



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

# Safeguarding Plant health in Ireland: Navigating the E-Commerce challenge together

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# E-commerce Challenges

- Increased Trade Volume
- Information Gaps
- Detecting regulated articles

- IPPC guide on
- E-commerce



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



International  
Plant Protection  
Convention

OCT  
2023

ENG

## E-commerce

A guide to managing the pest risk posed by goods ordered online and distributed through postal and courier pathways

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

# Overview of E- Commerce Trade in Ireland

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Over 40% of Irish enterprises now have e-commerce sales, a trend accelerated by the pandemic

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Revenue over €5 billion in 2024, expected to exceed 8 Billion by 2029.

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User penetration has exceeded 50%, meaning just over half of customers in Ireland have begun shopping online.

# Overview of E- Commerce Trade in Ireland

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Quantity of parcels delivered by the seven operators was **140million** in 2022.

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**42 million** e-commerce parcels were sent to Ireland from abroad in 2023. (Com Reg)

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**84%** of Irish online consumers have shopped internationally. International retailers, including Amazon, remain dominant

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Ireland has one of the highest online shopping rates in Europe, with 96% of internet users making digital purchases in 2024.

# Overview of E- Commerce Trade in Ireland

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why people use online marketplaces when shopping for physical goods. According to a [recent survey](#), **convenience is the most important factor**. This was listed by almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents, alongside saving time (64%) and saving money with more competitive pricing (52%).

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Public has become accustomed to buying plants on line, many Irish garden centres operate both a physical store and an e-commerce platform. This "click and collect" option, offered by some retailers, provides flexibility for customers.

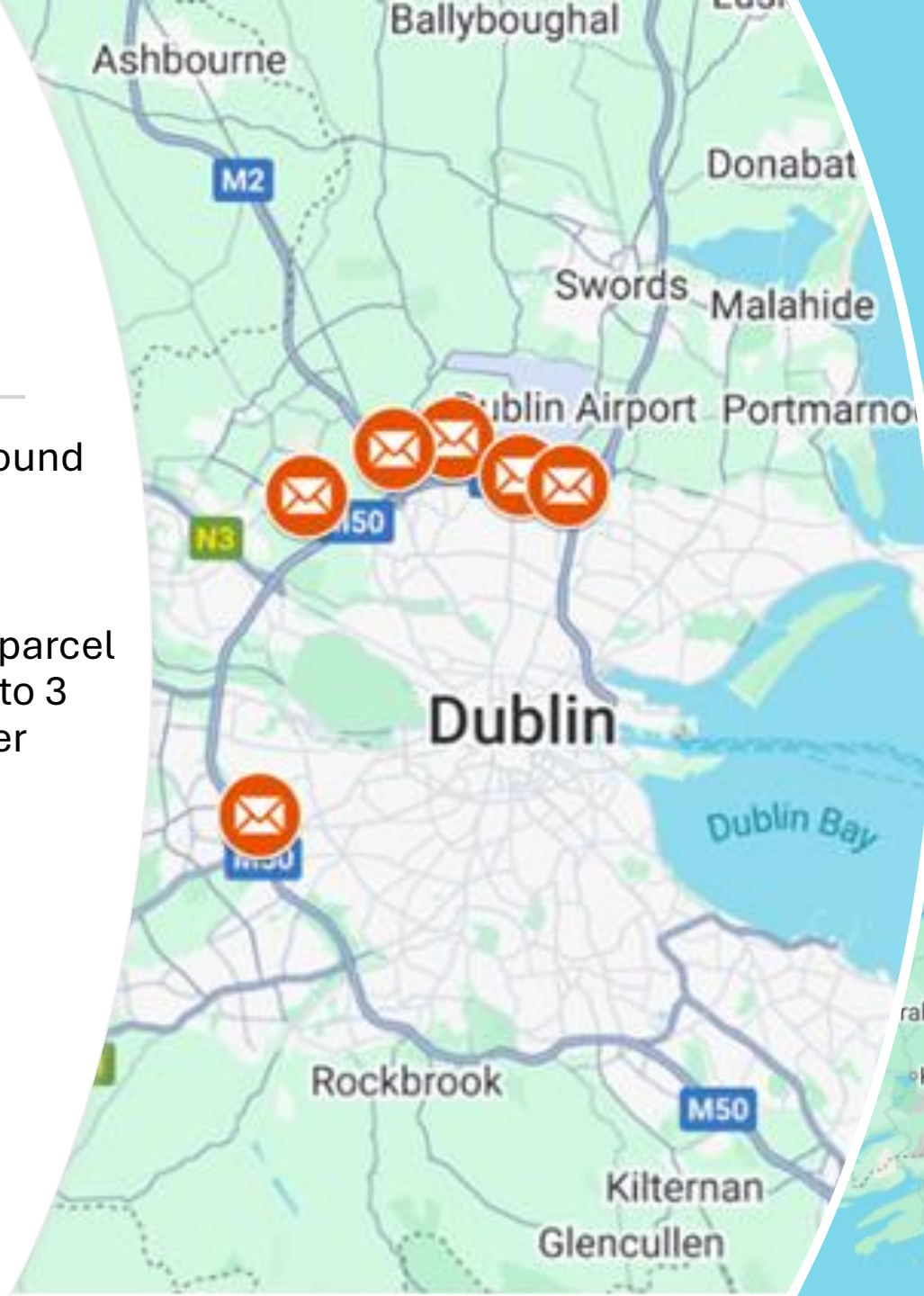
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**Niche products:** Specialised retailers are emerging to meet niche demands, such as mature specimen trees or native flora, which might not be available at larger, generalist garden centres.



# E-commerce Hubs

- 12 locations - primarily around major entry points.
- Receive daily manifest of parcel under control for review - to 3 times a day from the bigger operators
- 10 officers involved in monitoring & inspection





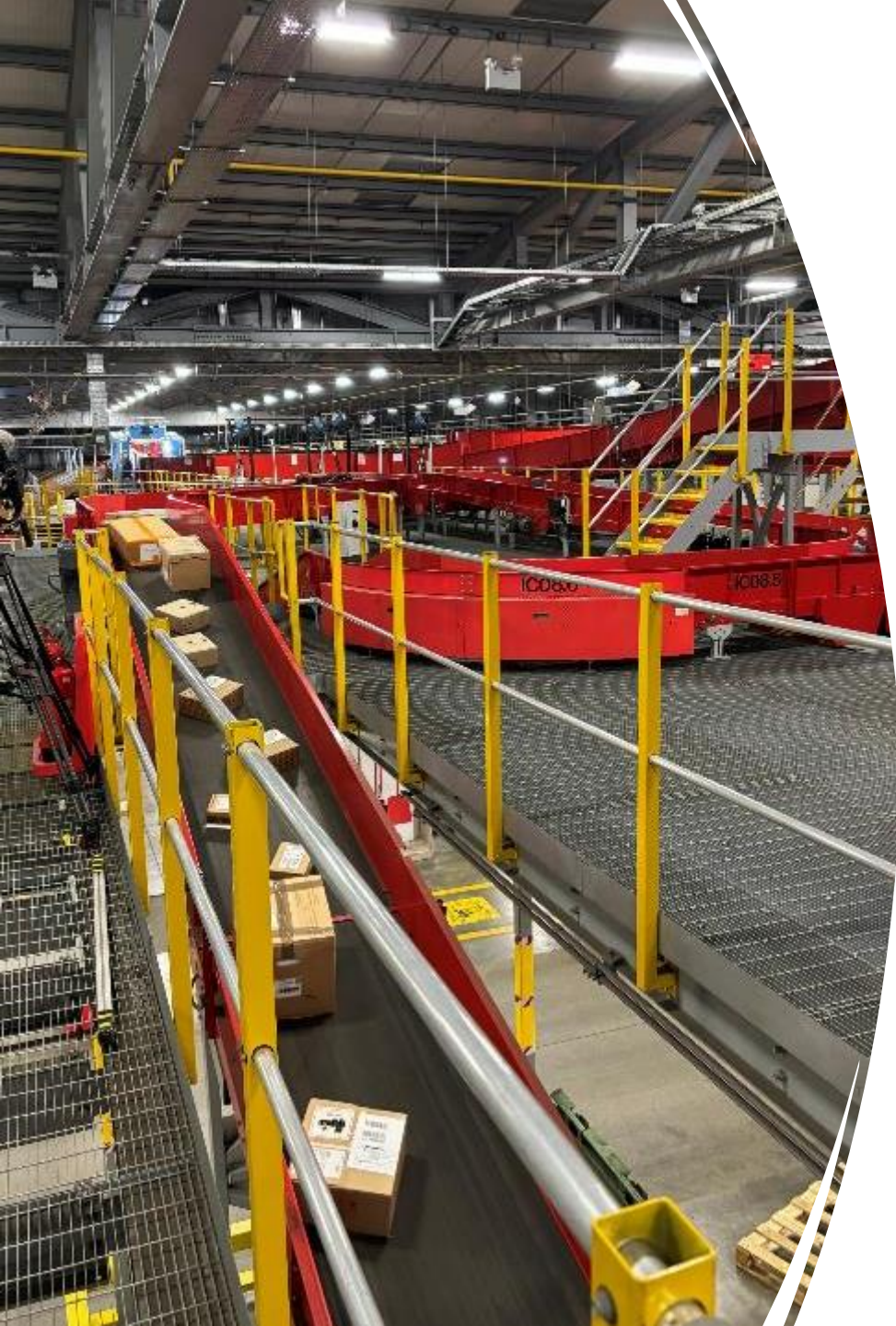


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# E- Commerce Controls

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- **Multifaceted approach**
  - **Building relationships in supply chain**
  - **Collaboration with Customs**
  - **Awareness raising**
  - **Innovation**



# Building relationships in the supply chain

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- High volumes of noncompliant parcels in period 2021-2023.
- Engagement with major online platform
- Sharing of intel and introduction of rules by the online platform based on product codes, keywords and redirect purchases source within the EU
- Reduction in non-compliant parcels



# Ongoing Challenges

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- Sellers will re-register products
- Mis declare as something else
- Irish registered websites maybe sourcing direct from other third countries
- Enforcement ???



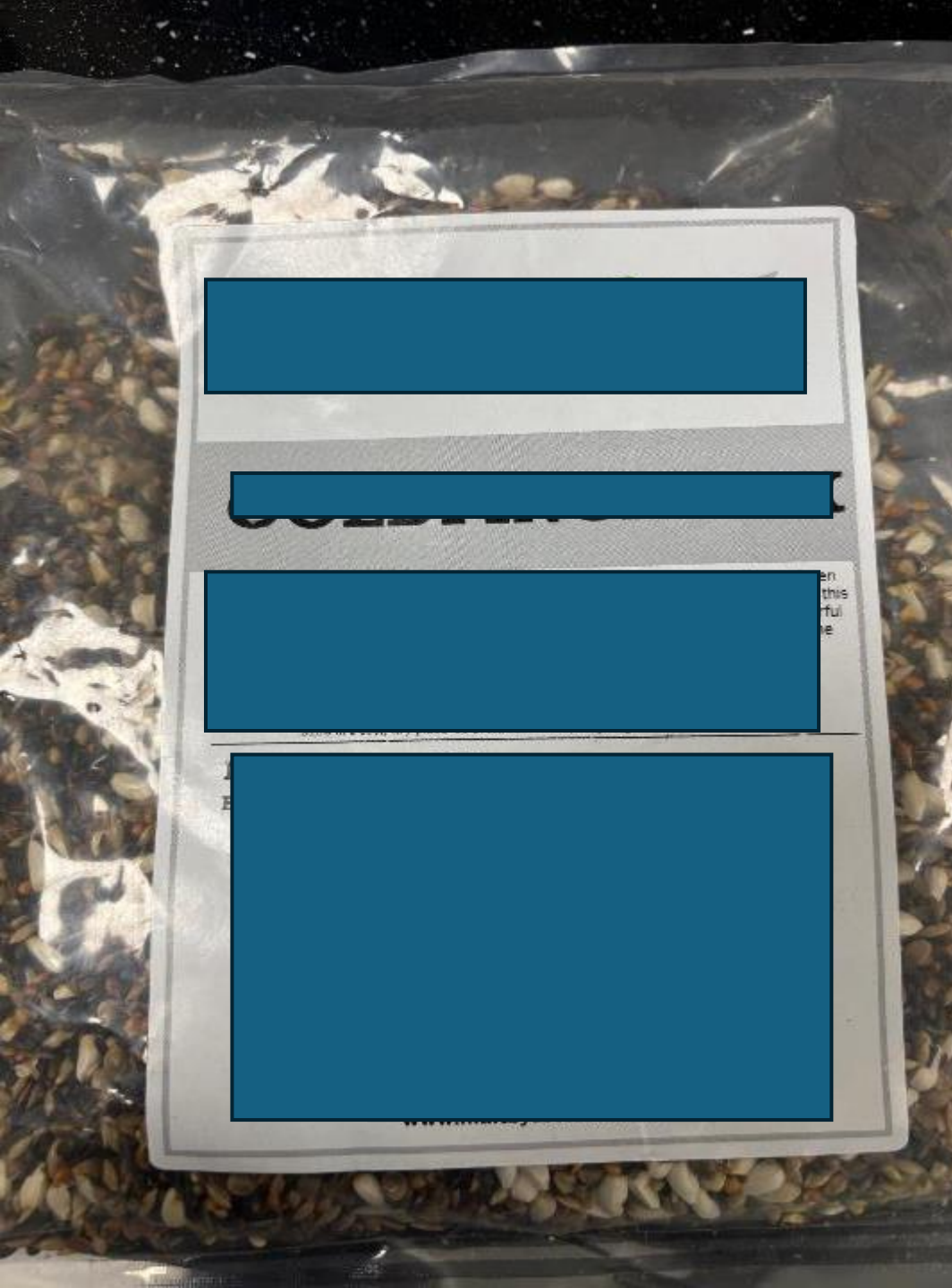


# Wild Flower

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- A .IE registered online platform
- Based in in a third country
- Wildflower seeds dispatched from the US





# A Risk?

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- Bird seed

# Bird seed - Feed


- Viable seeds per kg - 70,213
- Nature of use will end up on ground
- Consider risk equivalent as seed for sowing

Sample 9539101107192

Official Seed Testing Laboratory  
DAFM Laboratories,  
Backweston,  
Celbridge,  
Co. Kildare,  
Ireland.  
Tel: (01) 615 7155  
Email: seedtesting@agriculture.gov.ie

Saotharlann Anailís Siolta Oifigiúil,  
Saotharlanna na Roinne Talmhaíochta, Bia  
& Mara,  
Bhacastúin,  
Cill Droichid,  
Co. Cill Dara,  
Éire.

## ADVISORY REPORT

Barcode		Lab id. of sample	24251152
Name & address of customer		Reference No.	PHS01198
Name of Submitter	N/A	Sample Description	Wildflower mix, Goldfinch Mix, Unknown Dressing

Test/Date/Species	% Normal Germinated Seedlings	% Hard Seeds	Pretreatment	Comments
Germination Wildflower mix 06/05/2025	99	N/A	Chilled 1 day	Viable seeds per kg = 70,213

Date issued: 06/05/2025

Previous issue dates:

Signed:

**Note:**In the case of those species, varieties, stocks or strains of plants the seeds of which cannot be distinguished from one another by expert examination, the term purity as employed here, does not imply that the seed is genuine to name or description.



# Collaboration with Customs



- Engagement and collaboration is essential in the delivery of controls
- In late 2021-2022 collaborated on parcels declared as clothing coming from Hong Kong.
- Approx 50 consignment's intercepted containing hundreds of succulent plants
- In July/Oct of 2025 engaged on postal consignments coming from China
- interception of 26 packages unsolicited seeds











# Intercepted seeds

High germination potential – 93%



# Collaboration with customs

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- Interagency collaboration and training helps to build awareness on plant health risks
- Integrate awareness into their daily work.
- Develops long-term sustained professional relationships.



- **Examples of Intercepted parcels**





# Awareness raising

## Protecting Plant Health & Biosecurity



**KEEP NATURE HEALTHY.**  
**Don't bring plants home.**



**#planthealth4life**



An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine plays a crucial role in protecting the favourable plant health status of Ireland.

RTE's Home Grown Series, above, recently featured some of this work. Other key activities carried out by the Department include:

- Plant Health and Biosecurity Strategy
- Plant Health and Biosecurity Stakeholder Network
- Plant Pest Risk Register Fact Sheets
- Plant Health Contingency Plans
- Plant Health and Biosecurity Newsletter





**Oak Processionary Moth**

Over 100,000 oak trees in Ireland have been damaged by the caterpillars of the Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) since 2012. OPM poses a risk to forest and woodland health as the caterpillars feed on the leaves of oak trees, causing significant damage to the foliage and the tree's ability to photosynthesize.

OPM caterpillars are found in dense colonies on oak trees, often causing significant damage to the foliage and the tree's ability to photosynthesize.



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It's **WoodBloom2025**. You might be aware that a character called Pesty is hanging around our mascot, An Garda Síochána, and on the lookout for him, as are the kids. Visit us at the Horticulture for Life, in the meantime, take a photo with Pesty and be in with a chance of winning a prize. **#PlantHealth4Life**

**Bord Bia - The Irish Food Board**  
Teagasc



Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine  
11.12.25 to 12.1.26

It was great to be joined by Minister **Martin Heydon** at our **#PlantHealth4Life** stand in the 'Horticulture for Life' merchandise at **Bord Bia Bloom2025**. We need to be mindful when abroad to not bring home plants. Take a snap, but don't snap. Protect our plants and crops from pests.

**Bord Bia - The Irish Food Board**  
Teagasc





ADVERTORIAL

# Be aware of regulations for buying plants online



Example of a plant passport for *Lavandula angustifolia*

**A**s with every industry, the trade of plants over the internet has increased exponentially over the last number of years. However, there are a few things to be aware of when buying or selling plants online.

## Plant Passports

All plants traded online are

## Plant Passport

certificate (PC). A PC is a legal document issued by the National Plant Protection Organisation (NPPO) of the country of origin. It certifies that the plants are free from certain harmful quarantine pests and diseases. Always check with the exporter that the plants or plant products you are buying will be accompanied by a PC. If not, they will be refused entry

when they arrive at the border control post and either returned to origin or destroyed.

Examples of regulated plant products commonly bought online that need to be accompanied



House plants entering the EU must be accompanied by a Phytosanitary certificate that states they were grown in a nursery.

by a PC are grass seed, flower seed and bulbs, cut flowers, and

you must be registered with DAFM as an importer. The Plant Health Division at DAFM can assist you with more information on the documentation and procedures required.

If you wish to export plants or plant products outside the EU, you will need to obtain a PC from DAFM which is the NPPO for Ireland. This can be done online, and you do not need to be registered with DAFM to do so. You should apply for a PC at least two weeks prior to the date of export to allow sufficient time for inspection and sampling, if required. There may be certain lab tests required depending on what plants you are exporting and what country they are being exported to. When the inspection is complete and any required test results have come back clear, you will be issued with a PC.

Ireland has recently started to

# Raising Awareness

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- Raising awareness Operators and stakeholders on their legal obligations
- Postal- courier companies obligation to make information available to customers on requirements for import of plant and plant products.
- Signage at entry points





# Innovation

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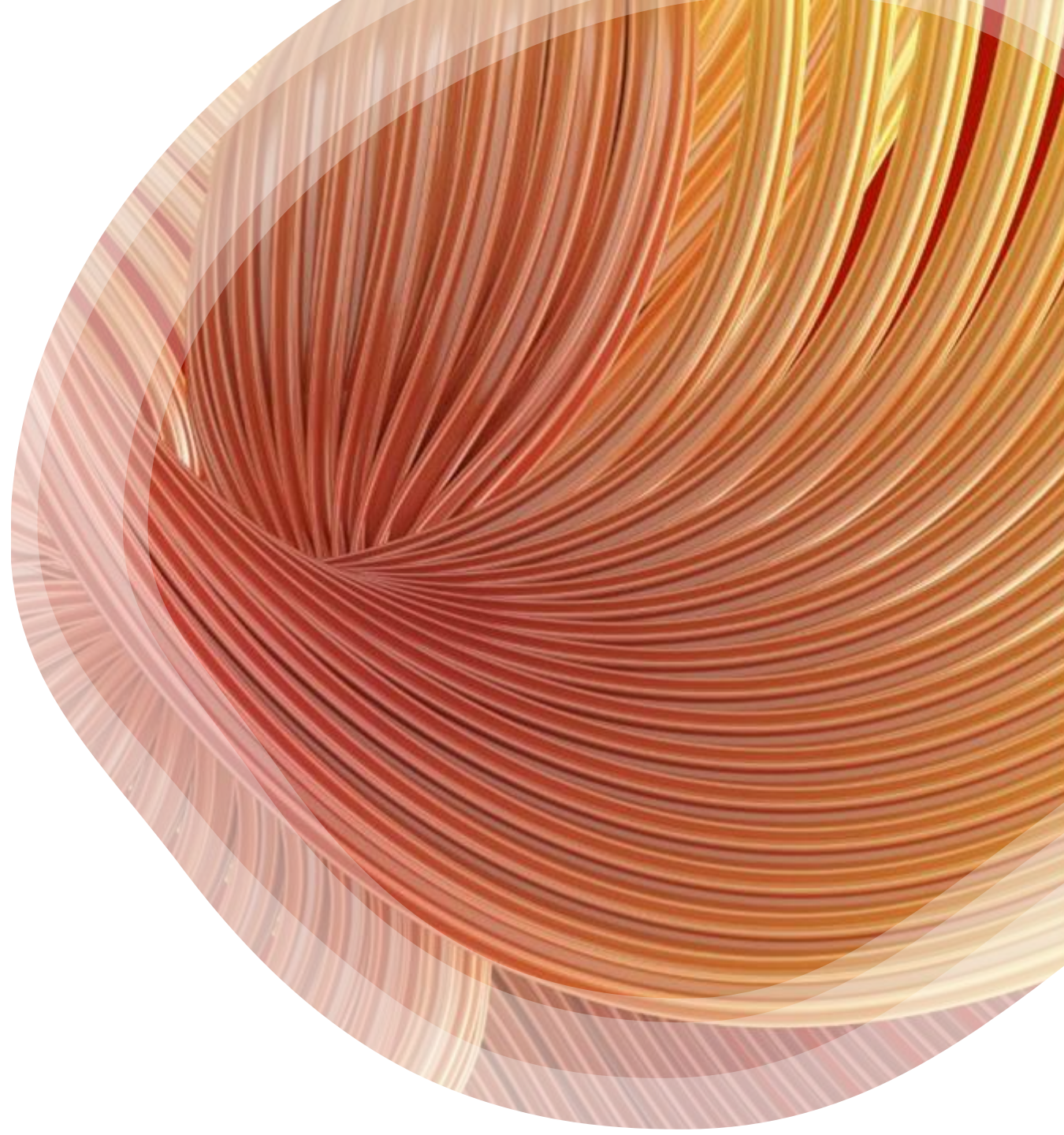
Significant challenges in the volume, complexity and unpredictable nature of this trade

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Engaged with our Data Analytics Division on potential use of AI assisted tool.

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Web scrapers and manifests data to identify high risk consignments.



# KEEP NATURE HEALTHY, don't bring plants home

Travelling outside the EU? Take  
pictures of your favourite plants,  
but don't bring them back with you.  
Prevent the spread of new pests!



#PlantHealth4Life

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Thank You