Flowers and indoor potted plants are grown locally or imported from other countries. Most cut flowers and indoor potted plants are sold in North America and Western Europe, and many are imported. The major sources of flowers that cross national borders include Colombia and Ecuador for North America and Kenya and Ethiopia for Western Europe. The Netherlands is the global hub for trade in flowers and ornamental plants.

Roses are the most valuable cut flower that is traded, accounting for a third of all cut flower exports in 2020. The Netherlands looms large in flower data because the country is a major producer of flowers and many flowers produced elsewhere are sold at the Royal FloraHolland near Aalsmeer.

Colombia is the major source of cut flowers for the US, exporting flowers worth $1 billion a year by ship from both Atlantic and Pacific Ocean ports and flying flowers from Bogota to Miami. Colombia is the source of 60 percent of US cut flower imports.

Kenya and Ethiopia supply most of the $1.1 billion worth of cut flowers that are imported by the EU. Most African flowers are flown to Amsterdam and auctioned to buyers from around Europe. Trade data suggest that most UK cut flowers are from the Netherlands because they pass through Aalsmeer.

Cut flowers are purchased in street kiosks, garden centers, and online. During covid, street sales diminished while online sales rose. Some countries required garden centers to close during covid lockdowns, while others allowed them to remain open. Most US states allowed home improvement stores, which often include garden centers, to remain open during covid, contributing to a sharp jump in sales.
of flowers and potted plants to $47 billion in 2021, double annual sales a decade earlier.

Most cut flowers move by air from growers to reception hubs and retailers. The pandemic curbed air travel, so more flowers and related commodities are moving by sea, especially from Colombia and Ecuador to the US.

FSI

The Floriculture Sustainability Initiative, part of the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), aims to ensure that flowers that cross borders are grown using good agricultural practices that include good labor conditions and minimize negative environmental impacts. Some 70 major buyers have endorsed the FSI, and about three-fourths of the cut flowers and indoor potted plants that were traded in 2020 had FSI-certification.

Women are three-fourths of the workers employed on Kenyan flower farms, and fill most of the lowest-level positions. Some report sexual harassment from male supervisors; NGOs urge flower exporters to have more female managers. Many of the workers in the Lake Naivasha basin migrate from elsewhere in Kenya, and are sometimes exploited by labor contractors and housed in substandard facilities. Environmental groups, who say that each rose requires 10 liters of water, complain that water extracted from Lake Naivasha is reducing the water available for the cattle herded by the Maasai peoples.

Floriculture encompasses more than cut flowers. Bulbs, indoor and outdoor plants, and nursery trees are also key elements of the floriculture industry. The value of bulbs, cut flowers, and potted indoor plants is over $80 billion a year, and the value of outdoor nursery plants and trees is $45 billion a year.
More Flowers are Being Shipped from Colombia and Ecuador to the U.S. by Sea

FSI Certified ¾ of Traded Cut Flowers and Indoor Potted Plants in 2020

Cut Flowers and Indoor Plants are More Valuable than Nursery Plants and Trees

References


To subscribe to RMN blogs, send email to ruralmigrationnews-subscribe@primal.ucdavis.edu

More at: https://migration.ucdavis.edu/rmn/