



Italian Prosecutor Accuses Seven Brands of Fraud



Turin, Italy Prosecutor Raffaele Guariniello

By YLENIA GRANITTO

The prosecutor of Turin, Italy, Raffaele Guariniello, announced an investigation of a dozen legal representatives of various olive oil producer companies for possible commercial fraud.

Seven major olive oil brands sold in Italian supermarkets are involved in the investigation: Carapelli, Santa Sabina, Bertolli, Coricelli, Sasso, Primadonna (a private label for the retail chain Lidl) and Antica Badia (a private label for the retail chain Eurospin), some of which, despite their Italian names, were recently acquired by foreign groups.

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Agriculture Minister Maurizio Martina

The investigation started after a [report by Il Test](#) (The Test), a magazine for consumer protection and rights, which last May analyzed the olive oil contained in 20 bottles labeled as "extra virgin olive oil" distributed and sold by the most popular supermarkets in Italy.

The analyses [were conducted](#) by the chemical laboratory of the customs agency (Agenzia delle Dogane e dei Monopoli) in Rome, one of the most qualified in Italy, which downgraded to "virgin" almost half of the olive oils due to the presence of organoleptic defects found by the panel tests.

SEE MORE: [Doing Hard Time in Italy's Last Island Prison Means Making Olive Oil](#) Chemical and physical analyses on the parameters of acidity, peroxides and alkyl esters [confirmed](#) the judgment of the panel.

The prosecutor instructed the NAS, officials from the anti-adulteration and health unit of the Carabinieri, to repeat the analyses, which confirmed that the olive oil contained in the bottles of some popular brands, contrary to the indication on the label, was not extra virgin, but simply virgin.

The investigation reportedly is not about the potential health risks of the olive oil sold. None of the substances in the products seemed to be harmful to health. Instead, the allegation is the potential deception of consumers, who paid about 30-40 percent more for a bottle of extra virgin olive oil when it turned out to not be the case.

"We will follow with attention the evolution of the investigation of the Prosecutor of Turin," the minister of agricultural, food and forestry policies Maurizio Martina wrote in a statement, "as it is essential to protect the strategic sector of Italian olive oil."

"In the last months," he continued, "we have strengthened controls, especially since last crop year was one of the [most difficult](#) in recent years. In 2014 our inspectorate for fraud repression (ICQRF) has accomplished over 6,000 inspections and 10 million euros of seizures in this sector. It is important now to clarify this case, to protect consumers and thousands of honest companies engaged today in olive oil production."

"The record of imports from abroad, in 2014, with the arrival of 666,000 tons of olive oil and pomace, 38 percent more than last year, certainly encouraged fraud," Coldiretti said in its last [press release](#). "We need to defend this 'Made in Italy' strategic sector, as Italy is the second largest producer of olive oil after Spain with about 250 million plants and an estimated annual revenues of 2 billion Euros."

"Italy is also the world's largest importer of olive oils," Coldiretti declared, "that are often mixed with domestic ones to acquire, with the images on the label and under the cover of historical brands — even if transferred abroad — a semblance of Italian character to be exploited on domestic and foreign markets, a behavior that promotes fraud that must be fought with the strict application of law."



[Source: Olive Oil Times](#)

