It's easy to take plants for granted; yet they are vitally important to us in ways we rarely think about. They provide nutrition, shape our living environment and influence our culture. They are also economically important; creating many of the products that shape modern life.

Many activities of modern life, such as global trade and individual behaviour, are increasing threats to our biosecurity by providing opportunities to introduce and spread new plant pests. The recent emergency caused by the introduction of the bacterium Xylella fastidiosa into Europe highlights the economic, political and social impact that a plant pest can have.

A dilemma arises about how to best protect plant health while facilitating trade; phytosanitary
measures provide the tools to assess the risks posed by a pest, prevent introduction, support early detection and facilitate effective mitigation. Research provides the scientific and technical information to justify these measures.

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The Euphresco [4] (European Phytosanitary Research Cooperation) network has been working since 2006 to consolidate Europe's phytosanitary research area and has expanded into a global network to facilitate cooperation among countries with similar problems or are the source of new pests.

At Euphresco we provide a framework for the joint production, sharing and implementation of plant health knowledge.

Our recent Euphresco strategic research Agenda [5] sets the transnational plant health research priorities to be addressed over the next decade. The document was published shortly after the EU's rules on protective measures against pests and plants came into force, replacing legislation that had been in place since 1977.

The new regulation focuses on preventing the entry and spread of pests within the EU. These risks must be assessed on the basis of the biology and epidemiology of pests as well as on the main drivers, such as increasing global trade and the movement of plants and plant products, increasing and changing trade pathways and climate change.

Front-line plant health professionals will apply the new rules while research should provide them with the knowledge and tools to improve inspection and surveillance and deliver more effective pest eradication, containment and control.

The phytosanitary sector is under intense pressure from the growth of global trade, therefore responsibility for protecting plant health must be shared between governments, commercial growers, companies, NGOs land-owners and the public.

Our research agenda sets a framework for dialogue between policymakers and stakeholders to support better coordination on plant health research, cross-sectoral collaboration and learning.

EU member states will play a major role in addressing the agenda's priorities; synergies and collaboration with the European Commission and the European Food Safety Authority are an essential component of this dialogue.

**About the author**

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