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12 May 2026: The #PlantHealth4Life campaign, led by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Commission (EC), and supported in Ireland by the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine, has launched today (12 May), warning the public that everyday actions — from bringing plants home from holidays to buying online — could put plant health, food supply and biodiversity at risk.

Now in its fourth and final year, the campaign continues to raise awareness of plant health risks and their direct link to the economy, local communities and food safety across Europe.

Launching on International Day of Plant Health (12 May), garden designer and UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Goodwill Ambassador for Ireland, Diarmuid Gavin, said: “We often think of plant health as something distant, but it starts in our own gardens and green spaces. The choices we make, what we plant, where we buy from, how we care for our gardens, all have a real impact. This campaign is a reminder that small, informed actions by many people can make a big difference for plant health, biodiversity and climate resilience.”

Holidaymakers are urged not to bring plants, cuttings, fruit or vegetables home when travelling outside the EU, as these may harbour harmful pests or diseases. Gardeners are encouraged to choose local plant species, reduce reliance on pesticides and check the “plant passport” on new plants, confirming they are free from harmful pests and disease. Parents and teachers are also encouraged to raise awareness of plant health among children. Full details are available at efsa.europa.eu/en/plh4l, with resources including social media posts, top tips and videos.

Ireland’s Chief Plant Health Officer, Ms Louise Byrne, emphasised the importance of public awareness and simple actions: “Protecting plant health is something everyone can contribute to. Simple steps like sourcing plants responsibly, avoiding bringing plants and seeds home from abroad, and staying alert to signs of pests and diseases, can have a significant impact. By working together and staying informed, we can help protect Ireland’s environment, food systems and biodiversity.”

This final year builds on growing awareness across Europe, with 33 countries now involved, and a renewed focus on turning knowledge into action — empowering individuals, families, gardeners and travellers to play their part.

Sylvain Giraud, Head of the Plant Health Unit at the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, said: “Plant Health 4 Life is built on a key principle: awareness empowers action. In this final year, the campaign reinforces how protecting plant health means safeguarding our food, our environment and our future. By engaging citizens across Europe, the



campaign has laid strong foundations that will continue to support efforts to protect plants well beyond the campaign itself.”

Tobin Robinson, Head of the Environment, Plants and Ecotoxicology Unit at EFSA, added:

“Science helps us understand the risks to plant health, but that’s not enough: we need Europeans to connect that knowledge to their daily lives. Plant Health 4 Life makes plant health accessible and relevant. By travelling responsibly, shopping responsibly, and educating the next generation, we can all be part of the solution.”

As Cyprus holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Anthemis Melifronidou, Chief Officer for Plant Health of Cyprus, said: “Hosting the launch of the campaign during the Cyprus Presidency, together with Chief Officers for Plant Health from across Europe, highlights how plant health is a shared European responsibility. Simple actions by citizens, supported by strong cooperation across countries, help protect our plants and our future.”

Visit www.efsa.europa.eu/en/plh4l to discover how to safeguard plant health.

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About the campaign

#PlantHealth4Life is a multi-year campaign developed at the request of the European Commission. It is 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, covering 33 countries:

- **EU countries:** Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden
- **Pre-accession countries:** Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, and Türkiye, and
- 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.*

How does plant health affect our lives?

Plants make up 80% of the food we eat, feed the animals we raise for food, and clean the air we breathe. But that’s not all: healthy plants mean good agricultural yield, which impacts food availability and food prices for consumers. See more information on the [role of plants](#).



Climate change and human activities, such as trade and travel put plants under heavy pressure. The spread of plant pests and diseases can have devastating economic and environmental consequences. For example, the pine wood nematode is a microscopic worm that can quickly kill pine trees and devastate forests. Until 1999, it was never detected in the EU. First introduced in Portugal, it is now present also in parts of Spain and has recently been detected in France. To stop it spreading, EU rules require all at-risk trees (mainly pines) within a 500 metres radius of an outbreak to be cut down and destroyed, with major economic and environmental impact, especially in regions with large pine forests.

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.

DAFM will launch its new Plant Health and Biosecurity Strategy 2026-2030. The Strategy will set out the vision to protect Ireland's agriculture, horticulture and forestry sectors and the wider environment from plant pests and diseases thereby safeguarding food security, facilitating safe trade and protecting the environment.

The Strategy will focus on (i) risk anticipation, (ii) risk surveillance and management and, (iii) risk awareness and communication relating to plant health and biosecurity.

At the EU level, DAFM 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
