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L-IKEL U D-DRITTIJJIET TAL-ANNIMALI

Dipartiment tal-Affarijiet Rurali

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### **Notification on the first findings of ToBRFV on tomatoes and peppers**

The Plant Protection Directorate, through this communication, informs professional operators and farmers about the first findings of the Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus (ToBRFV) from a number of seedlings collected from the local market. In the last days after the collection of a number of samples of tomato seedlings from the local market, a number of findings of the presence of ToBRFV have emerged.

The findings were found as part of the Directorate's ongoing year-round monitoring program in the Maltese and Gozitan territory, in the fields, on the market for both incoming and outgoing material growing locally. Monitoring consists of visual inspections and sampling.

This virus primarily attacks tomato and pepper plants, causing damage to plants and their fruit. The virus is able to be present even in tomato and pepper seeds. The virus spreads easily by mechanical transmission, meaning that it can move with tools, clothing, shoes, machinery, containers, insects among others, by moving from one plant to another and being able to survive on surfaces of different materials. This means that strict hygiene measures must be adhered to.

Following a number of findings from European Union countries of seeds entering the Union from third countries, Member States and the EU Commission in 2019 took immediate joint action and put in place emergency measures to prevent entry and dissemination within the Union through Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/1615. Following the further increase of findings and the improvement of scientific information on the virus during the year 2020, the measures have been strengthened by the issuance of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/1191 and it's amended, in 2021. The Plant Quarantine Act, 2001, the Regulation on Protective Measures against Plant Pests (EU) 2016/2031 and the Regulation on Official Controls (EU) 2017/625 also offer the the necessary legal framework..

The Directorate is working hard to gather all the information, analyze the situation and take all necessary measures to eradicate this virus from the territory. Professional operators, the sector and the general public are required to follow the measures and updates that officials are regularly issued.

Dennis Sciberras  
Director (Plant Protection)

#### **Technical information about the virus:**

From EPPO's official website: <https://gd.eppo.int/taxon/TOBRFV/datasheet>

Photos of the symptoms taken from the EPPO website: <https://gd.eppo.int/taxon/TOBRFV/photos>

#### **Legeslative reference:**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02020R1191-20210130>