

# You can't even buy your seeds without VAT abuse

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The [Telegraph has reported](#) massive VAT abuse of the Channel Islands' by horticultural companies - naming Thompson & Morgan and Mr Forhergills in the process.

As they note:

*During peak season from March to June, it is not uncommon for 40ft articulated lorries carrying up to 42 trolleys of plants to board the twice daily ferries to Jersey and Guernsey. The goods are then unloaded in packing sheds, repackaged and sent back to UK consumers or kept in greenhouses until ready for sale.*

*Martyn Langlois, the general manager for Ferryspeed, the company responsible for shipping plants belonging to horticultural company Thompson & Morgan's plants from the UK to packing premises in Guernsey, said that Ferryspeed's business with the company was one of its core contracts.*

*Last year Thompson & Morgan turned over £40 million.*

And as they also report:

*John Fothergill of Mr Fothergills, one of the handful of large horticultural companies with packing sheds operating out of neighbouring Jersey, accepted that the company was based there purely for tax reasons.*

*"To be blunt we are here for the VAT benefit and we would have to rethink things if this changes."*

I liked this quote to:

*Derek Jarman, director of Hayloft Plants Ltd, a nursery that sells new and unusual plants, paid £400,000 in VAT over the course of last year and said that companies 20 times his size are operating out of the Channel Islands and pay no VAT on goods under the value of £18.*

*"As a businessman I congratulate these companies on being entrepreneurial. As a person who is conscious about the environment, I am seriously concerned about the amount of fossil fuel which is being used to take garden plants from mainland UK to the Channel Islands to be packed and then sent back immediately to mainland UK consumers."*

*"As a Conservative member and supporter, I cannot believe this Government cannot see what is happening. The annual loss of VAT would fund many nurses, teachers and civil servants - the very hardworking people who are currently losing their jobs as the Government is short of money."*

He can see it because it's staring him in the face.

But all use of tax havens - or secrecy jurisdictions as I prefer to call them precisely because so much of this stuff is deliberately hidden from view - is as pernicious.

Secrecy jurisdictions are places that intentionally create regulation for the primary benefit and use of those not resident in their geographical domain. That regulation is designed to undermine the legislation or regulation of another jurisdiction. To facilitate its use secrecy jurisdictions also create a deliberate, legally backed veil of secrecy that ensures that those from outside the jurisdiction making use of its regulation cannot be identified to be doing so.

It's time to close them down.

Now.

Even Tories see the sense in that when it stares them in the face. They just need to look a little harder.

They [should start here](#).