

TRACIT calls for stronger action against e-commerce platforms that facilitate illegal online sales of seeds and pesticides

Geneva, 04 November 2024 – Today, the Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade’s (TRACIT) Deputy Director-General Stefano Betti participated in a workshop organized by the International Seed Federation (ISF) on the increasing problem of illegal seed trade on e-commerce platforms. The event took place at WTO headquarters in Geneva and was chaired by Doaa Abdel Motaal, WTO’s Senior Counsellor, Agriculture and Commodities Division.

During his presentation, Mr. Betti outlined the main findings and recommendations of TRACIT’s latest report on *“Tackling the sale of illicit pesticides on e-commerce platforms,”* and the relevance to similar practices for the illegal sales of seeds online. The primary objective of the report is to examine the structural vulnerabilities in the operations of e-commerce platforms that can be exploited by criminals to sell illicit agro-chemicals and related products online.

“The infiltration of agricultural supply chains by illicit pesticides and seeds is exacerbated by online sales through major e-commerce platforms worldwide,” said Mr Betti. **“These platforms have become conduits for delivering illegal pesticides and seeds directly to farmers, bypassing regulatory controls. This presents a triple threat to agricultural productivity, food security, and biodiversity, with potentially devastating impacts on crop yields, ecosystem health, and farmers’ livelihoods.”**

Notably, he suggested that discussions on potential ways to address the abuse of e-commerce platforms for the sale of illegal seeds should factor in their delivery through small parcels. He explained that improved action by postal operators and express couriers to share information on rogue shippers could help identify the criminals behind the problem. The increased use of social media and fraudulent advertisement by illicit traders should also be part of the equation.

“As both illegal pesticides and seeds destabilize food security chains and food sustainability, it makes sense to address our recommendations to both problems. Measures e-commerce platforms take to mitigate sales of illegal pesticides can effectively stop sales of illegal seeds,” said Mr. Betti.

A key conclusion from the workshop was the urgent need for the “seed community” to collect data to gauge the extent of the exploitation of online channels for illegal seed trade. TRACIT has developed significant expertise in addressing the sale of illicit pesticides, and these findings provide a strong foundation for tackling the illegal seed trade. Given the parallels in regulatory and certification processes for pesticides and seeds, many of the solutions outlined in TRACIT’s report can be readily adapted by the seed community. Leveraging this work will offer a head start and ensure a more coordinated approach to mitigating the sales of illicit seeds and pesticides on e-commerce platforms.

About TRACIT

The Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade ([TRACIT](https://www.tracit.org)) is an independent, private sector initiative to mitigate the economic and social damages of illicit trade by strengthening government enforcement mechanisms and mobilizing businesses across sectors most impacted by illicit trade.

Contact:

Suriya Padmanaabhan, Director of Programs, TRACIT

suriya.padmanaabhan@TRACIT.org | www.tracit.org | Twitter: @TRACIT_org | LinkedIn: tracitorg