

Appendix G

Adulteration

Extensive fraud on olive oil prompted the Italian government to mandate a new labeling law in 2007 for companies selling olive oil, under which every bottle of Italian olive oil would have to declare the farm and press on which it was produced, as well as display a precise breakdown of the oils used, for blended oils. In February 2008, however, EU officials took issue with the new law, stating that under EU rules such labeling should be voluntary rather than compulsory. Under EU rules, olive oil may be sold as Italian even if it only contains a small amount of Italian oil.

Extra Virgin olive oil has strict requirements and is checked for "sensory defects" that include: rancid, fusty, musty, winy (vinegary) and muddy sediment. These defects can occur for different reasons. The most common are:

- Raw material (olives) infected or battered
- Inadequate harvest, with contact between the olives and soil

In March 2008, 400 Italian police officers conducted "Operation Golden Oil", arresting 23 people and confiscating 85 farms after an investigation revealed a large-scale scheme to relabel oils from other Mediterranean nations as Italian. In April 2008, another operation impounded seven olive oil plants and arrested 40 people in nine provinces of northern and southern Italy for adding chlorophyll to sunflower and soybean oil, and selling it as extra virgin olive oil, both in Italy and abroad; 25,000 liters of the fake oil were seized and prevented from being exported.

On March 15, 2011, the prosecutor's office in Florence, Italy, working in conjunction with the forestry department, indicted two managers and an officer of Carapelli, one of the brands of the Spanish company Grupo SOS (which recently changed its name to Deoleo). The charges involved falsified documents and food fraud. Carapelli lawyer Neri Pinucci said the company was not worried about the charges and that "the case is based on an irregularity in the documents."

In February 2012, an alleged international olive oil scam occurred in which palm, avocado, sunflower and other cheaper oils were passed off as Italian olive oil. Police said the oils were blended in an industrial biodiesel plant and adulterated in a way to hide markers that would have revealed their true nature. The oils were not toxic, however, and posed no health risk, according to a statement by the Guardia Civil. Nineteen people were arrested following the year-long joint probe by the police and Spanish tax authorities, part of what they call Operation Lucerna.

