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## PLANT PATHOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

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### 1.1 Introduction

Most famines of historical significance have resulted from destruction of food crops by environmental extremes or from damage caused by pests and diseases. In addition to causing famines and their associated social consequences, plant disease epidemics affect humans in a number of ways. They can eliminate a thriving industry, they can make it unprofitable to grow certain crops without the application of expensive, and sometimes environmentally damaging, control procedures, they cause consistent leaks in production, they affect industries dependent on plant products, they cause wastage and spoilage of stored plant products and in some instances can poison humans and other animals.

It is not possible to accurately determine the damage caused by plant diseases on a world-wide basis because losses range from relatively little damage in some seasons and localities to devastating losses in seasons when the environment is conducive to disease development. It has been suggested that more than 50% of the world's total crop production is lost each year through pests and diseases,