

Speech by Dr Monday Ahonsi, Technical Adviser (Plant Protection), FAO Tanzania on the celebration of the International Day of Plant Health 2024 in Arusha, Tanzania

Honorable Permanent Secretary of Agriculture (Mr. Gerald Mweli),

Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority (TPHPA) (Prof Andrew Temu)

Director General, TPHPA, (Prof Joseph Ndunguru),

esteemed stakeholders,

all our distinguished guests,

FAO Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning (Habari za Asubuhi).

As the FAO Tanzania Technical Adviser for Plant Protection, I am deeply honored to address you on this significant day, the International Day of Plant Health, 2024. We gather here to celebrate under the theme "Plant Health, Safe Trade, and Digital Technology," which perfectly encapsulates our shared vision and the essence of our initiative, "Strengthening Plant Health Services in Tanzania for Enhanced Food Safety."

I wish to express my profound thanks to the Permanent Secretary of Agriculture for your presence, which reflects the Tanzanian government's strong dedication to propelling our agricultural sector forward. Your leadership is instrumental in steering us towards a future where food is plentiful and safe for all.

I also extend my gratitude to the Director General, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, and the entire team at the Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority. Your unwavering commitment to plant health is fundamental to building a durable agricultural economy and ensuring that our nation's agricultural products are safe and meet international standards.

As we commemorate the International Day of Plant Health, we also acknowledge a critical juncture in our mission to elevate food safety, supported by the European Union's substantial investment of 10.1 million euros in our project. This investment underscores our shared commitment to enhancing Tanzania's capacity for safe agricultural trade, both within our borders and internationally.

Our project's goals are in perfect harmony with this year's theme, as we aim to strengthen the infrastructure, institutional framework, and human capacity of the Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority. This enhancement will allow Tanzania to effectively carry out its role as the National Plant Protection Organization and adhere to international standards, including those set by the World Trade Organization's Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures and the International Plant Protection Convention.

We have made significant strides in our project:

1. The European Union's declaration of Tanzania as free from *Xylella fastidiosa* is a testament to our commitment to protecting our trade interests and agricultural heritage.
2. The creation of the Plant Health and Biosafety Intelligence Unit marks a significant advancement in our ability to conduct Pest Risk Analyses, horizon scanning, and digital data collection for surveillance and diagnostics.
3. The launch of the ePhyto system in Tanzania has propelled us into the digital era, allowing for the issuance of electronic phytosanitary certificates and the modernization of our trade procedures.
4. The acquisition of advanced equipment for surveillance, border post inspection, and diagnosis has greatly improved our capacity to defend our borders against pest and disease threats.
5. The training and graduation of drone pilots herald a new chapter in our surveillance capabilities, enabling aerial monitoring of plant health with unprecedented precision and efficiency.

On this International Day of Plant Health, let us renew our commitment to the vital cause of protecting plant health. Our collective efforts are essential for ensuring a food-secure and prosperous future for Tanzania. May we continue to innovate, collaborate, and commit to the well-being of our plants, which are the cornerstone of our survival.

Thank you for your attention, and I wish us all a meaningful and motivating International Day of Plant Health.

Asanteni sana.