



# Plant Health – international trade and controlled consignments, 2019-2023

These statistics present an analysis of international trade in plants and plant commodities<sup>1</sup> (including live plants, fruit, vegetables, and cereals) – covering both the financial value and the physical scale (mass) of this trade. The release also presents an analysis of the notifications of controlled commodities – i.e., where imports are declared to plant health authorities in order for checks to be undertaken to ensure that traded goods meet required standards. Data cover the period 2019 to 2023 (Forestry Commission data cover 2019/20-2023/24). Geographical coverage is specified at the start of each section.

## Key findings



Between 2019 and 2023, the overall value of trade in plants and plant commodities increased by £3.4bn whilst the net mass decreased by 374k tonnes. Such trends were not always linear due to the volatile nature of the trade, which can be affected by climate events, pest and disease and other factors, including methodological changes to the data collection.



Over the period 2019-2023 there was a big drop in the exports of plants and planting materials, but this was balanced by increases in forestry exports which led to a slight increase in overall exports of £111 million. In 2023, exports only made up 9.7% of total trade value, a decrease from 11.3% in 2019.



In 2023, trade with the EU accounted for 60% of the total value of trade in plants and plant commodities, and 66% of overall net mass. EU imports accounted for 52% of total trade value and 48% of total trade net mass in 2023.



There were over 695,500 consignments notified to the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate (PHSI) in 2023, an increase from over 479,300 in 2022 and over 246,000 in 2021. These changes were driven by the phasing in of plant health controls on imports from the EU.



In 2023/24, just under 3,500 consignments of controlled material were notified to the Forestry Commission. Consignments of softwood were at the lowest level of the time period in this year whilst consignments of hardwood were at the highest level.

<sup>1</sup> Includes raw products and those that can be defined as 'simply processed'. Please see the glossary at the end of this document and the associated quality and methodology report for more information.

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## Introduction

Plants are environmentally, economically, and socially important, providing a vital contribution to our food and timber supply and to the rural economy. Plants also perform an essential ecosystem service in shaping the landscape and supporting biodiversity and they have been linked to improved health and wellbeing<sup>2</sup>.

The globalisation of trade has facilitated an increase in the volume and diversity of plants and plant commodities which enter the UK. This trade generates economic value but also needs to be regulated (controlled) due to the risk of pest and disease<sup>3</sup>. Plant health legislation<sup>4</sup> controls the import and movement of certain plants, trees, seeds, and organic matter - such as soil - and certain plant products, including fruit, potatoes, vegetables, cut flowers, timber, foliage, and grain.

The analysis below explores both the overall UK trade in plants and plant commodities, and also the trade in controlled plant health and forestry commodities which informs the inspections undertaken by the Plant Health and Seed Inspectorate (PHSI) and the Forestry Commission (FC)

<sup>2</sup> [NHS Forest Evidence](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Plant biosecurity strategy for Great Britain \(2023 to 2028\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Plant Health legislation for forestry](#) and [Plant Health Legislation](#)

to prevent plant pests and diseases from entering England and Wales, and, for Forestry Commission, Scotland<sup>5</sup>.

*Please note that the three datasets explored in this publication are not directly comparable. There are key differences in how each dataset is compiled and these are outlined further in the accompanying quality and methodology report.*

## What you need to know about this release

This statistical release is intended as a contribution to increase the wider understanding about trade in these commodities and about plant health. It is designed to provide stakeholders, internal and external to government, with information on the patterns of trade over time for a specific set of commodities. The primary aim is to facilitate discussion and aid decision making around biosecurity. The release is not intended for the purpose of drawing inferences as to the effectiveness of plant health and forestry inspectorates.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You can read about how Official Statistics in Defra comply with these standards on the [Defra Statistics](#) website.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards using the contact details [sam.grant@defra.gov.uk](mailto:sam.grant@defra.gov.uk). Sam Grant, Plant Health Statistics, Horizon House, Deanery Rd, Bristol BS1 5TL. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk) or via the OSR website.

## Impact of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and the effect of EU exit on trade in plants and plant products

It is not possible to ascertain what the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and EU exit has been on trade in plants and plants products. This is because trade in plants and plant products is often volatile, due to climate and other factors, but also because changes are still ongoing, for example, changes to data systems and the full implementation of the [Border Target Operating Model](#).

The Office for National Statistics have published a report looking at the impacts of EU exit and the coronavirus on UK trade in goods: [The impacts of EU exit and the coronavirus on UK trade in goods](#).

For plants and plant product which require regulatory control the impact of EU exit, particularly imports from the EU to GB, will be ongoing as the UK phases in its checking regime: [Imports of plants and plant products from the EU to GB](#)

## Trade in plants and plant products

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) compiles statistics on commodities physically leaving and entering the UK, traded with both European Union (EU) Member States and non-EU

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<sup>5</sup> Plant Health is devolved thus Scotland conducts its own plant health inspections.

countries. Non-EU trade is collected from customs declarations. Until 31 December 2020 EU trade data was collected via Intrastat which covered VAT-registered businesses whose annual value of arrivals and/or dispatches exceeded a given exemption threshold<sup>6</sup>.

For goods moving from 1 January 2021, statistics covering exports from Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) to the EU have been compiled directly from customs export declarations made according to the requirements of the Taxation (Cross Border Trade) Act. Intrastat survey returns, however, continue to be collected for goods exported from Northern Ireland to the EU, under the terms of the Northern Ireland Protocol. Both the GB to EU customs export declaration data and Northern Ireland (NI) Intrastat export (dispatch) data are incorporated into the overall UK to EU export dataset. As a result of the changes and differences outlined above, there was a break in the timeseries for published UK to EU export statistics from January 2021.

During 2021 the Intrastat survey continued to operate for all UK (GB and NI) imports from the EU, to mitigate the effects of staging customs controls, and to comply with the Northern Ireland Protocol. From 1 January 2022 imports into Great Britain (GB) (England, Scotland, and Wales) from the EU are no longer covered by Intrastat. Customs declarations are used for imports of goods into GB from the EU and this information is used in combination with Intrastat data on imports into Northern Ireland from the EU, to create the overall UK's imports dataset.

Throughout 2021, the introduction of temporary Staged Customs Controls (SCC) allowed GB importers of non-controlled EU goods the opportunity to defer submission of the full customs declaration for up to 175 days after the movement of goods. This had a reducing effect on the number of received customs declarations for EU imports in 2021, most notably in the first few months of the year. It is not possible to distinguish which customs declarations are associated with SCC and therefore remove or adjust the trade statistics.

The Office for National Statistics has produced a paper looking at investigating the impact of changes to HM Revenue and Customs data collection: [Impact of trade in goods data collection changes on UK trade statistics: summary of adjustments and the structural break from 2021](#)

Although not collected for plant health purposes the HMRC data does allow us to examine the patterns of trade for a sub-section of commodities, i.e., raw, and simply processed plants and plant commodities, and to group these into categories. The categories covered in this release are:

- Plants and planting material. This category includes bulbs, plants for planting, forest tree seed and cut flowers.
- Food and crops. This category includes fruit, vegetables, cereals, nuts, herbs, and spices.
- Forestry: This category includes timber (unprocessed or simply processed: sliced, planed, or chipped), packing cases, casks, and barrels.

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<sup>6</sup> Information on methodology and quality for HMRC overseas trade data can be accessed at: [Overseas trade in goods statistics methodology and quality report](#)

**Table 1: Value of trade in plants and plant commodities, 2019 to 2023, £ million**

| Sector <sup>b</sup>          | Year <sup>a</sup> |        |         |            |         | Value change<br>2019 to 2023 | Percentage<br>change 2019<br>to 2023 |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--------|---------|------------|---------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                              | 2019              | 2020   | 2021(b) | 2022(b)(r) | 2023(p) |                              |                                      |
| <b>Imports</b>               |                   |        |         |            |         |                              |                                      |
| Plants and planting material | 1,005             | 1,012  | 1,164   | 1,643      | 1,562   | 557                          | 55.4                                 |
| Food and crops               | 9,987             | 10,572 | 10,194  | 12,094     | 12,147  | 2,160                        | 21.6                                 |
| Forestry                     | 1,986             | 1,945  | 3,152   | 3,245      | 2,604   | 617                          | 31.1                                 |
| Total                        | 12,979            | 13,529 | 14,510  | 16,982     | 16,313  | 3,334                        | 25.7                                 |
| <b>Exports</b>               |                   |        |         |            |         |                              |                                      |
| Plants and planting material | 119               | 96     | 72      | 64         | 74      | -45                          | -38.1                                |
| Food and crops               | 1,342             | 1,272  | 869     | 1,372      | 1,308   | -34                          | -2.5                                 |
| Forestry                     | 189               | 175    | 348     | 392        | 380     | 190                          | 100.5                                |
| Total                        | 1,651             | 1,543  | 1,289   | 1,829      | 1,762   | 111                          | 6.7                                  |
| <b>All trade</b>             |                   |        |         |            |         |                              |                                      |
| Plants and planting material | 1,124             | 1,108  | 1,236   | 1,708      | 1,635   | 511                          | 45.5                                 |
| Food and crops               | 11,330            | 11,844 | 11,063  | 13,467     | 13,456  | 2,126                        | 18.8                                 |
| Forestry                     | 2,176             | 2,120  | 3,500   | 3,637      | 2,983   | 808                          | 37.1                                 |
| Total                        | 14,629            | 15,072 | 15,799  | 18,811     | 18,074  | 3,445                        | 23.5                                 |

a. data are calendar year.

b. more information on sectors can be found in the glossary at the end of this document.

(b) indicates a break in the time series. In 2021 the break related to changes in the recording of exports, in 2022 the break related to changes in the recording of imports.

(r) indicates revised data

(p) indicates provisional data

Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Source: Overseas Trade Data, HMRC

Table 1 shows the total value of trade in plants and plant commodities, by sector, between 2019 and 2023.

- All sectors saw a slight decrease in the total value of trade between 2022 and 2023. In particular the total value of trade in forestry fell by 18.0% during this period, driven by a decrease in the value of imports.
- Whilst food and crops saw the lowest proportional increase in value (18.8%) between 2019 and 2024, it remained the largest sector accounting for 74.4% of total trade value in 2023. By contrast, plants and planting material saw the largest proportional change in value (45.5%) but remained the smallest sector (9.0% of all trade in 2023, up slightly from 7.7% in 2019).
- Both the plants and planting material sector and the forestry sector experienced a decrease in export value between 2019 and 2023. However, the value of plants for planting exports was higher in 2023 than in 2022 (£74m compared to £64m).

**Table 2: Net mass of trade in plants and plant commodities, 2019 to 2023, '000 tonnes**

| Sector <sup>b</sup>          | Year <sup>a</sup> |        |         |            |         | Value change<br>2019 to 2023 | Percentage<br>change 2019<br>to 2023 |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--------|---------|------------|---------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                              | 2019              | 2020   | 2021(b) | 2022(b)(r) | 2023(p) |                              |                                      |
| <b>Imports</b>               |                   |        |         |            |         |                              |                                      |
| Plants and planting material | 361               | 310    | 356     | 488        | 454     | 93                           | 25.9                                 |
| Food and crops               | 12,729            | 13,974 | 13,166  | 13,365     | 12,971  | 243                          | 1.9                                  |
| Forestry                     | 4,669             | 4,642  | 5,121   | 4,595      | 4,297   | -372                         | -8.0                                 |
| Total                        | 17,759            | 18,926 | 18,643  | 18,448     | 17,723  | -36                          | -0.2                                 |
| <b>Exports</b>               |                   |        |         |            |         |                              |                                      |
| Plants and planting material | 50                | 34     | 25      | 22         | 21      | -28                          | -57.2                                |
| Food and crops               | 4,095             | 3,426  | 1,960   | 3,134      | 3,280   | -815                         | -19.9                                |
| Forestry                     | 684               | 484    | 873     | 1,074      | 1,189   | 505                          | 73.9                                 |
| Total                        | 4,828             | 3,944  | 2,858   | 4,231      | 4,490   | -338                         | -7.0                                 |
| <b>All trade</b>             |                   |        |         |            |         |                              |                                      |
| Plants and planting material | 411               | 344    | 380     | 510        | 476     | 65                           | 15.8                                 |
| Food and crops               | 16,824            | 17,400 | 15,126  | 16,499     | 16,251  | -573                         | -3.4                                 |
| Forestry                     | 5,353             | 5,126  | 5,994   | 5,669      | 5,486   | 133                          | 2.5                                  |
| Total                        | 22,587            | 22,869 | 21,501  | 22,678     | 22,213  | -374                         | -1.7                                 |

a. data are calendar year.

b. more information on sectors can be found in the glossary at the end of this document.

(b) indicates a break in the time series. In 2021 the break related to changes in the recording of exports, in 2022 the break related to changes in the recording of imports.

(r) indicates revised data

(p) indicates provisional data

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Source: Overseas Trade Data, HMRC

Table 2 shows the total net mass of trade in plants and plant commodities, by sector, between 2019 and 2023.

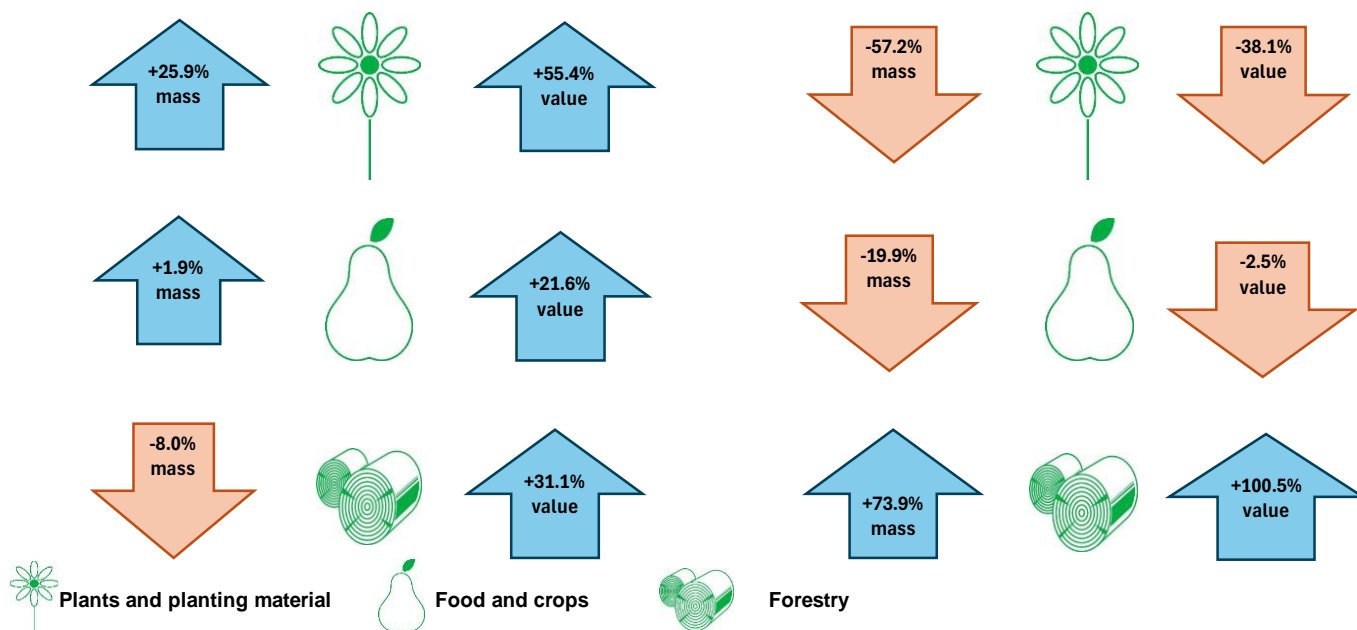
- All sectors saw a decrease in total net mass between 2022 and 2023 with plants and planting material experiencing the largest decline (-6.8%). This was driven by a 6.9% decrease in imports however exports have shown a year-on-year decline since 2019 with 2023 exports less than half the net mass of 2019 exports.
- No sector experienced increases in net mass across both imports and exports between 2019 and 2023. Whilst the net mass of forestry exports was the only export to increase (73.9%) over the time period, the corresponding import net mass decreased (-8.0%). For the other sectors import net mass increased whilst export net mass decreased.
- Food and crops was the only sector to experience a decrease in total net mass (-3.4%) across the time period.



**Figure 1: Changes in trade of plants and plant commodities, 2019 to 2023**

Change in imports of plants and plant commodities, 2019-2023

Change in exports of plants and plant commodities, 2019-2023



Source: Overseas Trade Data, HMRC

**Table 3: Value of UK and EU trade in plants and plant commodities, 2019 to 2023, £ million**

| Sector <sup>b</sup>          | Year <sup>a</sup> |       |         |            |         | Value change 2019 to 2023 | Percentage change 2019 to 2023 |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------|---------|------------|---------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                              | 2019              | 2020  | 2021(b) | 2022(b)(r) | 2023(p) |                           |                                |
| <b>EU Imports</b>            |                   |       |         |            |         |                           |                                |
| Plants and planting material | 819               | 849   | 884     | 1,334      | 1,265   | 446                       | 54.5                           |
| Food and crops               | 4,796             | 5,107 | 4,453   | 5,650      | 5,918   | 1,122                     | 23.4                           |
| Forestry                     | 1,551             | 1,546 | 2,579   | 2,764      | 2,186   | 634                       | 40.9                           |
| Total                        | 7,166             | 7,503 | 7,916   | 9,747      | 9,368   | 2,202                     | 30.7                           |
| <b>EU Exports</b>            |                   |       |         |            |         |                           |                                |
| Plants and planting material | 89                | 77    | 54      | 46         | 56      | -34                       | -37.7                          |
| Food and crops               | 1,097             | 994   | 666     | 1,131      | 1,083   | -13                       | -1.2                           |
| Forestry                     | 145               | 140   | 311     | 344        | 326     | 181                       | 124.7                          |
| Total                        | 1,331             | 1,212 | 1,030   | 1,521      | 1,465   | 134                       | 10.1                           |
| <b>All EU trade</b>          |                   |       |         |            |         |                           |                                |
| Plants and planting material | 908               | 926   | 937     | 1,380      | 1,320   | 412                       | 45.4                           |
| Food and crops               | 5,893             | 6,101 | 5,119   | 6,781      | 7,001   | 1,108                     | 18.8                           |
| Forestry                     | 1,697             | 1,687 | 2,890   | 3,108      | 2,512   | 815                       | 48.1                           |
| Total                        | 8,497             | 8,714 | 8,946   | 11,268     | 10,833  | 2,336                     | 27.5                           |

a. data are calendar year.

b. more information on sectors can be found in the glossary at the end of this document.

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(r) indicates revised data

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Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Source: Overseas Trade Data, HMRC



Table 3 shows the value of commodities that were imported into the UK from the EU and commodities exported from the UK to the EU between 2019 and 2023, by sector.

- The total value of trade between the UK and the EU decreased by £434.7m (-3.9%) between 2022 and 2023. Food and crops was the only sector to see an increase, from £6.8bn to £7.0bn (3.2%). At an import/export level only imports of food and crops and exports of plants and planting material increased (£268m and £10m respectively) between 2022 and 2023.
- Between 2019 and 2023, overall trade value increased by 27.5% with food and crops experiencing the lowest proportional rise (18.8% compared to 45.4% for plants for planting and 48.1% for forestry) but still accounted for 64.6% of all trade between the UK and the EU.
- In 2023 the value of forestry exports was over twice as high as in 2019, £326m compared to £145m.
- Imports as a proportion of all trade value stood at 86.5% in 2022 and 2023, a slight decrease from 88.5% in 2021.

**Table 4: Net mass of UK and EU trade in plants and plant commodities, 2019 to 2023, '000 tonnes**

| Sector <sup>b</sup>          | Year <sup>a</sup> |        |         |            |         | Value change 2019 to 2023 | Percentage change 2019 to 2023 |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--------|---------|------------|---------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                              | 2019              | 2020   | 2021(b) | 2022(b)(r) | 2023(p) |                           |                                |
| <b>EU Imports</b>            |                   |        |         |            |         |                           |                                |
| Plants and planting material | 308               | 266    | 287     | 418        | 384     | 76                        | 24.7                           |
| Food and crops               | 5,609             | 6,472  | 5,888   | 6,335      | 6,277   | 668                       | 11.9                           |
| Forestry                     | 4,138             | 4,060  | 4,415   | 4,247      | 3,993   | -145                      | -3.5                           |
| Total                        | 10,055            | 10,798 | 10,590  | 10,999     | 10,654  | 599                       | 6.0                            |
| <b>EU Exports</b>            |                   |        |         |            |         |                           |                                |
| Plants and planting material | 42                | 30     | 21      | 20         | 19      | -23                       | -55.0                          |
| Food and crops               | 3,437             | 2,584  | 1,631   | 2,777      | 2,959   | -477                      | -13.9                          |
| Forestry                     | 594               | 436    | 808     | 1,017      | 1,135   | 541                       | 91.0                           |
| Total                        | 4,073             | 3,050  | 2,460   | 3,813      | 4,113   | 40                        | 1.0                            |
| <b>All EU trade</b>          |                   |        |         |            |         |                           |                                |
| Plants and planting material | 350               | 296    | 308     | 438        | 403     | 53                        | 15.2                           |
| Food and crops               | 9,046             | 9,056  | 7,519   | 9,112      | 9,236   | 190                       | 2.1                            |
| Forestry                     | 4,732             | 4,496  | 5,224   | 5,263      | 5,128   | 396                       | 8.4                            |
| Total                        | 14,128            | 13,848 | 13,050  | 14,813     | 14,767  | 639                       | 4.5                            |

a. data are calendar year.

b. more information on sectors can be found in the glossary at the end of this document.

(b) indicates a break in the time series. In 2021 the break related to changes in the recording of exports, in 2022 the break related to changes in the recording of imports.

(r) indicates revised data

(p) indicates provisional data

Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Source: [Overseas Trade Data, HMRC](#)

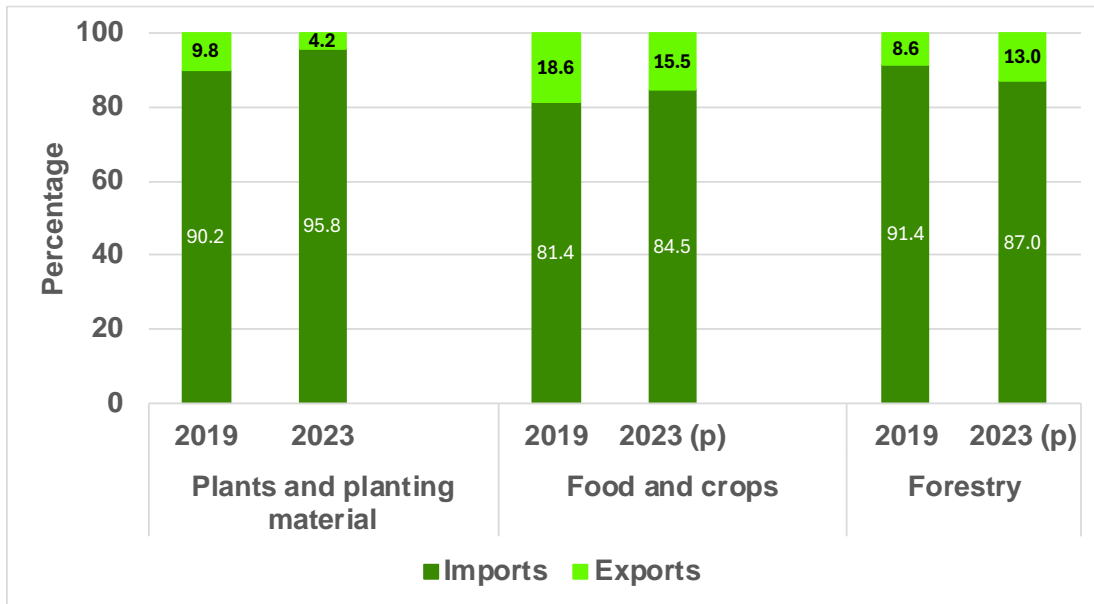
Table 4 shows the net mass of commodities that were imported into the UK from the EU and commodities exported from the UK to the EU between 2019 and 2023, by sector.

- The total net mass of trade between the UK and the EU remained fairly stable between 2022 and 2023. The net mass of imports in all sectors decreased however for exports net mass increased for food and crops and for forestry (6.6% and 11.6% respectively) whilst decreasing by 3.7% for plants and planting material.

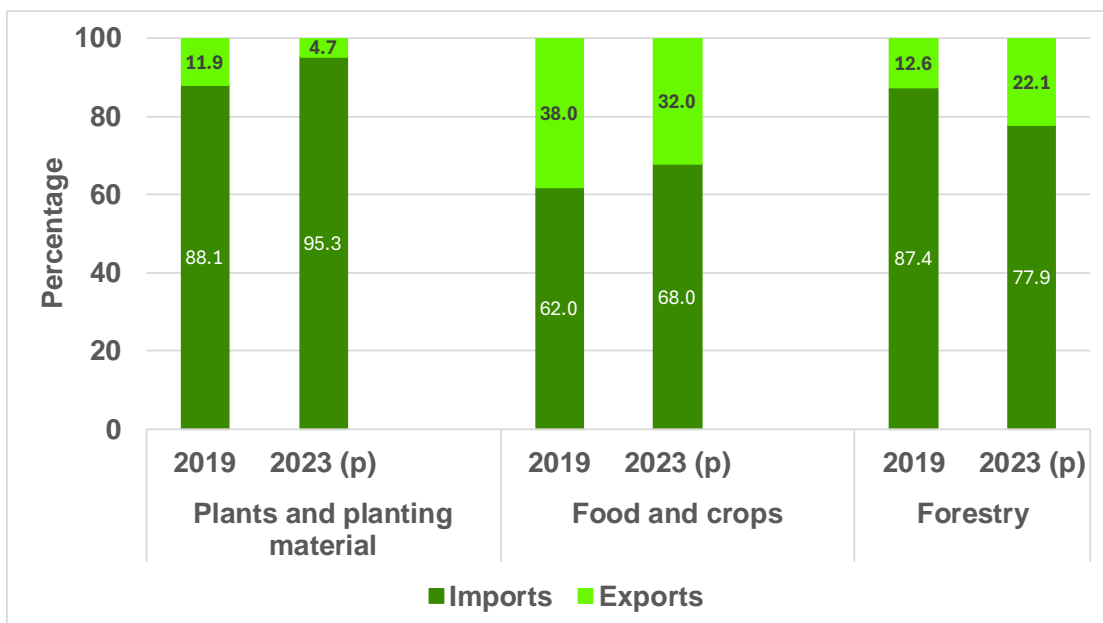
- The net mass of exports of plants and planting material decreased by 3.7% despite an increase of 20.9% in value (Table 3). In contrast, food and crops and forestry saw increases in net mass but decreases in value between 2022 and 2023.
- Although total net mass increased for all sectors between 2019 and 2023 this masked decreases in imports of forestry and exports of food and crops and plants and planting material.

### Chart 1a and 1b: Distribution of UK and EU trade in plants and plant commodities, 2019 to 2023

#### 1a. Value



#### 1b. Net mass



Data are calendar year.

(p) indicates data are provisional.

There were breaks in the recording of exports in 2021 and imports in 2022 meaning figures are not directly comparable.

Source: Overseas Trade Data, HMRC

- Across all sectors the proportion of import value for UK-EU trade is higher than the corresponding proportion of net mass. The largest difference is for food and crops in 2019, where imports made up 81.4% of value but only 62.0% of commodity net mass.
- Forestry was the only sector to see the proportion of imports decrease between 2019 and 2023 for both value and net mass. The proportion of trade that was exports increased by 4.4 percentage points for value and 9.5 percentage points for net mass.
- The proportion of EU trade value and net mass that was imports was highest for the sector plants and planting material, with import value increasing from 90.2% in 2019 to 95.8% in 2023. The corresponding import net mass for this sector increased from 88.1% in 2019 to 95.3% in 2023.

**Table 5: Value of UK and non-EU trade in plants and plant commodities, 2019 to 2023, £ million**

| Sector <sup>b</sup>          | Year <sup>a</sup> |       |       |         |         | Value change 2019 to 2023 | Percentage change 2019 to 2023 |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                              | 2019              | 2020  | 2021  | 2022(r) | 2023(p) |                           |                                |
| <b>Non-EU Imports</b>        |                   |       |       |         |         |                           |                                |
| Plants and planting material | 186               | 163   | 281   | 309     | 297     | 111                       | 59.4                           |
| Food and crops               | 5,191             | 5,465 | 5,741 | 6,445   | 6,230   | 1,039                     | 20.0                           |
| Forestry                     | 435               | 399   | 573   | 481     | 418     | -17                       | -3.9                           |
| Total                        | 5,812             | 6,027 | 6,594 | 7,235   | 6,945   | 1,132                     | 19.5                           |
| <b>Non-EU Exports</b>        |                   |       |       |         |         |                           |                                |
| Plants and planting material | 30                | 19    | 18    | 18      | 18      | -12                       | -39.3                          |
| Food and crops               | 246               | 277   | 203   | 241     | 225     | -21                       | -8.5                           |
| Forestry                     | 44                | 35    | 38    | 48      | 53      | 9                         | 20.9                           |
| Total                        | 320               | 331   | 259   | 308     | 297     | -23                       | -7.3                           |
| <b>All non-EU trade</b>      |                   |       |       |         |         |                           |                                |
| Plants and planting material | 216               | 182   | 299   | 328     | 315     | 99                        | 45.7                           |
| Food and crops               | 5,437             | 5,743 | 5,944 | 6,686   | 6,455   | 1,018                     | 18.7                           |
| Forestry                     | 479               | 434   | 610   | 529     | 471     | -8                        | -1.6                           |
| Total                        | 6,132             | 6,358 | 6,853 | 7,543   | 7,241   | 1,109                     | 18.1                           |

a. Data are calendar year.

b. more information on sectors can be found in the glossary at the end of this document.

(r) indicates revised data

(p) indicates provisional data

Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Source: Overseas Trade Data, HMRC

Table 5 shows the value of commodities that were imported into the UK from countries outside of the EU and commodities exported from the UK to countries outside of the EU between 2019 and 2023, by sector.

- Between 2022 and 2023 the value of trade between the UK and non-EU countries decreased for all sectors and trade flows, apart from exports of forestry which increased from £48m to £53m (10.5%) and exports of plants and planting material which remained stable at £18m. The largest proportional decrease was in imports of forestry (-13.1%).
- Non-EU imports of plants and planting material saw the greatest proportional increase in value of any sector (59.4%), whilst also seeing the greatest percentage decrease in export value (-39.3%) between 2019 and 2023.
- Compared to Table 3, which showed large increases in the EU trade value of both imports and exports for the forestry sector, Table 5 shows a smaller increase in non-EU exports (20.9%) and a slight decrease in the value of non-EU imports (-3.9%), resulting in an overall decrease in trade value between 2019 and 2023 of £8 million.

**Table 6: Net mass of UK and non-EU trade in plants and plant commodities, 2019 to 2023, '000 tonnes**

| Sector <sup>b</sup>          | Year <sup>a</sup> |       |       |         |         | Value change<br>2019 to 2023 | Percentage<br>change 2019<br>to 2023 |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                              | 2019              | 2020  | 2021  | 2022(r) | 2023(p) |                              |                                      |
| <b>Non-EU Imports</b>        |                   |       |       |         |         |                              |                                      |
| Plants and planting material | 53                | 44    | 69    | 70      | 70      | 17                           | 32.7                                 |
| Food and crops               | 7,120             | 7,501 | 7,278 | 7,030   | 6,694   | -425                         | -6.0                                 |
| Forestry                     | 531               | 582   | 706   | 348     | 304     | -227                         | -42.7                                |
| Total                        | 7,703             | 8,128 | 8,053 | 7,448   | 7,069   | -635                         | -8.2                                 |
| <b>Non-EU Exports</b>        |                   |       |       |         |         |                              |                                      |
| Plants and planting material | 8                 | 3     | 3     | 2       | 2       | -5                           | -68.9                                |
| Food and crops               | 658               | 842   | 329   | 357     | 321     | -338                         | -51.3                                |
| Forestry                     | 89                | 49    | 65    | 57      | 54      | -35                          | -39.6                                |
| Total                        | 755               | 894   | 397   | 417     | 377     | -378                         | -50.1                                |
| <b>All non-EU trade</b>      |                   |       |       |         |         |                              |                                      |
| Plants and planting material | 61                | 47    | 72    | 72      | 72      | 12                           | 19.6                                 |
| Food and crops               | 7,778             | 8,343 | 7,607 | 7,387   | 7,015   | -763                         | -9.8                                 |
| Forestry                     | 620               | 631   | 771   | 406     | 358     | -262                         | -42.3                                |
| Total                        | 8,459             | 9,021 | 8,450 | 7,866   | 7,446   | -1,013                       | -12.0                                |

(1) Data are calendar year

(2) more information on sectors can be found in the glossary at the end of this document.

(r) indicates revised data

(p) indicates provisional data

Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.

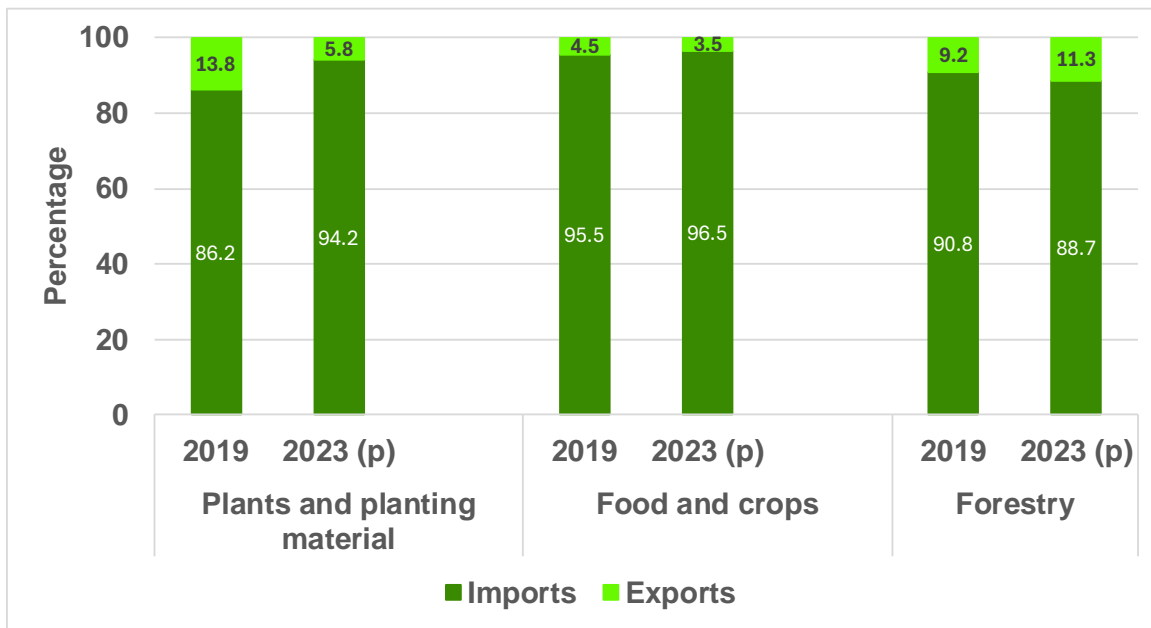
Source: Overseas Trade Data, HMRC

Table 6 shows the net mass of commodities that were imported into the UK from countries outside of the EU and commodities exported from the UK to countries outside of the EU between 2019 and 2023, by sector.

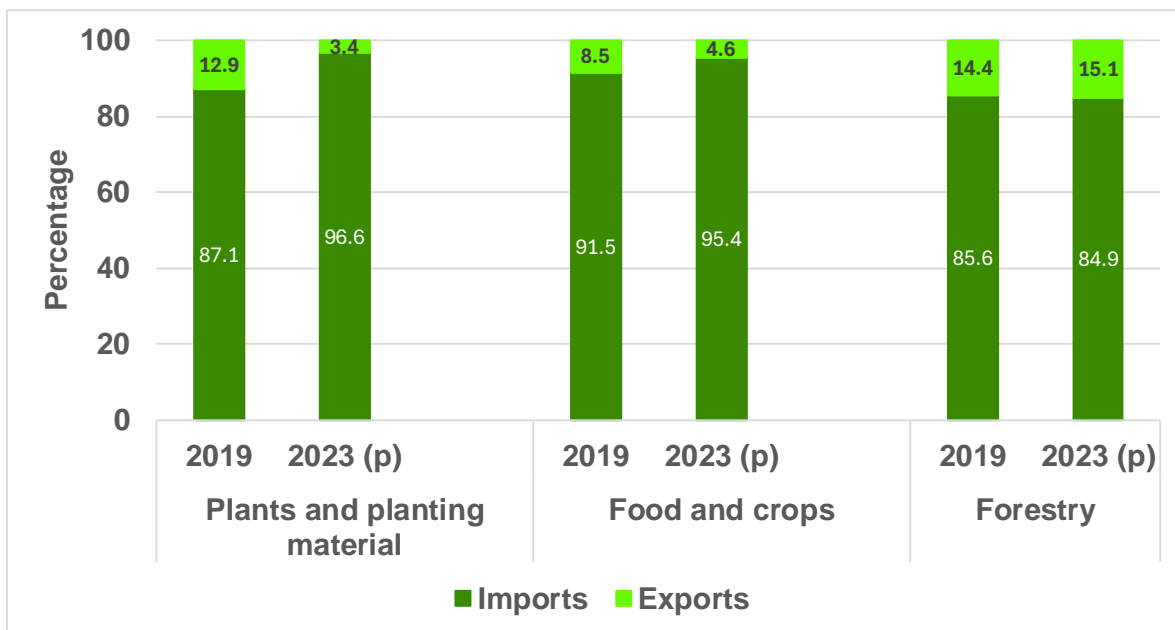
- With the exception of plants and planting material, all UK to non-EU trade flows, across all sectors, saw a decrease in net mass between 2022 and 2023 (-5.3% overall). The net mass of plants and planting material remained stable for both imports and exports at 70,000 tonnes and 2,000 tonnes respectively.
- Despite plants and planting material remaining stable over the past two years, the import net mass has increased by 32.7%, and the export net mass has decreased by 68.9%, since 2019.
- Overall, plants and planting material was the only sector to see an increase in net mass since 2019 (19.6%) but remains the smallest sector. Forestry experienced the largest decrease at 42.3% in total, comprising a decrease of 42.7% in import net mass and 39.6% in export net mass.
- The largest value change was in the net mass of food and crops imports from non-EU countries, which decreased by 425,000 tonnes. However, this group also had the smallest percentage change (-6.0%), due to food and crops making up 94.7% of the net mass of imports in non-EU trade.

## Chart 2a and 2b: Distribution of UK and non-EU trade in plants and plant commodities, 2019-2023

### 2a. Value



### 2b. Net mass



Data are calendar year.

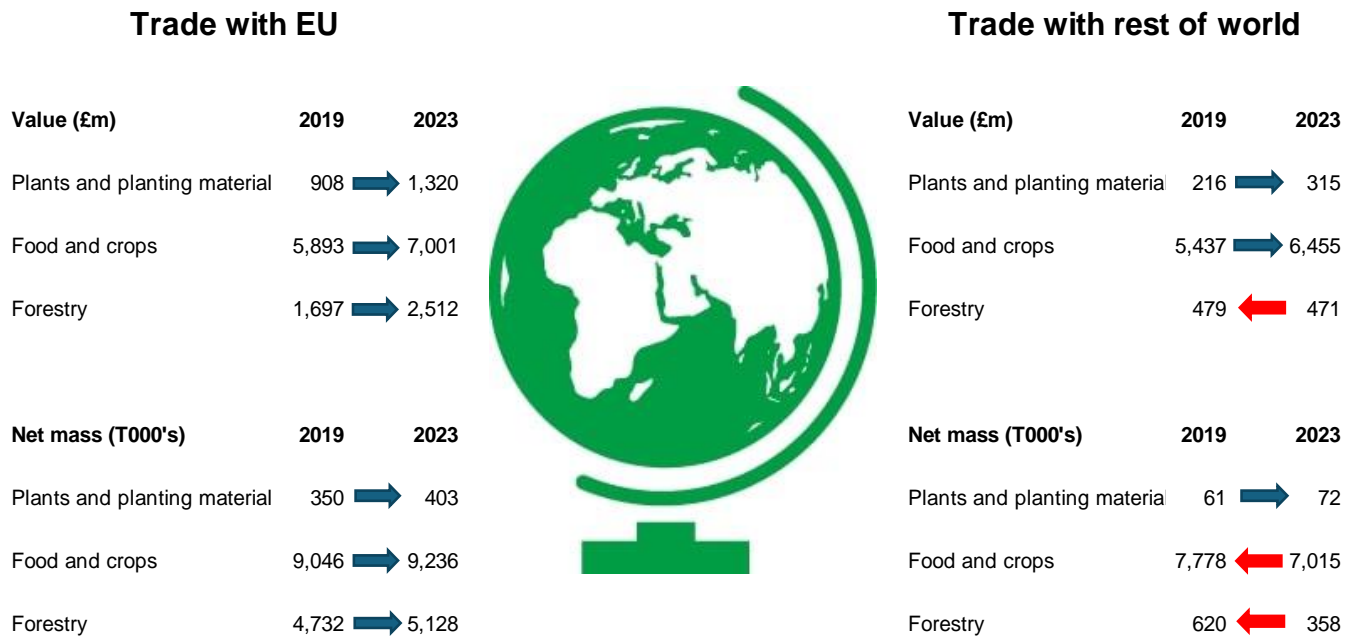
(p) indicates data are provisional.

Source: Overseas Trade Data, HMRC

- The proportion of trade that was imports increased for both net mass and value in the plants and planting material and food and crops sectors, but both decreased for the forestry sector.
- The largest distribution change was seen for the net mass of non-EU plants and planting material imports to the UK, where imports increased by 9.6 percentage points as a proportion of trade net mass. The net mass of imports of plants and planting material in 2023 was also the highest percentage of any sector distribution, accounting for 96.6% of this trade flow.

- The proportion of trade that is imports of food and crops from non-EU countries are generally higher than for EU countries in both value and net mass.

**Figure 2: Changes in trade of plants and plant commodities between 2019 and 2023, by broad region of trade**



1. Data are calendar year.
  2. Data for 2023 are provisional.
  3. There were breaks in the recording of EU exports in 2021 and EU imports in 2022 meaning figures are not directly comparable.
- Source: [Overseas Trade Data, HMRC](#)

## Controlled Commodities

The Plant Health and Seed Inspectorate (PHSI) implements and enforces plant health policy in England and in Wales (on behalf of the Welsh Government). The Forestry Commission (FC) implements and enforces plant health policy in England and Scotland, and in Wales via Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

PHSI and FC conduct inspections of controlled plant materials, including plants for planting. The controls of such materials differ according to the species - and what quarantine organisms they may carry – but may include phytosanitary certificates, plant passports and/or physical inspection. More detailed information covering the activities of the inspection services is available in the Multi Annual National Control Plan reports<sup>7</sup>.

Under EU legislation plants, fruit, vegetables, and plant material from outside the EU fall into three categories: ‘unrestricted’, ‘controlled’, and ‘prohibited’ material. Plant passports facilitate the movement of controlled commodities within the EU area whilst inspections of relevant businesses are conducted ‘in field’, generally between 2 and 4 times per year. Commodities imported from outside of the EU area need to be declared on entry to the EU and can then move freely across

<sup>7</sup> [Food Standards Agency - Multi-Annual National Control Plan](#)

the EU area. In December 2019 the EU introduced new legislation pertaining to plants and plant products. Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2072 and its Annexes replaced the Annexes of Directive 2000/29/EC<sup>8</sup>. Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2072 covers more plants and plant commodities than the previous legislation.

Now that the UK has left the EU new legislation is in place<sup>9</sup> and, following the end of the transition period (31 December 2020), there are new processes for importing plants and plant products, including wood and wood products, from the EU. These are detailed in the [Guidance on importing and exporting plants and plant products from 1 January 2021](#).

Under the new UK legislation plants, fruit, vegetables, cut flowers, soil and other regulated objects (for example, machinery) fall into five categories of phytosanitary control:

1. 'Prohibited' - Can only bring into Great Britain if a scientific research license or derogation is obtained.
2. 'Prohibited (pending risk assessment)' – material you can only bring into Great Britain if risk assessed by Defra. (Exclusions apply).
3. 'Regulated and notifiable' – material you can only bring into Great Britain if accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate and advanced notification of landing.
4. 'Regulated' – material you can only bring into Great Britain if accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate. After applicants complete a customs entry, a small number of these consignments may need advanced notification on CHIEF (Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight).
5. 'Unregulated' – material you can bring into Great Britain without a phytosanitary certificate or advanced notification.

Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) has adopted a phased approach to plant health controls for plants and plant products imported from the European Union (EU). This phased approach started in January 2021 and is proposed to be completed in 2025.

- Since 1 January 2021, high-priority plants and plant products have required pre-notification and a phytosanitary certificate (PC) when being imported from the EU, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland. These include all plants for planting, ware potatoes, some seed for sowing and other plant or forest reproductive material, some wood and wood products and used agricultural or forestry machinery.
- Since 1 January 2022, notification of import has been required for some other regulated and notifiable plants and plant products imported from the EU (except the Republic of Ireland) including growing medium attached to plants, root and tubercle vegetables, some leafy vegetables, some fresh produce (fruit and vegetables), some seeds (in addition to those on the high-priority list) and some cut flowers.
- Since November 2023 an easement has been applied to fruit and vegetables imported from the EU. Products included in the easement do not need to provide an import notification and are not subject to import checks at the GB border until the easement ends on 1 July 2025.<sup>10</sup>

The analysis below focuses on consignments of commodities classed as controlled and arriving at points of entry in Great Britain (England and Wales for PHSI, England, Wales, and Scotland for FC). These consignments are subject to inspection activities ranging from document checks to

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<sup>8</sup> [New Plant Health rules](#)

<sup>9</sup> [The Plant Health \(Phytosanitary Conditions\) \(Amendment\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2020](#)

<sup>10</sup> [BTOM update, Plant Health Portal](#)



physical inspections. The level of checks required for different types of commodities varies but the highest risk commodities are subject to full checks (100%). In addition, emergency measures<sup>11</sup> can be introduced which may restrict trade due to changes in import requirements.

Controlled commodities are a subset of the trade analysis shown above (which also includes unrestricted commodities); however, data are not comparable to that provided by HMRC due to differences in measurement units, geographies, and purpose. More information can be found in the accompanying quality and methodology report.

## Plant Health and Seed Inspectorate

The Plant Health and Seed Inspectorate (PHSI) is part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and implements and enforces plant health policy in England, and in Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government. PHSI conduct inspections of plants, seeds, bulbs, cut flowers, planting materials, fruits, vegetables and some used agricultural machinery.

It is important to note that changes in the number of consignments may be influenced by changes in trade patterns as well as by legislative changes. Factors which can contribute to changes in trade patterns include climate events, changes in market demand, social unrest or change, pest outbreaks etc. Controls may be applied to any number of countries where there is a pest risk but additionally countries may apply self-prohibition if they are aware of a pest issue in their country. Where self-prohibition is applied there are no formal reporting routes and often information cannot be confirmed:

- Decision 2019/523 added controls on fruits of Kiwi, Papaya, Strawberry, Avocado, Rubus, Grapes and used agricultural machinery.
- Decision 2019/1598 added controls on maize.
- Commission Implementing Regulation 2019/2072 implemented on 14 December 2019 as part of Smarter Rules for Safer Food package which increased the scope of regulated material to include all living plant material other than Fruits of *Ananas comosus*, *Cocos nucifera*, *Durio zibethinus*, *Musa* and *Phoenix dactylifera*. Following the departure from the EU, the Plant Health (Phytosanitary Conditions) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 implemented on 1 January 2021, amended 2019/2072 increasing the range of exempt material to include fruits of *Actinidia*, *Fortunella*, *Poncirus*, *Diospyros*, *Gossypium*, *Mangifera*, *Passiflora*, *Psidium* and fruit and leaves of *Citrus* and leaves of *Murraya*.
- Subsequent amendments to 2019/2072 include the additional controls on plants for planting of *Coffea*, *Polygala myrtifolia*, *Lavandula*, *Nerium oleander*, *Salvia rosmarinus*, *Olea europaea* and *Prunus dulcis* (the Official Controls and Phytosanitary Conditions (Amendment) Regulations 2021). Controls have been strengthened on plants of *Cedrus* and *Pinus* (The Phytosanitary Conditions (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2022) and new controls have been added on plants for planting of *Capsicum* and *Solanum lycopersicum* (The Official Controls (Plant Health) (Prior Notification) and Phytosanitary Conditions (Amendment) Regulations 2023)
- A ban has been imposed on plants of *Polymnia sonchifolia* by the Phytosanitary Conditions (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021. There has been self-imposed bans from Thailand, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. These can be very limited (for example to one exporter) or more general.

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<sup>11</sup> [EU emergency control measures by species](#)

**Table 7: Number of controlled consignments, by commodity type, England and Wales, 2019 to 2023**

| Year                        | Plants for planting | Cut flowers and flower buds | Foliage, branches and other parts of plants | Seed and tissue culture | Fruit and nuts | Vegetables | Other | Total   |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------|----------------|------------|-------|---------|
| 2019                        | 4,281               | 21,624                      | 123   | 478                     | 55,023         | 29,606     | 1,506 | 112,640 |
| 2020(b)                     | 3,173               | 18,933                      | 141   | 576                     | 73,055         | 48,559     | 1,674 | 146,111 |
| 2021(b)                     | 92,151              | 31,028                      | 360   | 1,876                   | 58,139         | 61,032     | 1,816 | 246,402 |
| 2022(b)                     | 101,099             | 87,125                      | 1,398                                       | 2,202                   | 97,788         | 186,047    | 3,652 | 479,311 |
| 2023(b)                     | 183,135             | 92,500                      | 1,943                                       | 2,775                   | 145,506        | 265,748    | 3,929 | 695,536 |
| Value change 2019-2023      | 178,854             | 70,876                      | 1,820                                       | 2,297                   | 90,483         | 236,141    | 2,424 | 582,896 |
| Percentage change 2019-2023 | 4,178.1             | 327.8                       | 1,484.1                                     | 480.5                   | 164.4          | 797.6      | 161.0 | 517.5   |

1. Data are calendar year.

2. See glossary for information on commodity types.

b. 2020 - EU plant health regulation and official controls regulation were implemented in the EU and the UK on 14th December 2019.

b. 2021 - Following the UK's exit from the EU, GB specific legislation has been introduced and a phasing in of plant health controls is currently in progress. From January 2021 all regulated and notifiable high priority plants and plant products imported from the EU have been subject to plant health controls. Additionally, some commodities have been deregulated.

b. 2022 - From January 2022 notification of import has been required for some other regulated and notifiable plants and plant products imported from the EU. More information is provided in the Controlled Commodities section above.

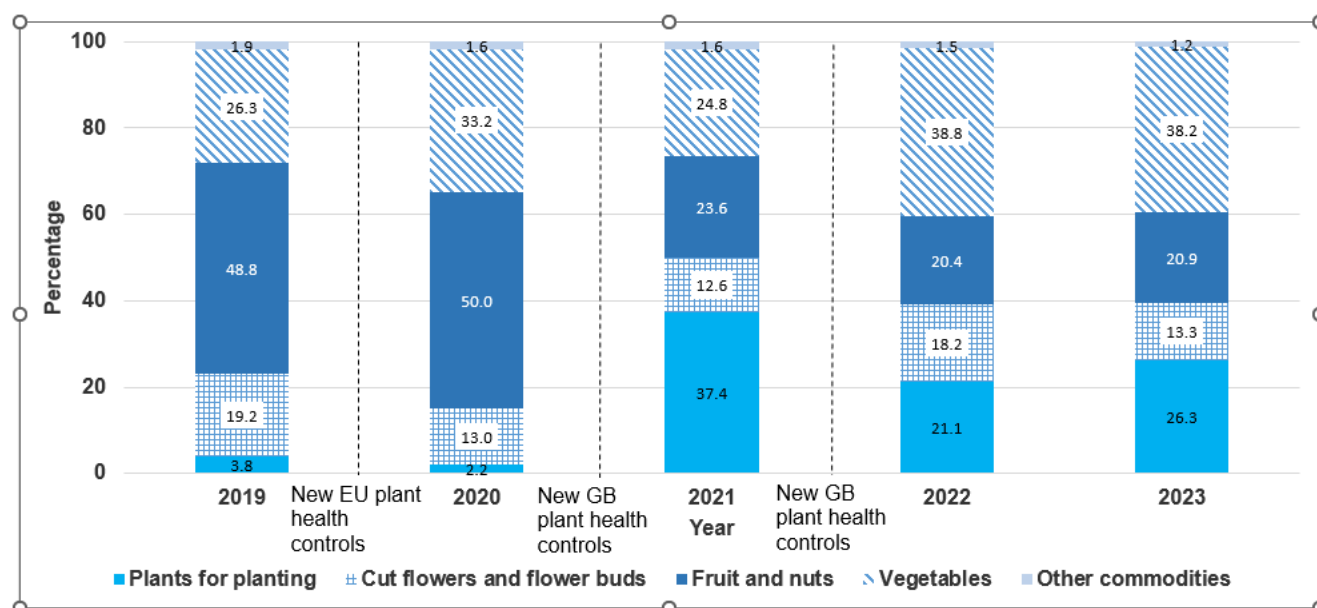
b. 2023 - Commodity categories have been revised to reflect new IPAFFS commodity groups. A small number of products recorded in PEACH could potentially be mapped to more than one category so these commodities have been proportionally assigned to categories based on 2023 IPAFFS data. This issue affects circa 13,200 consignments recorded in PEACH during 2023 and more information can be found in the accompanying Quality and Methodology report.

Source: Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate.

Table 7 shows the number of controlled consignments notified to PHSI, by commodity type.

- The majority of increases in notified consignments have followed key legislative changes; in 2020 following the implementation of new EU plant health regulations and from 2021 with changes relating to the UK exiting the EU and the phasing in of plant health controls.
- The number of regulated consignments notified to the PHSI increased from 112,640 in 2019 to 695,536 in 2023. The largest increase, from 246,402 consignments in 2021 to 479,313 consignments in 2022 (an increase of 94.5%), occurred as the phasing in of plant health controls for EU imports was introduced.
- Notifications of imports of plants for planting showed the largest percentage increase between 2019 and 2023 reflecting the UK-EU nature of the trade as well as the phasing of controls. Between 2022 and 2023 this group of commodities experienced an 81.1% increase in notified consignments, from 101,099 to 183,135.

**Chart 3: Controlled consignments by commodity type, England and Wales, 2019 to 2023**



Data are calendar year.

See glossary for information on commodity types.

Source: Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate

- Prior to 2021, controlled consignments of plants for planting were, proportionally, the smallest commodity group. This increased substantially in 2021 due to the introduction of controls on high-risk plants. The drop in percentage share in 2023 (37.4% in 2021 down to 26.3% in 2023), reflects the expansion of notification requirements in 2022, specifically the requirement to notify some medium risk commodities.
- Although there was an increase of 216,233 consignments between 2022 and 2023, the percentage shares for each commodity group remained stable, other than a percentage increase in plants for planting and a corresponding decrease in consignments of cut flowers.

**Table 8: Number of controlled consignments, by region of origin, England and Wales, 2019 to 2023**

| Year                        | Africa | Americas | Asia   | Europe <sup>3</sup> | Oceania | Other <sup>4</sup> | Total   |
|-----------------------------|--------|----------|--------|---------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
| 2019                        | 60,099 | 26,241   | 22,990 | 1,279               | 2,031   | -                  | 112,640 |
| 2020(b)                     | 77,825 | 32,592   | 32,581 | 1,186               | 1,927   | -                  | 146,111 |
| 2021(b)                     | 88,423 | 29,453   | 36,910 | 90,133              | 1,473   | 10                 | 246,402 |
| 2022(b)                     | 90,184 | 31,495   | 29,101 | 327,433             | 1,098   | c                  | 479,311 |
| 2023(b)                     | 95,698 | 37,130   | 34,558 | 527,151             | 981     | 18                 | 695,536 |
| Value change 2019-2023      | 35,599 | 10,889   | 11,568 | 525,872             | -1,050  | z                  | 582,896 |
| Percentage change 2019-2023 | 59.2   | 41.5     | 50.3   | 41,115.9            | -51.7   | z                  | 517.5   |

1. Data are calendar year.

2. Table uses UNSD geographies.

3. Prior to 2021, Europe only included non-EU countries.

4. Includes records where the origin is unknown, or the entry is ambiguous.

b. 2020 - EU plant health regulation and official controls regulation were implemented in the EU and the UK on 14th December 2019.

b. 2021 - Following the UK's exit from the EU, GB specific legislation has been introduced and a phasing in of plant health controls is currently in progress. From January 2021 all regulated and notifiable high priority plants and plant products imported from the EU have been subject to plant health controls. Additionally, some commodities have been deregulated.

b. 2022 From January 2022 notification of import has been required for some other regulated and notifiable plants and plant products imported from the EU. More information is provided in the Controlled Commodities section above.

c indicates data are confidential and have been suppressed.

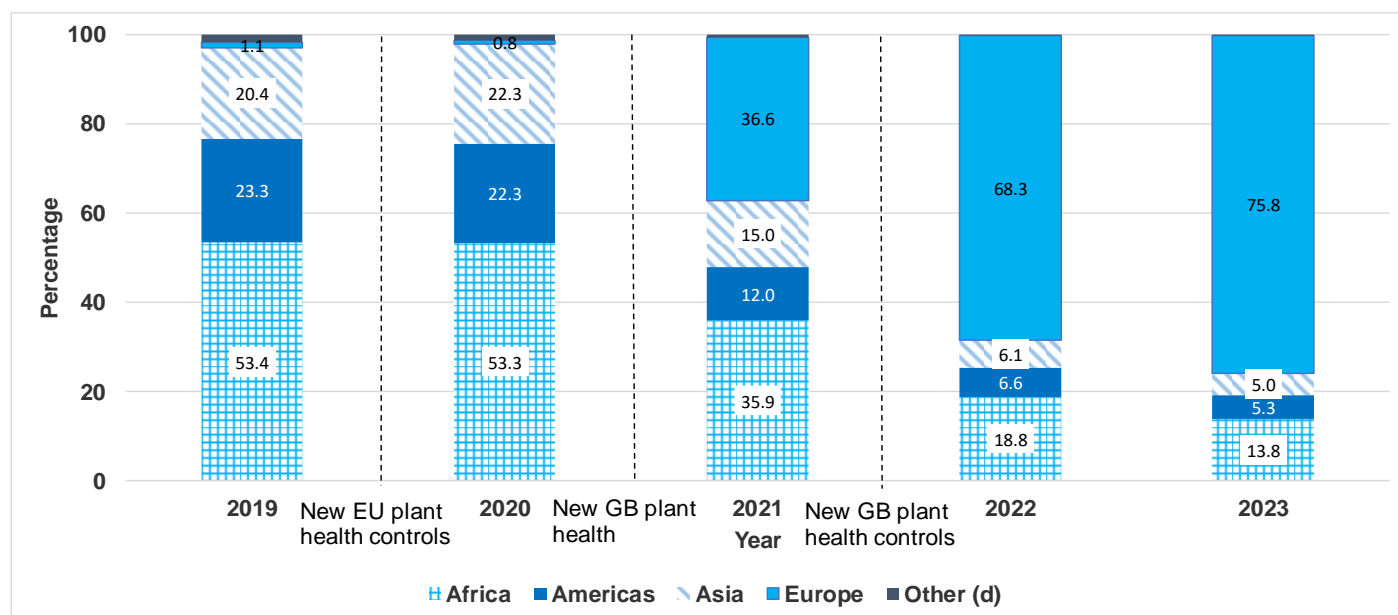
z indicates data are not applicable.

Source: Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate

Table 8 shows the number of controlled consignments notified to PHSI, by region of origin.

- The number of controlled consignments from Europe has significantly increased since 2021, with each successive change to plant health rules leading to more European imports needing to be pre-notified. The largest increase was seen between 2021 and 2022 (237,300 more notified consignments). This has led to an unnaturally high percentage change in both European and total consignments which may be more reflective of regulation change than of changes in trade.
- Oceania was the only region to show a year-on-year decline in controlled consignments over the time period, from 2,031 consignments in 2019 to 981 consignments in 2023 (52%).
- While Africa, Asia and the Americas have all seen increases in consignments, only Africa increased each year between 2019 and 2023, from 60,099 in 2019 to 95,698 in 2023, making it the second-largest region for number of controlled consignments in 2023.

**Chart 4: Controlled consignments by region of origin, 2019 to 2023**



1. Data are calendar year.

2. Table uses UNSD geographies.

Source: Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate.

- Proportionally there was a substantial swing from Africa being the largest region for controlled consignments, making up 53.4% in 2019, to Europe being the largest in 2023 with 75.8% of total consignments. As a result of the large European increases from 2021, all the other regions reduce proportionally year-on-year from this point, despite Table 8 demonstrating that almost all regions saw an increase in consignments over time.
- Consignments from Asia and the Americas have made up a similar percentage share as one another over the 5-year period, with the largest difference between them being three percentage points in 2021. This was also the only year when there were more

consignments from Asia than the Americas. Asia accounted for 15.0% of consignments, while the Americas accounted for 12.0%.

## Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission (FC) are responsible for inspections of timber, including sawn timber, wood shavings, wood chips, sawdust, controlled firewood<sup>12</sup> and prefabricated buildings made of wood being imported to England, Scotland and Wales. The Forestry Commission are also responsible for inspections of wood packaging<sup>13</sup> however this trade is not covered by this release.

It is important to note that changes in the number of consignments may be influenced by changes in trade patterns as well as by legislative changes. Factors which can contribute to changes in trade patterns include climate events, changes in market demand, social unrest or change, pest outbreaks etc. Controls may be applied to any number of countries where there is a pest risk but additionally countries may apply self-prohibition if they are aware of a pest issue in their country.

The war in Ukraine was having a major impact on bulk imports of sawn conifer timber from Russia. In the last few months of the 2021/22 financial year these imports were replaced by uncontrolled imports from the EU however in 2022/23 substitution for Russian sawn timber was less of an issue.

An additional group of commodities are included in the data from 2021/22 onwards. These are wood shavings, wood chips, sawdust and 'other' (mainly oak barrel imports) and the measurement unit is kilograms rather than cubic metres. These data have not been included in the charts below but are included in the tables.

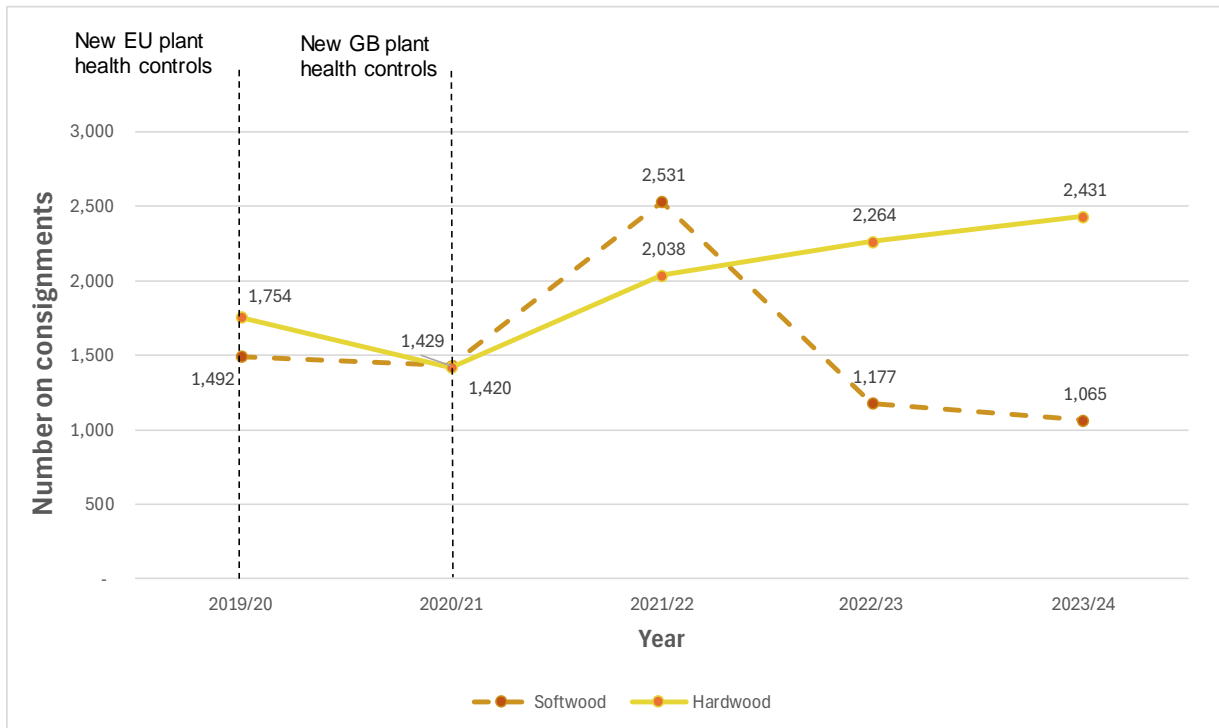
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<sup>12</sup> [Guidance on importing firewood](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Guidance on importing or exporting wood packaging material](#)

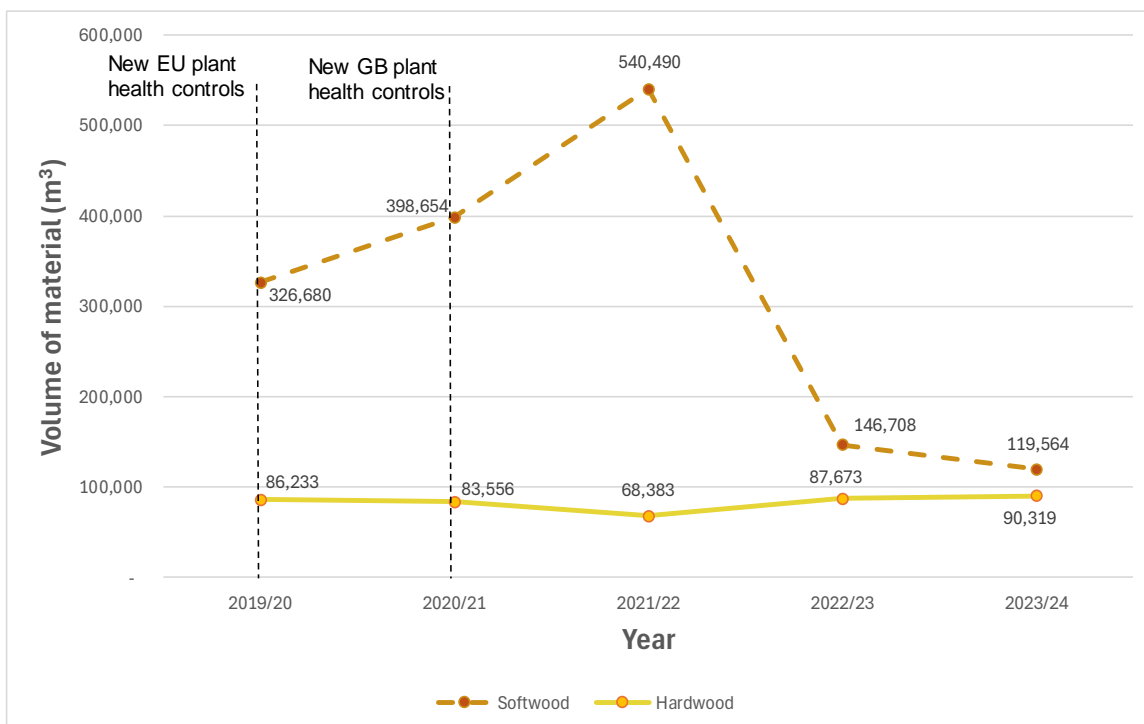
# Chart 5a and 5b: Number of controlled consignments by timber type, 2019/20 to 2023/24

## 5a Number of consignments



Please note that chart 5b only contains volumes of commodities recorded in cubic metres. From 2021/22, import data also contained entries of new commodities which are recorded in kilograms. These new commodities' masses are included in the tables below but will not be considered for inclusion in chart 5b until a full set of datapoints are available.

## 5b. Volume of material



Data are financial year.  
Source: Forestry Commission

- In 2023/2024 the number of hardwood consignments and the associated volume of material were at the highest level of the time period whilst softwood consignments and volume were at the lowest level.
- There was a large increase in the number of consignments (2,531) and volume of material (540,490m<sup>3</sup>) for softwood in 2021/22 following the introduction of new legislation. After this peak, both consignments and volume decreased in 2022/23, and this decrease continued in 2023/24 to 1,065 consignments and a volume of 119,564 m<sup>3</sup>.
- Per consignment, there was a higher volume of material of softwood than hardwood. In 2023/24, this was approximately 112m<sup>3</sup> of softwood per consignment, compared to 37m<sup>3</sup> of hardwood per consignment.

**Table 9: Controlled consignments of softwood, by region of origin, 2019/20 to 2023/24<sup>1</sup>**

|   | Year <sup>2</sup> |            |            |           |           | Value change<br>2019/20-2023/24 | Percentage change<br>2019/20-2023/24 |
|---|-------------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|   | 2019/20(b)        | 2020/21(b) | 2021/22(r) | 2022/23   | 2023/24   |                                 |                                      |
| <b>Number of consignments</b>                     |                   |            |            |           |           |                                 |                                      |
| Africa  | 8                 | 4          | 7          | 26        | c         | z                               | z                                    |
| Asia  | 17                | 13         | 4          | c         | 9         | -8                              | -47.1                                |
| Oceania   | 63                | 27         | 27         | 35        | 78        | 15                              | 23.8                                 |
| Central and South America                         | 41                | 28         | 39         | 44        | 29        | -12                             | -29.3                                |
| North America                                     | 860               | 815        | 1,043      | 541       | 509       | -351                            | -40.8                                |
| Europe <sup>3</sup>                               | 503               | 542        | 1,411      | 531       | 440       | -63                             | -12.5                                |
| Total   | 1,492             | 1,429      | 2,531      | 1,177     | 1,065     | -427                            | -28.6                                |
| <b>Volume of notified product (m<sup>3</sup>)</b> |                   |            |            |           |           |                                 |                                      |
| Africa  | 400               | 159        | 341        | 1,410     | c         | z                               | z                                    |
| Asia  | 1,128             | 986        | 241        | c         | 13,455    | 12,327                          | 1,092.8                              |
| Oceania   | 2,997             | 1,266      | 1,156      | 1,697     | 2,994     | -3                              | -0.1                                 |
| Central and South America                         | 3,472             | 2,634      | 3,216      | 3,900     | 1,616     | -1,856                          | -53.5                                |
| North America                                     | 56,189            | 42,484     | 64,637     | 28,962    | 25,397    | -30,792                         | -54.8                                |
| Europe <sup>3</sup>                               | 262,494           | 351,125    | 470,899    | 110,739   | 76,102    | -186,392                        | -71.0                                |
| Total   | 326,680           | 398,654    | 540,490    | 146,708   | 119,564   | -207,116                        | -63.4                                |
| <b>Mass of notified product (kg)</b>              |                   |            |            |           |           |                                 |                                      |
| Africa  | x                 | x          | c          | 82,980    | 0         | z                               | z                                    |
| North America/Europe                              | x                 | x          | 1,617,932  | 5,748,830 | 8,221,486 | z                               | z                                    |
| Asia/Oceania/Central and South America            | x                 | x          | x          | x         | 9,525     | z                               | z                                    |
| Total   | x                 | x          | 1,617,932  | 5,831,810 | 8,231,011 | z                               | z                                    |

1. Table uses UNSD geographies.

2. Data are financial year.

3. Prior to 2021, Europe only included non-EU countries.

b. 2019/20 - EU plant health regulation and official controls regulation were implemented in the EU and the UK on 14th December 2019.

b. 2020/21 -Following the UKs exit from the EU, GB specific legislation has been introduced and there has been a phasing in of plant health controls. From January 2021 all regulated and notifiable high priority plants and plant products imported from the EU have been subject to plant health controls. Additionally, some commodities have been deregulated.

x indicates data are not available.

z indicates data are not applicable.

c indicates data are confidential and have been suppressed.

Source: Forestry Commission

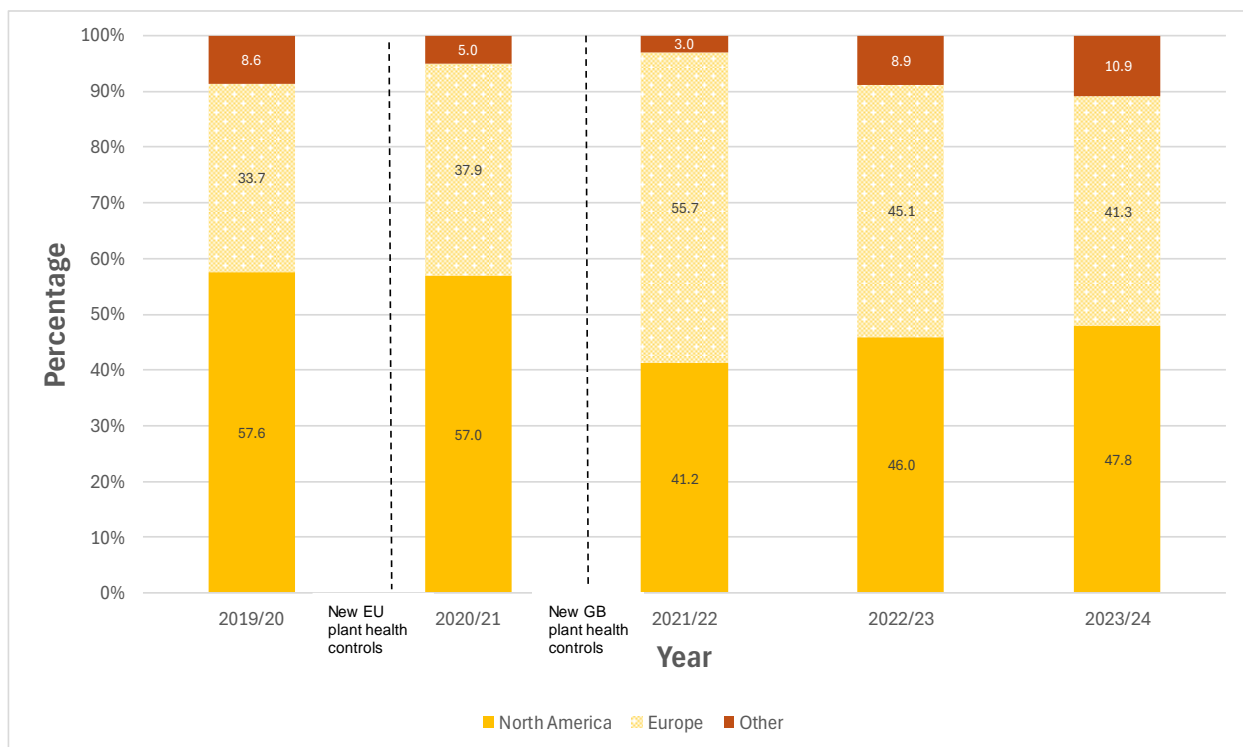
Table 9 shows the number of controlled consignments of softwood and the associated volume of material notified to FC, by region of origin.



- The number of controlled consignments of softwood peaked at 2,531 in 2021/22 before decreasing to the lowest levels seen across the time period in 2022/23 and 2023/24. The same pattern was seen for the volume of material which peaked at 540,490m<sup>3</sup> before decreasing to the lowest levels of the time period in the two years since.
- A similar pattern was seen for consignments from Europe which reached 1,411 in 2021/22 before falling to 440 in 2023/24 however intervening years were more stable.
- The volume of material imported from Europe peaked at 470,899m<sup>3</sup> in 2021/22 before decreasing to 76,102m<sup>3</sup> in 2023/24, the lowest level of the time period. The mass of material reached a high of 8,221,486 in 2023/24 suggesting a change in the type of softwood imported.
- The volume of softwood imported from Asia stood at 13,455 in 2023/24, far higher than previous years however the number of consignments dropped to a low of nine suggesting larger consignments were imported.

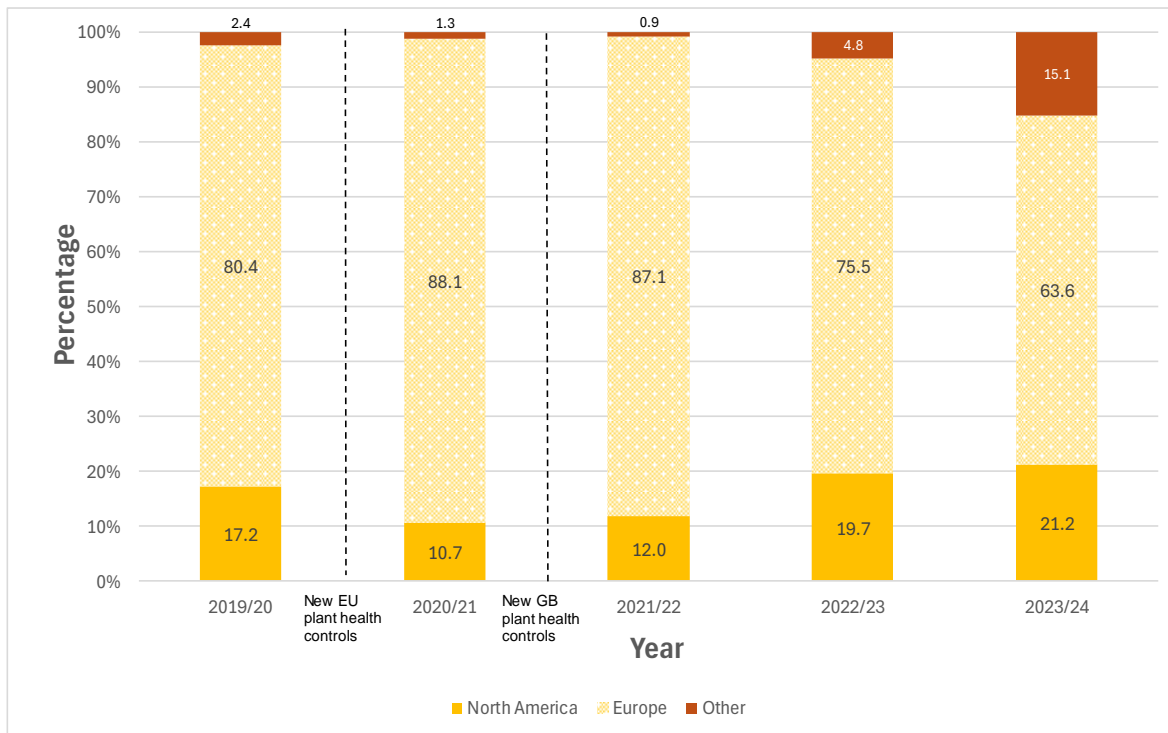
## Chart 6a and 6b: Softwood consignments and volume, by region of origin, 2019/20 to 2023/24

### 6a. Softwood consignments



Please note that chart 6b only contains volumes of commodities recorded in cubic metres. From 2021/22 import data also contained entries of new commodities which are recorded in kilograms. These new commodities' masses are included in the tables below but not in charts as only two data points are available.

## 6b. Softwood volume



Data are financial year.

Chart uses UNSD geographies.

Prior to 2021, Europe only included non-EU countries.

Source: Forestry Commission

- In each year, softwood from Europe made up the majority of volume, even when it was not the majority of consignments. This is most noticeable in 2020/21, when although it made up only 37.9% of consignments, softwood from Europe accounted for 88.1% of the total volume of softwood.
- After new plant health controls were introduced in 2021/22, there was an increase from 37.9% to 55.7% in the proportion of controlled consignments from Europe, however the volume of notified products stayed relatively stable. Both proportions have decreased in the most recent two years with the number of European consignments standing at 41.3%, and volume at 63.6%, of all softwood imports in 2023/24.
- Although the percentage of consignments from North America was lower in 2023/24 (47.8%) than it was in 2019/20 (57.6%), the percentage share for the volume increased from 17.2% in 2019/20 to 21.2% in 2023/24. Table 9 showed that the volume of softwood from North America has halved over the period, but the decrease in volume of softwood from Europe was more extreme, resulting in a higher percentage share for softwood from North America.

**Table 10: Controlled consignments of hardwood, by region of origin, England, Scotland and Wales, 2019/20 to 2023/24<sup>1</sup>**

|   | Year <sup>2</sup> |            |         |         |         | Value change<br>2019/20-2023/24 | Percentage change<br>2019/20-2023/24 |
|---|-------------------|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|   | 2019/20(b)        | 2020/21(b) | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |                                 |                                      |
| <b>Number of consignments</b>                     |                   |            |         |         |         |                                 |                                      |
| North America                                     | 1,734             | 1,411      | 1,822   | 1,461   | 1,408   | -326                            | -18.8                                |
| Europe/Asia <sup>3</sup>                          | 20                | 9          | 216     | 803     | 1,023   | 1,003                           | 5,015.0                              |
| Total   | 1,754             | 1,420      | 2,038   | 2,264   | 2,431   | 677                             | 38.6                                 |
| <b>Volume of notified product (m<sup>3</sup>)</b> |                   |            |         |         |         |                                 |                                      |
| North America                                     | 84,980            | 83,113     | 58,670  | 50,520  | 47,252  | -37,728                         | -44.4                                |
| Europe/Asia <sup>3</sup>                          | 1,253             | 443        | 9,713   | 37,153  | 43,067  | 41,814                          | 3,337.1                              |
| Total   | 86,233            | 83,556     | 68,383  | 87,673  | 90,319  | 4,086                           | 4.7                                  |
| <b>Mass of notified product (kg)</b>              |                   |            |         |         |         |                                 |                                      |
| North America                                     | x                 | x          | 30,973  | 41,584  | 41,669  | z                               | z                                    |
| Europe <sup>3</sup>                               | x                 | x          | 0       | 15,206  | 236,320 | z                               | z                                    |
| Total   | x                 | x          | 30,973  | 56,790  | 277,989 | z                               | z                                    |

1. Table uses UNSD geographies.

2. Data are financial year.

3. Prior to 2021, Europe only included non-EU countries.

b. 2019/20 - EU plant health regulation and official controls regulation were implemented in the EU and the UK on 14th December 2019.

b. 2020/21 - Following the UKs exit from the EU, GB specific legislation has been introduced and there has been a phasing in of plant health controls. From January 2021 all regulated and notifiable high priority plants and plant products imported from the EU have been subject to plant health controls. Additionally, some commodities have been deregulated.

x indicates data are not available.

z indicates data are not applicable.

Source: Forestry Commission

Table 10 shows the number of controlled consignments of hardwood and the volume of material, notified to FC, by region of origin.

- The only region to see a decrease in the number of consignments and associated volume of hardwood material was North America where consignments decreased from 1,734 to 1,408 and volume decreased from 84,980m<sup>3</sup> to 47,252m<sup>3</sup> between 2019/20 and 2023/24. The mass of hardwood material increased from 30,973kg in 2021/22 to 41,669kg in 2023/24.
- The increase in the volume of notified hardwood material from Europe following the phasing in of new plant health controls has balanced out the decrease from North America resulting in an overall volume increase of 4.7% since 2019/2020.
- The number of consignments imported from Europe/Asia increased sharply after the requirement to notify was implemented; from 20 in 2019/2020 to 1,023 in 2023/24. The mass of hardwood from Europe also increased from 15,206kg in 2022/23 to 236,320kg in 2023/24. This material includes wood shavings, wood chips, sawdust, bark, and other wood products rather than sawn timber, roundwood and firewood.

**Table 11: Controlled consignments of oak and ash timber, England, Scotland, and Wales, 2019/20 to 2023/24**

|   | Year <sup>1</sup> |            |         |         |         | Value change<br>2019/20-2023/24 | Percentage change<br>2019/20-2023/24 |
|---|-------------------|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|   | 2019/20(b)        | 2020/21(b) | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |                                 |                                      |
| <b>Number of consignments</b>                     |                   |            |         |         |         |                                 |                                      |
| Ash   | 240               | 131        | 302     | 736     | 870     | 630                             | 262.5                                |
| Oak   | 1,227             | 1,003      | 1,246   | 963     | 875     | -352                            | -28.7                                |
| Total   | 1,467             | 1,134      | 1,548   | 1,699   | 1,745   | 278                             | 19.0                                 |
| <b>Volume of notified product (m<sup>3</sup>)</b> |                   |            |         |         |         |                                 |                                      |
| Ash   | 22,128            | 4,589      | 12,405  | 34,921  | 39,433  | 17,305                          | 78.2                                 |
| Oak   | 38,330            | 68,310     | 38,087  | 31,543  | 27,851  | -10,479                         | -27.3                                |
| Total   | 60,458            | 72,899     | 50,492  | 66,464  | 67,284  | 6,826                           | 11.3                                 |
| <b>Mass of notified product (kg)</b>              |                   |            |         |         |         |                                 |                                      |
| Ash   | x                 | x          | 0       | 0       | 0       | z                               | z                                    |
| Oak   | x                 | x          | 5,663   | c       | c       | z                               | z                                    |
| Total   | x                 | x          | 5,663   | c       | c       | z                               | z                                    |

1. Data are financial year.

b. 2019/20 - EU plant health regulation and official controls regulation were implemented in the EU and the UK on 14th December 2019.

b. 2020/21 -Following the UKs exit from the EU, GB specific legislation has been introduced and there has been a phasing in of plant health controls. From January 2021 all regulated and notifiable high priority plants and plant products imported from the EU have been subject to plant health controls. Additionally, some commodities have been deregulated.

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Source: Forestry Commission

Ash from all third countries became controlled in 2021, prior to this, ash originating in Canada, China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Russia, Taiwan, Europe, and the USA was controlled. Oak originating in Canada, China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia, Taiwan, Turkey, Taiwan, USA and Vietnam is controlled.

- Oak and Ash accounted for 71.8% of all controlled hardwood consignments in 2023/24, a decrease from 83.6% in 2019/20. These two species accounted for 74.5% of the volume of controlled hardwood in 2023/24, an increase from 70.1% in 2019/20.
- In 2023/24 there were similar numbers of consignments of ash (870) and oak (875) however the volume of ash was greater (39,433m<sup>3</sup>) than oak (27,851m<sup>3</sup>), a trend seen over the past two years.
- Oak accounted for 50.1% of controlled consignments of ash and oak, and 41.4% of the volume of material in 2023/24, a decrease of 33.5 percentage points in consignments and 22.0 percentage points for volume since 2019/20.

## Glossary<sup>14</sup>

Commodity: A type of plant, plant product, or other article being moved for trade or other purpose [FAO, 1990; revised ICPM, 2001]

Consignment: A quantity of plants, plant products or other articles being moved from one country to another and covered, when required, by a single phytosanitary certificate (a consignment may be composed of one or more commodities or lots) [FAO, 1990; revised ICPM, 2001]. For PHSI data a consignment is a commodity type declared on a phytosanitary certificate. Some phytosanitary certificates will cover more than one commodity type and so the number of consignments declared will be more than the number of phytosanitary certificates.

Controlled plant products: plants and plant commodities which are required to undergo checks for pest and disease on crossing a customs border. For countries within the European Union (EU) this means upon entry to the EU, and this applied to GB trade until the UK exited the EU on 31 December 2020.

Country of origin: Country where the plants were grown [FAO, 1990; revised CEPM, 1996; CEPM, 1999]

Customs declaration: an official document that lists and gives details of goods that are being imported or exported. In legal terms, a customs declaration is the act whereby a person indicates the wish to place goods under a given customs procedure. This legal procedure is described in the Union Customs Code (UCC) (Articles 5 (12) and 158 to 187)<sup>15</sup>.

Cut flowers and flower buds: cut flowers used for bouquets and decorative purposes.

Exports (HMRC trade data): the country of destination as declared at the time of export. However, where goods can be traded while in transit (e.g., grain and crude oil), this may not necessarily be the final destination of the goods.

Foliage, branches and other parts of plants: branches, leaves and other parts of plants used mainly for decorative purposes.

Food and crops: commodities traded for the primary purpose of human consumption.

Forestry: timber and wood commodities but not live trees.

Fruit and nuts: The sweet and fleshy product of a tree or other plant that contains seed and can be eaten as food or a fruit consisting of a hard or tough shell around an edible kernel.

Hardwood: timber from broadleaved trees.

Imports (HMRC trade data): The country from which the goods were originally dispatched to the UK without any commercial transaction in any intermediate country (either with or without breaking bulk in the course of transport). This is not necessarily the country of origin, manufacture, or the last country from which the goods were shipped to the UK.

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<sup>14</sup> Some definitions are taken from [ISPM 5 Glossary of phytosanitary terms](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Union Customs Code](#)

Inspection: Official visual examination of plants, plant products or other regulated articles to determine if pests are present or to determine compliance with phytosanitary regulations [FAO, 1990; revised FAO, 1995; formerly “inspect”].

Non-EU European countries: Countries outside of the European Union but geographically part of Europe<sup>16</sup>.

‘Other’ commodities: Grain, other vegetable products (such as herbs), machinery and vehicles which have been operated for agricultural or forestry purposes.

Phytosanitary certificate: An official paper document or its official electronic equivalent, consistent with the model certificates of the IPPC, attesting that a consignment meets phytosanitary import requirements [FAO, 1990; revised CPM, 2012]

Plants and plant commodities: goods including plants, trees, bulbs, seeds, fruit, vegetables, and timber. Commodities are included if they are (1) raw plant products or (2) simply processed, i.e., processed in a manner that would not, in theory, remove the pest and disease risk.

Plants for planting: live or dormant plants, bulbs or tubers of plants and trees.

Seed and tissue culture: seeds for sowing and plant tissue for propagation.

Simple processing: Simple processing can include peeling, grinding, chopping, and debarking but excludes cooking, fermenting and preservation in liquid. For further information please see International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures; ISPM No. 32; Categorisation of commodities according to their pest risk (2009)<sup>17</sup>.

Softwood: timber from coniferous trees.

Vegetable: A plant or part of a plant used as food, such as a cabbage, potato, turnip, or bean.

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<sup>16</sup> [List of non-EU countries](#)

<sup>17</sup> [International standards for phytosanitary measures. ISPM No. 32](#)