

Ireland reaffirms its commitment to safeguard Plant Health, Biodiversity, and Economy in the EU

"We all have a role to play" - garden designer and UN FAO Goodwill Ambassador for Ireland, Diarmuid Gavin

12 May 2025: Ireland continues to participate in the #PlantHealth4Life campaign, a European campaign to raise awareness of the critical role plant health plays in protecting food, biodiversity, and the environment. Now in its third year, the #PlantHealth4Life campaign returns with renewed focus on citizen empowerment, encouraging people across Europe — including gardeners, travellers, and families — to become active plant health ambassadors.

Led by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Commission (EC), the 2025 campaign is supported by the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine in Ireland, and will empower citizens to become plant health ambassadors, spotlighting how everyday actions can have powerful impacts on biodiversity, agriculture, and the environment.

Speaking on the campaign, garden designer and UN FAO Goodwill Ambassador for Ireland, Diarmuid Gavin, said: "Along with being places of beauty, our gardens are frontline defences in the fight for biodiversity and climate resilience. Every seed we sow responsibly and every pest we spot early is a step toward protecting Ireland's natural environment. This campaign reminds us that plant health begins at home, and we all have a role to play."

Ms Louise Byrne, Chief Plant Health Officer for Ireland, added: "Protecting plant health is something every person in Ireland can contribute to. People should travel wisely and avoid bringing plants and seeds home from abroad. Practice responsible sourcing of plants with plant passports from reputable operators. Monitor plants in your garden and in the wider environment for pests and diseases and if you've concerns email PlantAndPests@agriculture.gov.ie. Empower the next generation by teaching children about the importance of plant health."

Emphasising practical action and community involvement, the campaign encourages informed citizens not only to reflect but also to share their knowledge and inspire others to join in the collective effort to safeguard our ecosystems and economies.

The campaign urges travellers not to bring back any plants, flowers, seeds, fruits, or vegetables from outside the EU, as these items may harbour plant pests or diseases detrimental to native flora. Additionally, consumers are advised to buy plants and seeds online only if accompanied by a valid phytosanitary or plant health certificate. Embracing good plant hygiene practices and promptly addressing signs of plant pests or diseases in home gardens and communal outdoor spaces will also prevent their spread to neighbouring plants and natural habitats.

Sylvain Giraud, Head of Plant Health Unit in the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) said: "When citizens understand the vital role of plant health in their lives — from the food on their tables to the air they breathe — they become powerful agents of

change. The #PlantHealth4Life campaign is a reminder that each of us can make a meaningful difference by staying informed and making thoughtful choices that help protect what sustains us all.”

Giuseppe Stancanelli, Team Leader for Plant Health Risk Assessment at EFSA added: “A plant isn’t just a plant — it can carry other living organisms too. In our interconnected world, plants move more than ever. That’s why the EU relies on science-based risk assessment to understand and manage potential threats to plant health— helping to protect our environment, agriculture, and biodiversity. Through the #PlantHealth4Life campaign, we’re raising awareness across Europe.”

The 2025 #PlantHealth4Life campaign is running across 26 EU Member States, five EU pre-accession countries, and Switzerland. Visit www.efsa.europa.eu/en/plh4l and discover how to safeguard plant health.

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About the campaign

#PlantHealth4Life is a multi-year and multinational campaign developed at the request of the European Commission and based on an in-depth analysis of citizen perceptions and behaviour with respect to plant health across the EU. The campaign continues to extend its scope and reach, welcoming 10 newcomers in 2025: Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, the Netherlands, and Romania join the existing 21 EU Member States: Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. Four new pre-accession countries: Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo*, and Türkiye join Montenegro as #PlantHealth4Life members, alongside Switzerland.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

About EFSA

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is an agency of the European Union set up in 2002 to serve as an impartial source of scientific advice to risk managers and to communicate on risks associated with the food chain. It cooperates with interested parties to promote the coherence of EU scientific advice and provides the scientific basis for laws and regulations to protect European consumers from food-related risks – from farm to fork.

About the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The International Standards on plant health to facilitate trade in plants and plant products are based on the provisions laid down in the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures. Each of the 181 Member Countries of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) have a National Plant Protection Organisation (NPPO) to implement the standards agreed.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) fulfils the role of Ireland's NPPO, implementing the annual plant health programme under EU and national legislation with the aim of protecting the health of plants in Ireland. The work of DAFM with respect to plant health is underpinned by the Plant Health and Biosecurity Strategy 2020-2025 focused on risk anticipation, risk management and risk communication relating to plant health. At the EU level, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine represents Ireland's interests and provides input into the development of phytosanitary legislation. Ireland is also a member of the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO), which is a Regional Plant Protection Organization under the IPPC that promotes the exchange of information between its member countries.

See www.gov.ie/planthealth