



Media Release

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SOUTH AFRICA TO COMMEMORATE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PLANT HEALTH 2026 WITH INTERACTIVE BIOSECURITY AWARENESS EVENT

Pretoria: South Africa will observe the International Day of Plant Health (IDPH) on 12 May 2026 under the theme “*Biosecurity for Food Security*”, emphasising the pivotal role of plant health systems in safeguarding agricultural production, livelihoods, and national food security.

The 2026 commemoration will be managed by the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), in partnership with the Department of Agriculture (DoA) and the National Biosecurity Hub. The initiative will convene stakeholders from government, industry, and research sectors to enhance collective understanding and responsibility for biosecurity.

“Plant health forms the cornerstone of our food system. Biosecurity measures that prevent, detect, and address plant pests and diseases are essential not only for farmers, but also for ensuring food availability, affordability, trade stability, and household nutrition,” said Dr Yolisa Pakela-Jezile, ARC’s Acting Executive Manager: Crops and Natural Resource and Engineering.

IDPH 2026 will feature an interactive awareness experience entitled “*Border to Basket: The Biosecurity Experience*.” The one-day engagement moves beyond conventional

lecture formats by demonstrating biosecurity across the entire value chain, including border controls, surveillance, diagnostics, trade impacts, and household food security.

Participants will engage with six facilitated awareness stations covering:

- Pest risks associated with trade and travel
- On-farm and landscape transmission
- Early warning and surveillance mechanisms
- Diagnostic capacity and rapid response strategies
- Trade and market impacts of outbreaks
- Implications for household food access

The 'Border to Basket' experience illustrates the interconnected nature of the biosecurity system. Efforts made at borders, farms, laboratories, and markets directly affect what is available at household level.

Approximately 60 participants representing national and provincial government, industry bodies, commodity organisations, and research and diagnostic institutions are anticipated. Diverse sector groupings are designed to foster dialogue and collaboration throughout the biosecurity framework.

A central aspect of the event will be the Biosecurity Commitment Wall, enabling participants to pledge one practical action within their respective areas to strengthen biosecurity for food security.

"Safeguarding plant health is a collective responsibility. The International Day of Plant Health 2026 aims not only to raise awareness, but also to translate that awareness into tangible, practical action," Dr Pakela-Jezile concluded.

Through this activation, South Africa underscores that biosecurity is both a regulatory requirement and a national food security priority.

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Notes to the Editors

About the Agricultural Research Council

The Agricultural Research Council is a premier science institution that conducts research with partners, develops human capital, and fosters innovation in support of the agricultural sector. The ARC provides diagnostic, laboratory, analytical, and agricultural engineering services, post-harvest technology development, agrochemical evaluation, consultation and advisory services, food processing technology services, as well as various surveys and training interventions. For more information, visit the ARC website at www.arc.agric.za.



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