

International soil-borne pathogens R&D center launched in Ankara, Turkey

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Food security is threatened by soil-borne pathogens (SBP), especially as climate extremes (temperature, precipitation) become more common. A variety of specific adverse effects are caused by fungi, bacteria, viruses, and nematodes, including root rot, wilt, yellowing, and dwarfing. Crop yields can be reduced by 50-75% as a result of these pathogens.

Turkish Agriculture and Forestry Minister Vahit Kirişçi inaugurated the Center, the first of its kind in Central West Asia and North Africa (CWANA) dedicated to advancing research on SBPs and developing innovative solutions to control and prevent their spread.

Among the new programs at the center are a robust surveillance system for tracking pathogens, a genebank for germplasm, and screening facilities for SBP resistance.

The opening ceremony took place in early May 2023 at the Directorate of Plant Protection Central Institute working under the General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies (TAGEM), and it was attended by deputy ministers, TAGEM's DG, and high-level officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

In order to enhance crop health and productivity, Country Representative of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and the Soil-Borne Pathogens Research & Development Center (ISBPRDC) are signing a joint R&D collaboration agreement that will facilitate knowledge exchange and technology transfer.

Thirty-five scientists and technicians will work at the ISBPRDC and the institute will act as an umbrella for all SBP research in Turkey. Bahri Dağdaş International Agricultural Research Institute (BDIARI), the Transitional Zone Agricultural Research Institute (TZARI), and the Plant Protection Central Research Institute (PPCRI) with offices in Konya, Eskisehir, and Ankara,

respectively, will support the ISBPRDC center and collaborate with the SBP program at CIMMYT to deliver high-yielding wheat germplasm that is resistant to SBP.

In accordance with international sanitary standards, the ISBPRDC will be operated, said the General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies (TAGEM), part of the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. CGIAR and TAGEM mutually supported the SBP CIMMYT Turkey program by establishing and funding the ISBPRDC.