January 2021

Monthly Summary of Articles on Food Fraud and Adulteration

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Food Fraud Cases

A local Malaysian journal discovered a huge fraud case involving fake “halal” certifications. For more than 40 years, the criminal cartel have bribed customs officials to smuggle cheap and non-halal meat mislabelled as “halal”, thus increasing its value for the Muslim consumers. The agents seized 1 500 tons of frozen meat (including kangaroo and horse), together with fake labels and rubber stamps. The cartel also utilised the logo of a company famous for its highly-demanded products.

New Straits Times 21/12/2020  New Straits Times 22/12/2020
Mashable 23/12/2020
The Straits Times - Malay Mail - New Straits Times 29/12/2020
Bloomberg  SCMP  30/12/2020
The Straits Times 02/01/2021   Daily Muslin 05/01/2021
Malay Mail 12/01/2021  Malay Mail  Food Safety Tech 19/01/2021

The Spanish Civil Guard seized 15 tons of grapes mislabelled as organic (total value of 24 000 euros). The products should be shipped to companies in Spain and France.

The Indian authorities seized almost 10 tons of lollipops and candies (for children) adulterated with talcum powder.

India.com 13/01/2021
Business Today 14/01/2021

According to the Bulgarian National Potato Growers Association, French and German potatoes are imported in their country and mislabelled as “Origin: Bulgarian”. The average price for imported potatoes (4-6 cents/kg) is usually half of the Bulgarian ones (11 cents/kg).

Novinite 15/01/2021
Food Focus 19/01/2021
The Italian authorities seized almost 2 tons of cheese and more than 100 kg of dried tomatoes lacking the required documentation or label. Hygienic standards were also not respected.

Casteddu Online 19/01/2021
Ansa 19/01/2021

Two Italian companies have been caught selling low-quality apple juice mislabelled as "organic" and containing expired fruits (with high levels of mycotoxins) and unauthorised substances (e.g. sugar, plant protection products). Within the operation "Bad Juice" the authorities seized 1 411 tons of products, for a total value of 5 million euros.

Il Dolomiti 19/01/2021

The Spanish authorities denounced a dairy company producing mozzarella from buffalo’s and cow’s milk, but mislabelled as “100% buffalo mozzarella”, which is a GI product.

EFA News - Zazoom - Anteprima24 19/01/2021

The Jordan Food and Drug Administration (JFDA) seized 27 tons of powdered milk and cheese, with falsified nutrition labels, all over the country. The products were apparently not suitable for human consumption as well.

Petra Gov 21/01/2021

The Indian police uncovered an organisation producing fake turmeric and chilli powder starting from chemicals and waste materials (e.g. wood dust and rice powder). Products were misbranded with the logo of a popular company before entering the market.

Times of India 22/01/2021

The Spanish Civil Guard seized 122 tons of meat (poultry, beef, pork, rabbit) unfit for human consumption, and mislabelled in terms of freshness (e.g. expiry date), origin and organic labels. The authorities are currently investigating ten companies.

Euro Weekly News 24/01/2021
The Olive Press 25/01/2021
Food Safety News 27/01/2021

As part of the "Operation Hitsmo", the Spanish authorities seized 225 000 bottles of counterfeit rum (total value of 3.5 million euros) together with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). The criminals produced fake labels from three famous brands of rum in Spain.

Food Safety News 27/01/2021
Securing Industry 28/01/2021
According to a collective action, in Colombia many companies replace part of their milk with whey, a liquid by-product resulting from the production of cheese.

Caracol 27/1/2021
Occidente 28/01/2021

The Italian authorities seized 2 tons of fish missing the required traceability documentation.

Giornale di Sicilia 28/01/2021

The Italian authorities seized 6.5 tons of processed meat products, which were sold by a supermarket without respecting the traceability legislation.

Latina Today 30/01/2021

In 2020 the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) discarded 3.5 million litres of adulterated milk and 120 tons of blended spices.

The News
The News

An article from an online magazine summarizes the most relevant food fraud cases that occurred during 2020.

Food Safety Tech

The EU Commission published the new Eurobarometer “Making our food fit for the future – Citizens’ expectations” carried out by Kantar with 27 000 interviews in 27 EU Member States. Concerning food fraud, the majority of consumers are worried of: 1) being misled about the true qualities of a food; 2) possible threats to their health (e.g. toxic substances).

Eurobarometer (PDF)
Food Safety News
Le Blogaa

JRC staff contributed to a recent scientific review discussing the food frauds affecting olive oil, as well as current and future ways to tackle the phenomenon.

Food Control

Other interesting articles

2/01/2021 – PFA report summarising the 2020 activities

2/01/2021 – A summary of food fraud cases from 2020

08/01/2021 – New insights on food fraud perception from the Eurobarometer

08/01/2021 – An overview of frauds in the olive oil sector
14/01/2021 – Food fraud in the honey sector

A popular online magazine highlights the challenges in the honey sector, with a special focus on adulteration practices from China affecting the global honey chain.

Wired
Il Fatto Alimentare

28/01/2021 – Food fraud on the rise in UK

According to a report from the Food Authenticity Network, during the Covid-19 pandemic food fraud cases related to adulteration (+30%) and counterfeit (+47%) increased. Most affected categories include spirits, wine and honey.

The Grocer

28/01/2021 – USA Consumers against seafood fraud, poll reports

According to Oceana, the vast majority of USA consumers and politicians would support policies against frauds in the seafood sector and in favour of similar standards between domestic and imported products.

Market Screener

Disclaimer: The presentation 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 specific food product. The European Commission does not take any responsibility for the validity 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.

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