January 2017

Monthly Summary of Articles on Food Fraud and Adulteration

Retrieved mainly from the JRC tool Medisys (http://medisys.newbrief.eu/)

Food Fraud Cases

09/01/17 - Operation "Countdown": several controls in the fish sector in Italy
During the Christmas period, the coast guard of Tuscany carried out 600 inspections, seized 1500 kg of fish products. 61 offenses were detected and fines of over 90 000 EUR were imposed. Controls took place at various points of the fish supply chain and mainly concerned mislabelling of fish.
Gonews

The operation also targeted the Lazio region and fines of 150 000 EUR were levied.
Roma Today

09/01/17 - Adulterated milk from Bahrain refused entry in Guyana
A container of flavoured milk was denied entry into Guyana. 21 600 litres of the product contained vegetable oil and were below the amount of milk fat (2.5%) declared
Stabroek News

09/01/17 - Dyes used in two cases of food adulteration in Coimbatore, India
Near Coimbatore (South of India), a batch of 1.5 tons of tea dust was adulterated with colouring agents extracted from coal tar. It makes the prepared tea appear stronger and more easily sellable.
The Hindu

In the same city, 1620 kg of jaggery (solidified palm sugar) were also found adulterated with dyes (sodium hydrosulphide) to make it more appealing.
Business Standard

20/01/17 - 106 barrels of counterfeit white wine seized in Portugal
The Food and Economic Security Authority (ASAE) seized 106 barrels (980 litres) of white wine, worth about 5300 EUR. The seizure was made in the warehouse of a drinks distributor in the Porto metropolitan area who supplied cafes and restaurants with white wine from a protected brand, at prices slightly below its market value. The distributor was not authorized by the brand owner and the wine was of a different nature.
Sabado

Official communication by ASAE available at: http://www.asae.pt/
(Noticias > Comunicados de Imprensa 2017 > ASAE apreende vinho à pressão por venda fraudulenta)

24/01/17 - 3 tons of fish seized and 29 000 EUR in fine imposed in a large fish control operation
A large scale control operation carried out by the Carabinieri and the Italian military targeted about 100 operators in the wholesale fish trade in the provinces of Milan, Turin, Florence and Naples. In total, 3 tons of fish were discovered which were not traceable and 29 000 EUR in fine imposed.
Arezzoweb
Gonews
26/01/17 – Domaine de la Romanée-Conti sues Russian fraudster
The prestigious Burgundy wine estate, Romanée-Conti, asks for a compensation of 500 000 EUR from a Russian fraudster that counterfeited 400 bottles of its exclusive wine in 2012-2014. This very rare (6000 bottles per year) and high-quality wine only sells through exclusive networks and prices can reach up to 9000 EUR per bottle.
La Revue du Vin de France

26/01/17 - 186 000 kg of vegetable products conserved in oil (sott'olio) seized in Italy
The Environment and Forest police of Foggia raided a facility that processed vegetables in oil (sott'olio). Apart from blatant infractions on waste management, 150 000 kg of the food products were lacking any labelling and 36 000 kg were declared not fit for consumption.
Stato Quotidiano

Other interesting articles

09/01/17 - Companies suing Obama administration about the new fish regulations
Last month, new regulations imposed the tracking of the origin of each shipment of fish imported into the US. Fish importers say the compliance burden would be large and the rules would "dramatically increase the cost of catching, processing and importing seafood".
Daily Caller

11/01/17 - Half of sushi sold in Los Angeles are mislabelled, UCLA study finds
According to a four-year study carried out by the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), nearly half of the fish served at 26 highly-rated sushi restaurants in the city is mislabelled. Out of the 364 samples submitted to DNA barcoding tests, 47% showed irregularities. Salmon and Bluefin tuna were mostly correctly labelled while halibut and red snapper were often substituted by another fish species.
UCLA
Link to the scientific article: Wiley

18/01/17 - Dyed tuna: a 200 million EUR industry
A new type of fraud consists in dyeing low quality tuna to sell it as fresh fish. Fraudsters use fermented extracts of vegetables treated high in nitrites to turn the brownish colour of low quality tuna into reddish, a process similar to curing meat. It is estimated that the EU consumers pay 200 million EUR each year for this type of fraudulent product. There is a close collaboration between the EU Food Fraud network and the fish industry to stop this illegal practice.
Independent

18/01/17 - Lethal food fraud could lead to life imprisonment in India
The Law Commission of India has recommended life imprisonment for traders, businessmen and shopkeepers found guilty of the death of their customers by intentionally selling them adulterated food and drink. The Law Commission’s recommendation is now on the government’s table, awaiting a decision.
The Hindu

20/01/17 - Mandatory origin labelling of milk and dairy products comes into force in Italy – Portugal to follow
The decree imposing the origin labelling of milk and its derivatives has been published in the 'Gazzetta Ufficiale'. The measure should come into force within 90 days. The measure was pushed by several defenders of the 'Made in Italy' campaign, because 3 out of 4 milk bottles sold in the country actually come from abroad.
Targatocn
Portugal is supporting the move and investigates the application of such labelling requirements in its own market. Welcomed by consumers, the origin labelling raises less enthusiasm from trade associations, assimilating it to “protectionism”.

Food Navigator

20/01/17 – Belgian honey market prone to frauds

The Belgian consumers association “Test Achats” conducted a study on the national honey market. In total, 16 out of 28 tested honeys (57%) showed some irregularities concerning freshness, exogenous sugars content, floral composition and/or geographical origin. The association asks for more honesty in the domain and filed a complaint to the ministry of economy.

Test Achats

24/01/17 – A smartphone app to protect “Made in Italy”

A free smartphone application, Reliabitaly, was developed to help consumers detecting the real “Made in Italy” products by scanning the barcodes. Italy has 221 products (cheese, cured meat, wine, olive oil, ...) protected by EU quality logos (geographic indication of origin or traditional production) that are often target of fraudulent practices. The app’s database is still work in progress, as it is up to manufacturers to decide whether to sign up.

Repubblica
Reliabitaly

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.

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