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|  | |  | Forest Service Headquarters  Inishkeen House  Killyhevlin  Enniskillen  BT74 4EJ  Phone: 02866 343165 |
|  |
|  | | **Date:** **15th Sept. 2017** |

Dear Sir/Madam

**Act now to keep Northern Ireland *Xylella* free**

*Xylella fastidiosa*presents a serious threat to plants in Northern Ireland. The best defence against the disease is to prevent its arrival, which is why it is essential Government and industry work together to keep it out of the country.

*Xylella* is a very infectious bacterial disease that is already devastating olive trees in southern Italy and affecting a range of trees and plants in Spain and France. The impact on the sector were *Xylella* to arrive in the Northern Ireland would be significant - commercially and environmentally important trees and plants would be at risk, while restrictions would include a ban on movement of host plants from premises within 10km of an outbreak for at least five years. In countries with significant outbreaks the disease has already proved impossible to eradicate, with major restrictions imposed on businesses in outbreak areas.

Government is taking strong action to prevent the arrival of the disease. In Europe, through DEFRA, we are pushing for greater protections and DEFRA has asked the European Commission to strengthen requirements for high risk hosts to provide additional assurance that they are free of the disease when moved. In Northern Ireland we will carry out inspections of all consignments of host plants of *Xylella* imported from outside the EU and have an ongoing inland surveillance programme, targeted at host plants being grown and traded. We are also making available on the DAERA website, information on the high risk plants and guidance on sourcing plants.

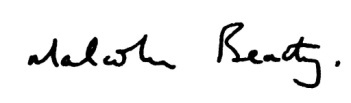
Many nurseries and garden centres in Great Britain are already on the front foot against *Xylella.* They have committed not to bring *Xylella* host plants into the UK from countries or regions of the EU where the disease is present and management practices are being employed around careful sourcing, traceability and good hygiene measures, to reduce the risk of introducing the disease.

To keep Northern Ireland protected against *Xylella* it is vital that local plant importers and traders follow this lead. I urge you to make careful decisions on sourcing plants, particularly those from countries where *Xylella* is present, and review on-site measures to reduce the risk of disease introduction and spread. Guidance is available [on the DAERA website](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/xylella-fastidiosa)[[1]](#footnote-1) [on the DEFRA plant health portal](https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/pests-and-diseases/high-profile-pests-and-diseases/xylella/)[[2]](#footnote-2) and [on GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protecting-plant-health-topical-issues) [[3]](#footnote-3) while the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) have also published a [*‘5 point plan’ against Xylella*](https://hta.org.uk/news/retailers-xylella-statement.html)[[4]](#footnote-4) *fo*r those involved in the commercial supply and receipt of plants.

*Xylella* is not currently in Northern Ireland and it is essential that all of us with an interest in a healthy, thriving plant and horticulture industry do all we can to keep it that way and protect our environment and businesses.

Let’s work together to keep *Xylella* out.

Yours faithfully



Malcolm Beatty

Chief Plant Health Officer for Northern Ireland

1. <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/xylella-fastidiosa> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/pests-and-diseases/high-profile-pests-and-diseases/xylella/>

   3 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protecting-plant-health-topical-issues> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://hta.org.uk/news/retailers-xylella-statement.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)