseases are now more easily able to survive in Europe. It is therefore crucial to update current rules to be able to fully address these increased risks and put into place uniform rules across all EU member states.

2. In detail

3. Regulation on protective measures against pests of plants

The new regulation replaces the current directive (2000/29/EC) on plant health and put in place a stronger, more transparent and sustainable framework for plant health protection in the EU.

To allow a more flexible response to existing and emerging risks, it will be possible to define as pests also non-parasitic plants, subject to the condition that they have a severe economic, social and environmental impact on the territory of the EU.

The regulation **lists the main pests and defines them into two categories:**

1. **Quarantine pests**, which are the most dangerous ones for the Union territory, and which require eradication:

- under the new rules the regulation allows the Commission to list a number of these pests as 'priority pests' for the EU, on the basis of a number of detailed criteria set out in an annex to the Regulation
- 'priority pests' have severe impacts for the territory of the EU and specific resources will be devoted to fight them - thus implying also more far-reaching obligations for both competent authorities, professional operators and private individuals
- protected zone pests are quarantine pests from which only parts of the EU territory shall be protected, since they are already present in other areas

2. **Quality pests** which affect plants but do not require eradication

The new rules also include **measures to tackle pests from non-EU countries**. The Commission will be able to implement precautionary measures for emerging risks from plants coming from certain non-EU countries. A category of **'high risk' plants, plant products or other objects** is created: those are plants, plant products or other objects which present, on the basis of a preliminary assessment, a pest risk of an unacceptable level for the EU territory. Therefore their introduction into the Union territory from a third country shall be prohibited, pending the completion of a full risk assessment.

The new rules also propose to **extend, simplify and harmonise the existing plant passport scheme**. This means that an extended range of plants, plant products or other objects need:

- a phytosanitary certificate before being imported into the EU (attesting the conformity with the Union legislation)
- a plant passport for movement within the EU

Plant passports are also be needed for all movements between professional operators, but not for sales to final non-professional users.

Finally, the new rules would also **require relevant professional operators to be registered**. Operators will be listed in a single register, thus reducing the regulatory burden for operators.

- [European Commission proposal on protective measures against plant pests](#)

4. In the Council

The European Parliament adopted its **position at first reading** on the plant health proposal on **15 April 2014**.

The proposal on plant health was examined by the Council's Working Party on Plant Health. The Council's Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper) approved a **negotiation mandate** for the proposal on 30 June 2015. This mandate allowed the Council to start negotiations with the European Parliament.

The Council and European Parliament representatives reached the agreement during a trilogue meeting held on 16 December 2015. The Coreper **approved a final package on plant health on 18 December 2015**.

The Council finalised its first reading on 18 July 2016, fully reflecting the agreement reached between the two co-legislators, and the European Parliament's plenary adopted that same text, at second reading on 26 October 2016.

- [Plant health regulation - position of the Council, 18 July 2016](#)

5. Next steps

The **new plant health regulation was published in the Official Journal of the EU on 23 November 2016 and entered into force in December 2016**. The new regime will be **applicable on 14 December 2019**, after a transition period of three years, during which the necessary tertiary legislation will be adopted and member states will prepare their administrations for the full application of the new provisions.

- [Regulation on protective measures against pests of plants \(Official Journal of the EU\)](#)

6. Raising awareness for plant health in the EU

On 14 June 2017 the **chief plant health officers** from the 28 EU member states agreed to launch a new and comprehensive **awareness raising strategy for plant health** in the EU.

The strategy consists of 5 suggested **priority actions** to be carried out by **both member states and the Commission**:

- development of awareness-raising strategies
- creation of a Commission working group of member states experts
- creation of toolkit and awareness-raising materials
- engagement with target groups and training of communicators
- monitoring and evaluation
- [Awareness raising strategy for plant health in the EU, 14/07/2017](#)