**Participant Information Sheet**

**Study Title**: FloraGuard: Tackling the illegal trade in endangered plants.

**Researcher**: Dr Anita Lavorgna

**ERGO number:** 31264

***Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research.***

***It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part.***

***If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.***

**What is the research about?**

The FloraGuard proposed project combines innovative and cross-disciplinary ways of analysing online marketplaces for the illegal trade in endangered plants and analyses of existing policing practices. It aims at producing a package of digital resources to assist law enforcement in the detection and investigation of illegal trades of endangered plants. It focuses on the UK, which serves as a major transit and destination market for the European region. The result of this research will be of significant importance for our better understanding of this criminal activity, and also for the work of law enforcement in combating the illegal trade in endangered plants (in both its online and offline elements), disrupt criminal networks involved in such trade, and preserve biodiversity.

The research is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

**Why have I been asked to participate?**

You have been asked to participate because of your expertise and work experience on wildlife trafficking. We hope that you agree that this is a great opportunity to enhance our understanding of the illegal trade in endangered plants, and we hope you share our vision of how important and fruitful your participation would be.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

As a participant, you will be expected to take part to a face-to-face interview of about one hour. You might be contacted again in case a short follow up (face-to-face, or via Skype) turns out necessary. No further time or commitment will be expected from you. If possible, the interview will be audio recorded. If you do not give the consent for the recording, notes will be taken during the interview.

**Are there any benefits in my taking part?**

There are no material or other individual benefits to individual participants.

**Are there any risks involved?**

There are no specific risks involved with this interview. However, as we might be discussing about illegal activities, you are advised not to discuss during the interview any issue of sensitive/potentially incriminating nature that you would not feel confident discussing with law enforcement (e.g., when it comes to illegal activities you might have been exposed to).

**Will my participation be confidential?**

Your participation will be confidential (meaning that research information will not be disclosed except to other authorised persons, e.g. the research assistant) and anonymous (meaning that your data will be coded so that you will not be identified by other researchers. However, you could be linked to your data through a coding key, which will be stored securely by me and destroyed at the end of the study).

The PI (Dr Anita Lavorgna) will direct the overall data management process and will be responsible for the oversight of quality assurance, security, storage and archiving. Please read under “What will happen to the results of the research?” for further details.

**What should I do if I want to take part?**

You will simply have to sign the Consent form.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

You have the right to withdraw from the research during the interviews or within the next 10 working days without your rights being affected. After this deadline, data collected up to the point of withdrawal will be retained and used.

**What will happen to the results of the research?**

The results of the research will be published in the form of academic articles, reports, and guidelines. The reports and the guidelines will be freely accessible to all participants via the project website, and we are happy to send copy of the academic articles to you, should you be interested. We will also organise a final event to discuss the research findings, and you will be invited to participate.

The transcribed interviews will be anonymised and saved in plain text files to ensure accessibility to other interested researchers for ethically approved studies. If some interviews take place virtually, they will be transcribed, anonymised, and saved in plain text files. After that, the audio record will be destroyed. Transcribers will sign a confidentiality agreement.

Backup copies of the data and metadata will be regularly uploaded to the University of Southampton Research Filestore. Data storage is housed in a secure University data centre, offering power backup and full environmental control. The Filestore is designated as a critical IT service and is specifically identified within the University’s business continuity plan and policiesData integrity is assured by the use of multiple snapshots for day-to-day file restoration and offsite copy methods to satisfy business continuity needs.

Access to data is guided by the following standard principles:

* Nobody outside the authorised group of users has access to data, with the exception of named senior IT systems administrative staff. Users are granted access based on the approval of the Data Custodian within the Research Group.
* Passwords on the University's network are changed every 12 months.
* Filestore administration is carried out by named senior IT system administrators. Physical access is strictly limited to a trusted Operations team.
* Use of portable media such as DVD/CDs and memory sticks are strongly discouraged.

Data will be stored in the institutional repository for 10 years, as per University of Southampton policy.

By the end of the project (June 2020), we will upload all data outputs to the UK Data Service for long-term storage and preservation. We have contacted the UK Data Service regarding our specific requirements and been assured they have the experience and infrastructure to host the data and provide controlled access to it. The UK Data Service will provide a request/approval process for access control.

**Where can I get more information?**

Should you need further information, you can contact the project PI – Dr Anita Lavorgna – via email ([a.lavorgna@soton.ac.uk](mailto:a.lavorgna@soton.ac.uk)) or via phone (02380592614).

You can also find further information on the FloraGuard project here: [www.floraguard.org](http://www.floraguard.org)

**What happens if something goes wrong?**

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact the Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, [rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk)](mailto:rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk)).

The University has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study.

**Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in this research.**