Food Fraud Cases

04/02/18 - Untraceable fruits seized in Campania
In Sapri (Campania), the Carabinieri confiscated three tons of fruits that had no labelling of origin. Five businesses were caught and fined 12 000 EUR. The controls will continue throughout the province of Salerno in the next few days.
La Città di Salerno

06/02/18 - Discovery of large quantities of counterfeited Balsamic vinegar of Modena
Three entrepreneurs of Bari have been accused of counterfeiting the traditional Aceto Balsamico di Modena by violating the protected production mode. They used cheap table grape, instead of the traditional recipe that uses well-defined high-quality grapes. The authorities seized more than 1.3 million litres of table grape must and the businesses caught were fined 600 000 EUR.
Stato Quotidiano

07/02/18 – Two spice production plants shut down for adulteration
Food safety officers in Kashmir raided two spice production plants and found huge quantities (4500 kg in total) of adulterants. Spices such as turmeric, chilli powder, fennel, and coriander were mixed with adulterants like grass, rice husk, wheat or salt. These substances were dyed with unauthorised colours and used to dilute the spices.
Rising Kashmir

07/02/18 – Three people arrested over a substandard saffron scam
Three people were arrested following an investigation conducted in the Spanish saffron sector. They sold substandard saffron, exported to countries such as France, Italy, Malaysia, Mauritius, Bahrain, Kuwait, Mexico or Argentina. Saffron purity is assessed by ISO standard 3632, which measures the amount of non-stigma content and other extraneous matter. The product sold by the fraudsters were labelled as category I (highest quality), while the tests classified it as category III (lowest).
Yahoo

08/02/18 – A business selling fake Iberico ham dismantled in Tenerife
The Spanish Civil Guard dismantled a business in Tenerife that sold fake Iberico hams, a product with a protected denomination of origin (Jamón Ibérico Denominación de Origen Protegida Los Pedroches). The alleged fraudster bought hams not bearing this PDO and replaced the labels with new ones under the name of a company that was not registered, and also added the official PDO labels. The perpetrator initially built trust with clients by first selling high quality products before turning to PDO forgery.
Eurocarne
09/02/18 – A boat full of untraceable fish impounded in Andalusia
The Civil Guards of Andalusia have impounded a ship containing 5.5 tons of untraceable frozen fish. The intervention took place in Ayamonte at the border with Portugal. As the fish lacked the mandatory documentation, the authorities withheld the products in the cold store of the company.

Finanzas
20 Minutos

12/02/18 – Spanish study reveals that half of the fish served differs from the one on the menu
Based on DNA tests conducted, the company AZTI Tecnalia revealed that half of the fish tested across 300 Spanish restaurants do not correspond to the species advertised on the menu. The species most substituted were sole (83%), hake (73%) and Bluefin tuna (53%). It was also mentioned that cheaper dishes (<20 EUR) were most prone to substitution fraud (53%) compared to medium (20-50 EUR, 38% of substitution) and higher priced dishes (>50 EUR, 11%).

AZTI
La Verdad

13/02/18 – Untraceable food in restaurants
The Carabinieri inspected 25 ethnic restaurants throughout Italy and discovered mainly problems of traceability. The main violations were found in Rome where 430 kg of untraceable food were seized. Smaller quantities were also seized in Naples and Salerno. Six people were arrested for selling frozen food as fresh food with a false Italian origin. In total, 15 000 EUR of penalties were administered.

Giornale di Sicilia

19/02/18 – Fake organic coffee unveiled in Pescara
The Italian sanitary authorities unveiled fraudulent practices in several coffee marketing companies in Pescara. These companies competed between each other in marketing coffee-oriented beverages with false indications of the products used and the methods of production. The production techniques and biological raw materials were misrepresented and not reflected upon the examination of the supply chain documentation. No organic production certificates required by the stringent sector’s regulations were provided.

Salute

21/02/18 – Mutton sold as lamb in a Welsh Indian restaurant
An Indian restaurant in Swansea (Wales) was subjected to several unannounced inspections. The inspectors found that the dishes advertised as lamb (animal <12 months) were actually made from mutton (older animal). No product made from lamb was found in the restaurant’s freezers and the mutton meat substitute lacked documentation of its origin.

Wales Online

21/02/18 – Questionable organic certification system in Costa Rica
In Costa Rica, several companies are accused by local producers for exporting (mainly to the USA and Europe) pineapples misbranded as organic products. The problem arises from the organic certifications. The authorities claim that the companies were not certified by the officially mandated certification bodies. For their part, the accused companies argue that they have been certified by an international organisation. However, one of the suspected companies won an appeal against the withdrawal of their organic pineapples. The investigations extend to all the actors in the sector, including the certification bodies.

La Republica

22/02/18 – A car trunk with untraceable clams
In Porto San Giorgio (Marche), the Italian authorities stopped a car loaded with a trunk full of clams (vongole). As suspected, the molluscs had no traceability or documentation of origin. The driver was severely fined 20 000 EUR and the product was confiscated and thrown back into the sea.

Riviera Oggi
23/02/18 – Untraceable food found during a wide control operation around Salerno
Italian authorities conducted a control operation of the food chain in hotels, pastry shops, supermarkets, bars, retailers, food stores, as well as in retirement homes. The main violations were: discovery of 400 kg of untraceable fish, 250 kg of cheese produced without proper authorization, 530 kg of untraceable bakery products, 100 kg of counterfeit fresh pasta, together with 4000 fake PDO labels. In total, the perpetrators were fined 20 000 EUR.
Otto Pagine

27/02/18 – Lack of traceability in the fish sector in Sicily
The Operation Phoenix 6 aimed at controlling the fish sector around Porto Empedocle (Sicily), undertook a control-exercise from 29th January to 18th February 2018 and a total of 1872 kg of fish were confiscated mainly for lack of traceability or absence of documentation of origin. More than 38 000 EUR in fines were imposed.
Grand Angolo Agrigento

Other interesting articles

02/02/18 – Possible misbranding of “Alpine milk”
This article exposes the lack of precise definition for denominating milk “Alpine”. The European regulation mentions only the provinces/regions where “Alpine milk” can be produced. However, parts of these provinces can be located in flat plains. Thus, milk from cows raised in eligible provinces but not in the mountains could still produce “Alpine milk”, which can mislead the consumer about the true origin of the product.
Panorama

02/02/18 – Italy enforces the mandatory origin labelling of pasta and rice
Two decrees came into force on 14 February for the mandatory labelling of the origin of wheat used in pasta as well as rice. In Italy, one out of three packs of pasta and one out of four packs of rice are imported from abroad and not necessarily labelled with its country of origin, passing it as a national product. The mandatory labelling of origin was supported by 96% of the consumers.
Coldiretti

08/02/18 – EU institutions to push for support of the honey sector
The honey sector has recently been in the spotlight with issues such as the decline in bee colonies or adulteration of imported products with exogenous sugars. The EU is tackling the problems through several actions.
The Commission’s Joint Research Centre organized a roundtable meeting of the different actors in the field to identify ways of detecting fraud in the honey supply chain and to find consensus on the best practices to ensure authenticity.
European Commission

The European Parliament received a report on the prospects and challenges to the EU apiculture sector. Adulteration is clearly highlighted as a major problem and proposals have been made to develop new detection methods.
European Parliament
22/02/18 – Forbidden GMOs found in animal feed

The French authorities seized biomass destined for animal consumption that comprised of unauthorised genetically modified bacteria. The European Commission was alerted and requested investigations in several Member States. They were asked to seize and destroy any suspected products that came from the incriminated farms.

Le Monde
Sciences et Avenir

Disclaimer: The selection of articles reflects their media coverage. In any case, it does not reflect the frequency of food fraud in a particular country and/or concerning a particular food product. The European Commission does not take any responsibility for the truthfulness of the information extracted from the media channels scanned. The views expressed shall not be regarded as stating an official position of the European Commission.