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REPORT

Operation OPSON V



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KEY ELEMENTS



57
COUNTRIES



21
PRIVATE PARTNERS



4 months
OPERATIONAL PHASE

SEIZURES OF:



>11,000
TONNES OF FOOD



>1,440,000
LITRES OF BEVERAGES

>5,5 MILLION
FOOD ITEMS



4,054
INSPECTIONS



3,567
ADMINISTRATIVE AND
CRIMINAL CASES INITIATED



41
ARRESTS



1,793
SUSPECTS REPORTED

KEY ELEMENTS

- **57 countries and 21 private partners**, from 23 EU MS and 34 non-EU countries, participated in Operation OPSON V. This represents the largest number of participating countries, especially for non EU countries, since the beginning of OPSON in 2011.
- In total, **11,131.18 tonnes, 1,449,056.40 litres and 5,549,328 units** of either counterfeit or substandard food and beverages have been seized in the framework of OPSON V. In terms of figures for seized units and litres, these are the highest since 2011, with the seized tonnage only slightly less when compared to OPSON IV (11,591 seized tonnes) in 2014/2015.
- In terms of product range, the levels of seizure within OPSON V differ significantly compared with OPSON IV. The highest quantity of **seized products** is **condiments** which include commodities such as vegetable oil, vinegar, salt, pepper, spices, and sauces. Significant seizures of fraudulent olive oil in Italy labelled as extra-virgin, smuggled palm oil in Thailand and smuggled mayonnaise in Colombia were also reported.
- The reported **infringements** are, in most cases, multiple and combined. On a global level, the highest number of infringements relates to **fiscal infringements (49%)**, **food safety offences** ranking behind with **19%** and **infringements deceiving consumers amounting to 17%** of the cases. On a regional level, those proportions vary significantly and reveal that participating countries face different challenges.
- As for previous editions, the operation developed in **three phases**: the pre-operational phase, the operational period and the post operational phase. During the pre-operational phase, capacity building activities were provided to participating countries to enable them to be better prepared for operational deployments. Liaison with the private sector was also enhanced. During the **operational phase**, participating countries reported **4,054 inspections, 3,567 administrative and criminal cases and 1,793 suspects**.
- The **debriefing meeting** was hosted by the Spanish authorities in Madrid on 20-21 October 2016.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the operational results of operation OPSON V as well as all related activities developed in this framework. As with previous reports, it seeks to evaluate the threat regarding food fraud on the basis of the results reported by the participating countries. It also elaborates recommendations for the future of the initiative.

Operation OPSON¹ started in 2011 with ten participating countries, exclusively European Member States. Developed in 2015 and early 2016, OPSON V encompassed 57 countries from all continents, and 21 private companies or associations. In total, since the first operational phase, 31,302 tonnes and 3,056,505 litres² of fake and substandard products, in all cases deceiving consumers and often unfit for human consumption, have been seized or withdrawn from markets. Cross border investigations have been developed and criminal networks involved in the production and distribution of illicit food products have been dismantled.

Since its start, Operation OPSON set clear objectives consisting of:

- protecting public health;
- fighting against organised crime groups involved in the trade of fake and substandard food;
- enhancing international cooperation;
- enhancing national cooperation between LEAs³ and food regulatory agencies; and
- enhancing cooperation with private partners from the food and beverage industry.

These objectives remain valid and efforts to achieve them should continue.

Since 2011, the fight against food fraud has become a growing concern for all law enforcement bodies, due to the strong impetus given by politicians, notably at the European Union level. Throughout the globe, awareness has also increased significantly. Major steps have been taken towards the development of a more comprehensive approach against counterfeit or substandard food and beverages. The participation of fifty seven countries in OPSON V, the highest since 2011, reflects this awareness and commitment to effectively tackle the issue. The increased involvement of the food industry in OPSON has led to better operational results.

Finally, as initiated with the report on OPSON IV, this review continues to provide examples of cases developed in the participating countries. It cannot precisely reflect all activities carried out during the operational phase in 57 countries. However, it intends to give operational insights, with enhanced explanations of the modus operandi, products and criminal groups involved.

Those examples have been presented by the relevant OPSON contact points during the debriefing meeting held in Madrid, in October 2016.

This report was adopted by all participating countries.

¹ OPSON (ὄψων) means food in ancient Greek.

² Those figures encompass results since OPSON I in 2011.

³ Refer to Annex 6 for Acronyms and Abbreviations.

1 SCOPE

Operation OPSON, in all its phases, has retained the same legal scope and framework targeting:

- Counterfeit food and beverages
- Substandard food and beverages

Food products are defined⁴ as any item or substance intended to be, or reasonably expected to be, ingested by humans or animals. Beverages are defined as drinkable liquids, that is to say liquids intended to be, or reasonably expected to be ingested by humans or animals.

Food products do not include live animals (unless being prepared for sale in a market), plants prior to harvesting, medicinal products, cosmetics, tobacco and tobacco products, narcotic or psychotropic substances, or residues and contaminants.

A counterfeit food product is defined as a food product infringing an Intellectual Property Right. All intellectual property rights defined under national and European law are included.

A substandard food product is defined as a product which does not meet the criteria required by European and national laws regarding its production, packaging, storage and distribution. Generally speaking, it is a product of a quality inferior to that which is legally required under European and national standards.

Both European and national legislations on intellectual property rights and food safety were enforced during the operation.

The operation OPSON is embedded within the EU Policy Cycle (EMPACT priority).

2 PARTICIPANTS

2.1 Participating countries, EUROPOL and INTERPOL

The following countries participated in OPSON V : **Albania, Argentina, Australia**, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, **Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina**, Bulgaria, Burundi, Colombia, **Comoros**, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Eritrea, Estonia, **Fiji**, Finland, France, **Germany**, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, **Indonesia**, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Romania, **Russia**, Rwanda, **Seychelles**, South Korea, South Sudan, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Tanzania, Thailand, **Togo**, Turkey, United Kingdom Uruguay, USA, Vietnam and **Zambia**⁵: 57 in total⁶.

⁴ All definitions mentioned here have no legal value but are used in the framework of the operation.

⁵ Please, refer to Annex 1 for the list of agencies/services involved per country.

⁶ Countries participating for the first time are mentioned in bold characters.



In terms of trends, one can note the continuous expansion of the network. OPSON V welcomed 13 new countries, most of them non-EU MS. In 2013-2014, 31 countries took part in OPSON III whereas 47 implemented OPSON IV in 2014-2015. The increasing number reflects the development of awareness in each country, mostly thanks to awareness activities carried out by INTERPOL and Europol, as well as growing media attention on OPSON each year.

With 13 participating countries, Africa once more demonstrated its willingness to fight food fraud. The support of the Regional Bureau of Nairobi proved key in ensuring a high level of participation from the Eastern African countries. Most of the countries which joined OPSON IV maintained their participation in this edition (Burundi, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania). OPSON V for the first time welcomed Togo and Zambia. Côte d'Ivoire has constantly supported activities since OPSON II.

Six countries from Latin America took part in OPSON V (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay), Argentina and Bolivia participating for the first time. Only Paraguay decided not to implement OPSON V this year, whereas all others renewed their commitment and reported noticeable results.

Regarding the Middle East, Jordan participated in OPSON V.

In Europe, of note this year is the first participation of Germany at national level⁷. OPSON was coordinated by the Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL). In total, 23 EU MS implement OPSON. Europol continues to draw the attention of the 5 non-participating EU MS to the OPSON initiative.

⁷The Federal State of Bavaria (Bavarian Authority for Food Safety and Health – LGL) took part in OPSON I and OPSON II in 2011 and 2012.

Asian and Pacific countries also showed their involvement, with the first participation of Australia, Indonesia and Fiji, and the renewed participation of South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. This increased participation from Asian countries results from a Food Fraud Workshop organised by INTERPOL and held in Kuala Lumpur in June 2015. The event gathered 12 countries, mostly Asian, and included private partners.

This year, OPSON V for the first time welcomed three archipelagos: Seychelles, Fiji and the Comoros Islands. This illustrates the global aspect of the threat regarding food fraud. Any country can be affected, regardless of its size or peculiar geographical situation.

As for previous phases, participating countries had to designate a national contact point responsible for the operation. The countries could appoint a single point of contact at national level, or one point of contact per agency or administration. In most countries, contact points remained the same as for previous editions. This contributes to a better implementation of the operational phase, as contact points could build on experience from previous phases and liaise more easily with counterparts, at the national level as well as abroad.

EUROPOL and INTERPOL coordinated the operation by providing expertise and intelligence as well as technical and logistical support. Focal Point Copy, the project in charge of Intellectual Property Crimes and Public Health and Safety Crimes, coordinated the operation at Europol. At INTERPOL, the Illicit Goods and Global Health Programme of IPSG promoted, developed and coordinated OPSON among third countries. They worked closely with the INTERPOL Regional Bureau of Buenos Aires, the Regional Bureau of Nairobi and the Liaison Office in Bangkok.

2.2 Private partners

The following private companies and associations participated in operation OPSON V:

Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (CIVC - Association of Champagne producers), Comité Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bordeaux (CIVB - the Bordeaux Wine Bureau), The Coca Cola Company, Colgate-Palmolive Company, Consorzio di tutela Gorgonzola DOP, Consorzio di tutela Prosecco DOP, Unaprol Consorzio Olivicolo Italiano, Danone Group, Diageo plc, Ferrero Spa, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), International Federation of Spirits Producers (IFSP), Mars, Moët Hennessy, Mondelez International Inc, Nestlé, REACT (Association of various right holders), Red Bull, Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), the Tequila Regulatory Council (CRT), Unilever⁸.

Their participation consisted in:

- providing intelligence and risk assessment on their products during the pre-operational phase, including during training sessions tailored for law enforcement services;
- participating in preparatory meetings organised at national level, *e.g.* in Kenya, with the support of the INTERPOL Regional Bureau of Nairobi;
- providing expertise in legal proceedings when needed.

Each firm transmitted a list of relevant contact points according to the concerned geographical area.

Private partners were asked to join based on:

- their size and presence in the different markets (Europe, USA, Middle East, Africa, South America, Asia), prioritising those most affected by the threat of counterfeiting; and

⁸ For more information on the private partners, especially on their products, please refer to Annex 2: list of participating private companies/associations

- their products.

Companies producing commonly counterfeited or highly regulated products (dairy products, fishery, etc) were similarly engaged.

The involvement of the above-mentioned private partners does not constitute any preferred relationship with EUROPOL or INTERPOL. Their association was made on a voluntary basis, and did not imply any specific action from the law enforcement agencies involved in OPSON regarding their brands or products. EUROPOL and INTERPOL are willing to develop partnerships with private partners of the food industry in order to reinforce the cooperation and the exchange of operational information. Countries are also invited to implement such partnerships at national level if deemed relevant.

Two new private partners joined OPSON V: Mondelez International and the Bordeaux Wine Bureau.

Generally speaking, OPSON V saw greater involvement of private partners. The need for operational information was clearly recognized and understood by them, which resulted in more strategic information being provided to participating countries.

3 SCHEDULE OF THE OPERATION

The operation was divided into 3 phases.

3.1 Preparatory phase

Operation OPSON V was launched in April 2015, during a meeting hosted by the Czech Authorities (Police and Customs), in Prague, CZ. The two day event debriefed operation OPSON IV, by presenting the results and discussing the implementation of the operational phase. It officially launched OPSON V with a discussion on new challenges for this fifth phase, and updated delegates on on-going projects against food fraud (*e.g.* EMPACT Policy Cycle). The meeting gathered together more than 75 participants representing 43 countries, and eight private partners. It was opened by the Deputy Police President Colonel Zdenek Laube and Deputy Minister of Finance Mrs Simona Hornochova (see Annex 5 Pictures library).

The pre-operational phase consisted of gathering intelligence on the phenomenon, initiating collaboration with private partners and establishing an operational plan. Each country updated the OPSON contact list to initiate this phase and elaborated its own internal profiling and action plan with the relevant stakeholders: law enforcement, regulatory bodies and private sector.

In order to provide capacity building support, INTERPOL organised a training session for countries from the Asia/Pacific region. The event took place in Kuala Lumpur, in Malaysia, on 9-11 June 2015. It aimed to raise awareness about the scope and impact of food fraud, equip law enforcement agencies with the adequate skills to fight against this crime and build a network involving the representatives of the food and beverage industry in the region. The training gathered 50 participants from LEAs of 12 countries: Argentina, Australia, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, The Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Some participating right holders and associations presented the threat related to their products and provided useful information for the enforcement of their IP rights.

Participants in the event reported positive feedback. Out of the 11 Asian Pacific countries represented, six implemented OPSON V. The training session enabled them to better prepare the operations. Additional national training sessions can be organised thanks to the contacts made during the workshop. Those events help to target products and operators more efficiently during the operational phase. INTERPOL and Europol encourage any initiative of this kind. The organisation of such training can be made upon request of a country or a company.

3.2 Operational phase

The operational phase spanned four months between 01 November 2015 and 29 February 2016.

As in previous editions, checks and investigations were carried out on high risk entities in the food and beverage supply chains. Each participating country independently decided on the type of controls to be carried out. INTERPOL and EUROPOL performed crosschecks against their databases and coordinated the dissemination of intelligence in order to support on-going actions.

The operational centre supported OPSON V at EUROPOL Headquarters during the entire operational phase. The INTERPOL Command and Coordination Centre provided round-the-clock support from 1st November 2015 to 29th February 2016.

Finally, the participating countries sent all available results to the operational centres which centralised them.

3.3 Post operational phase

The results of the operational phase were sent to INTERPOL and Europol. Both organisations analysed the transmitted data to assess the threat, identify best practices and areas of improvement. A debriefing meeting was held in October 2016, with the support of the Spanish National Police, Guardia Civil and Spanish Customs.

This report was discussed during this event. It was finalised after the debriefing meeting and incorporated some of the case examples presented by the National Contact Points.

4 RESULTS OF THE OPERATIONAL PHASE

4.1 Received results and elaboration of the statistics

Results of the operation were to be sent in a formatted way. Thresholds for seizures to be reported were established at:

- 5 kilograms
- 5 litres
- 10 units

These limits were set in order to provide the most meaningful statistics.

4.2 Seizures, checks and investigations

All participating countries carried out checks throughout their national territory.

4.1.1 Overall figures

In the framework of the operation, more than **4,054** inspections and checks were carried out, **3,567 administrative and criminal cases** were initiated, **1,793 suspects** and **41 arrests** were reported⁹.

The statistics presented below are based on the aforementioned reported cases, and all other elements reported as results by the participating countries.

⁹ A case is an inspection that led to the notification of an infringement and/or a seizure or withdrawal of products. An inspection or a check is a control activity and does not always lead to a seizure. A suspect is an individual which has been either heard or detained in the framework of the enforcement activities.

As the number of checks and inspections was not reported by all countries, it is believed that actual figures concerning the enforcement activities implemented in each country are in reality much higher.

The following examples detail some of the operation's results:

Spain reported that in total 1,714 checks and controls were carried out throughout the national territory: in wholesalers' facilities, retail shops, supermarkets, means of transport and warehouses. 1,764 procedures for administrative infringements were initiated, based on sanitary and fiscal regulations (irregularities with labelling, expiry dates, storage conditions etc...). 684 individuals were charged. Moreover, 6 criminal offences involving 29 persons, among them 8 detained and 16 under investigation for offences against public health were reported. In total, Spanish authorities seized more than 102 tons of food and 26,855 litres of drinks. These figures exclude seizures of products counted by piece such as 65,176 non-compliant sweetening tablets. Most seized products in Spain were fish and seafood, meat and meat products, dairy products, cereals (pasta) and processed food such as soups.

Germany reported a total of 45 inspections of food facilities, including fish restaurants. The operation, coordinated at federal level by the Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety focused on fish and seafood presenting high risk of species substitution. Authorities also checked restaurant menus online (around 110 restaurants).

In Sweden, 15 municipalities took part in the operation, focusing on traceability and labelling of liquors and spirits. Around 150 restaurants were checked, with good results since no infringement exceeding the seizure threshold was discovered.

Croatian Customs implemented OPSON V during 30 days, and performed checks according to national risk profiles. 9 containers, 34 cargo trucks, and 9 facilities were checked, resulting in the discovery of counterfeit alcoholic beverages.

Like previous years, Belgium carried out OPSON V during two weeks, with joint inspections (Food Agency and Customs) in the ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge and in the airports of Zaventem (biggest airport in Belgium, located near Brussels) and of Bierset (Liège airport). Checks targeted food products not submitted to mandatory inspections at the border. During this period, 70 containers were physically inspected and 5 infringements were discovered. 39 shipments were checked in Zaventem, with 4 infringements reported, one resulting in the establishment of a multi-agency investigation.

Albania, which participated for the first time in OPSON, conducted 200 interventions in commercial and private premises. Checks were carried out in factories and on the road. 40 persons were prosecuted for infringement of intellectual property rights, smuggling, forgery of fiscal stamps and illicit manufacturing.

In the framework of a regional initiative, 8 countries of Eastern Africa carried out interventions during the same period from 3 to 18 December 2015. Those actions led to the arrest of 162 suspects with 49 involved in trafficking of counterfeit and/or substandard food and beverages. Results also included a high number of cases related to falsified medicines (60 identified suspects).

South Korea reported 327 cases being investigated by the Police, 527 suspects being charged, and 12 suspects being detained. Additionally, 96 cases led to administrative sanctions or warnings.

Interventions and checks did not lead to any seizure above the thresholds in Argentina, Austria, Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Sweden and Fiji¹⁰.

¹⁰ Seizures above the threshold mentioned in page 13.

- The seized quantities are as follows¹¹:

Global Results Seized Goods	
Unit of measurement	Quantity
Tonnes	11,131.18
Litres	1,449,056.4
Units	5,549,328

In total, **11,131.18 tonnes, 1,449,056.40 litres** and **5,549,328 units** of food and beverages have been seized in the framework of OPSON V.

The proportion of seizures by **type of products** is as follows:

Category	Litres	Units	Tonnes
Condiments	512,942.00	6,254.00	7,171.60
Fruits and Vegetables	-	-	1,596.67
Seafood, fish and fish products	-	89,419.00	906.33
Sugar and sweet products	-	340,151.00	432.77
Meat and meat products	-	8,518.00	345.3
Cereals, grains and derived products	-	2,550.00	248.9
Dairy	156,781.00	17,898.00	198.77
Unidentified and miscellaneous	24,000.00	4,797,668.00	174.69
Non alcoholic	370,169.00	53,883.00	49.6
Tea, coffee and cacao	-	8,159.00	2.71
Pet food	-	-	1.61
Alcoholic beverages	385,164.40	96,838.00	1.6
Dietary supplements	-	127,990.00	0.65
Total	1,449,056.40	5,549,328.00	11,131.18

¹¹ Seized quantities in previous operations are mentioned in Annex 3. Please refer to it for more details on the statistics.

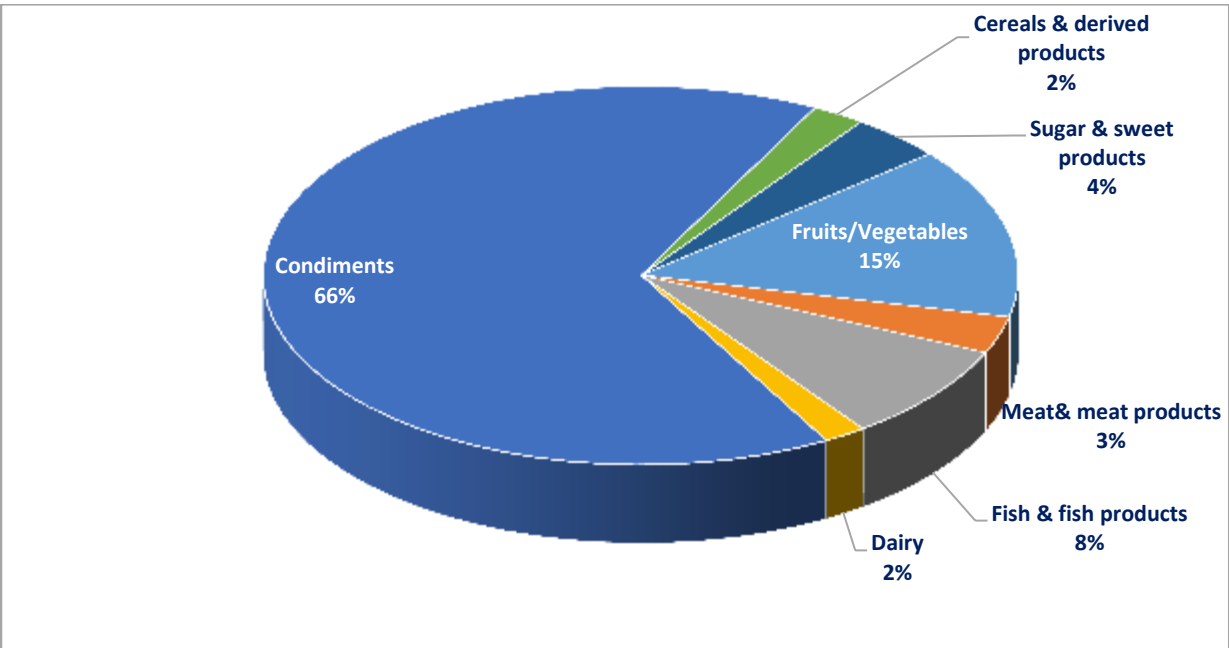


Chart 1

Proportion of seized goods per weight (kg)

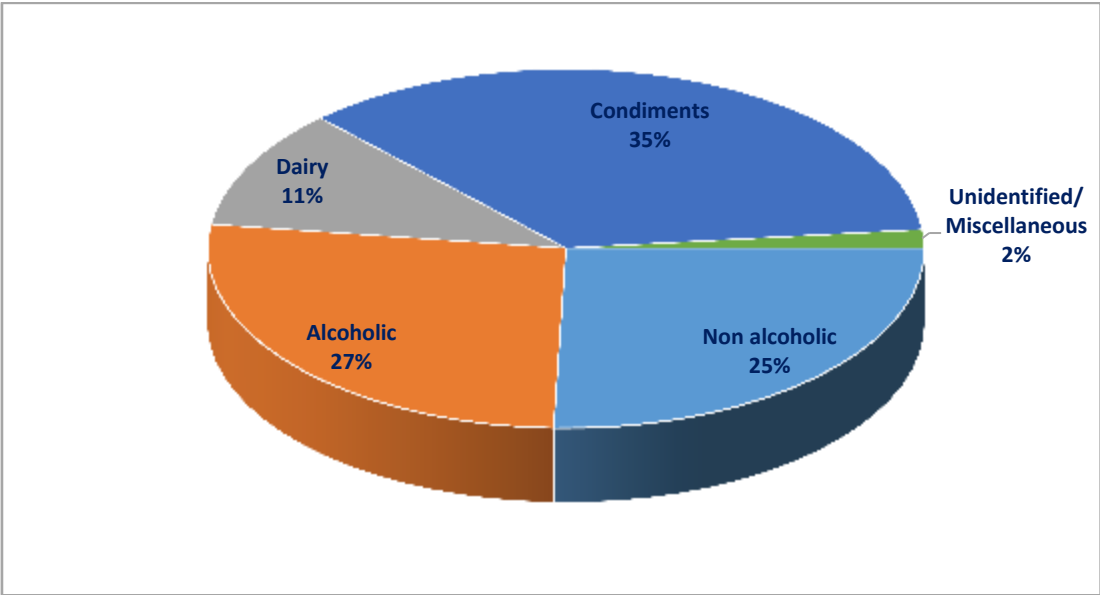


Chart 2

Types of seized products by volume (litres)

The first chart illustrates the most seized goods measured by weight. The biggest seized category in Food products is Condiments, representing 66% of the seizures reported in tonnes. This category actually represents the highest in all measurements (litres, units and tonnes). It includes commodities such as vegetable oils (e.g. olive, sunflowers), vinegar, salt, pepper, spices, variety of sauces and seasoning products. 20 countries out of the 57 participating countries reported seizures of this type of products. Chart 2 illustrates the seizures reported in litres. Condiments represent as well the largest category. For both types of measurements (tonnes and litres), vegetable oil represent the most seized product. In Italy, National Forestry police (*Corpo Forestale dello Stato*) reported the biggest seizure of olive oil with 7,000 tonnes of alleged extra virgin olive oil. Thailand reported the biggest seizure in litres with 423,000

litres of palm oil. Thai Customs intercepted 14 trucks loaded with palm oil coming from Malaysia. The oil was misdeclared as low grade oil to evade taxes. Other examples include seizures in Colombia of smuggled genuine products: 1.5 tonnes of mayonnaise (genuine product) and 168 kg of soya oil and butter.

Like last year, *Fruits and vegetables* are the second most affected category representing 15% of all seized goods. They were seized in 13 countries across all regions. The two largest seizures in this category were reported by Italy and concerned 610 tonnes of olives and 526 tonnes of prepared olives. Those cases result from an annual campaign of checks on prepared olives. This year, Law Enforcement Agencies noticed a relatively new modus operandi consisting in adding copper sulphate as well as other illicit substances to enhance look and feel of the products. Cooper sulphate is usually not searched for in laboratories analysis hence why it is now used by criminals. They previously used substances containing chlorophyll to artificially enhance the green colour of the products. The value of the 526 tonnes of seized olives amounted to 2,5 million €. Italian authorities ordered immediate closures of the involved business structures. In Hungary, authorities seized 123 tonnes of potatoes in the absence of relevant health documentation. The goods came from Poland and were seized in the premises of a wholesaler. In general, seized goods in this category were extremely varied, ranging from herbs (Bulgaria) to pistachios and dates (Jordan).

Goods categorised as *Cereals, Grains and derived products* comprise products such as wheat, cereals, rice, various types of flour, pasta, noodles, bread etc. 14 countries across all regions seized food items belonging to this category. The biggest seizures were reported by Latvia: 25 tonnes of non-compliant buckwheat, coming from China; by Italy, more than 49 tonnes of wheat in provenance of Germany infringing health regulation; by Bolivia, two seizures of 57 and 50 tonnes of smuggled rice originating from Argentina.

Regarding the types of goods measured in litres, *Condiments* (35%), *Alcohol* (27%) and *Non-alcoholic beverages* (25%) are the most seized categories. In total, 30 countries seized alcoholic beverages, in all geographical areas. More than 200 checks and inspections led to seizures of spirits and liquors. Burundi reported major cases such as the seizure of more than 36,000 litres of prohibited beer; in Belarus authorities conducted several interventions, which resulted in the seizure of more than 23,250 litres of illicit alcoholic beverages and pure alcohol. In Indonesia, the National Agency of Food and Drug Control conducted two interventions resulting in the seizure of nearly 45,000 bottles of expired vodka and beer. Products were immediately sent for destruction. Peruvian Police carried out a series of raids leading to the confiscation of more than 170,000 bottles and 12,000 litres of assorted counterfeit alcohol (wine, Champagne, Pisco). In Italy, Carabinieri seized more than 75,000 litres of sparkling wine, containing propylene glycol. *See case example for more details p. 23.*

94% of the Dairy products category consist of milk, originating from a seizure by the Turkish authorities. They seized 149,839 litres of milk infringing safety regulations. Cheese is among one of the most seized dairy products measured by weight. The largest seizures were reported in Czech Republic (16,5 tonnes of counterfeit Edam Cheese, refer to *Case examples* for more information), in Italy (98.15 tonnes¹²) and Portugal, mostly due to food safety infringements.

The goods in the category *Pet Food* represent approximately 1 tonne. Most of this category was seized in Colombia, when being smuggled.

¹² This figure refers to seizures of cheese products only. Other seizures encompass several categories of products such as meat and cheese are not encompassed.

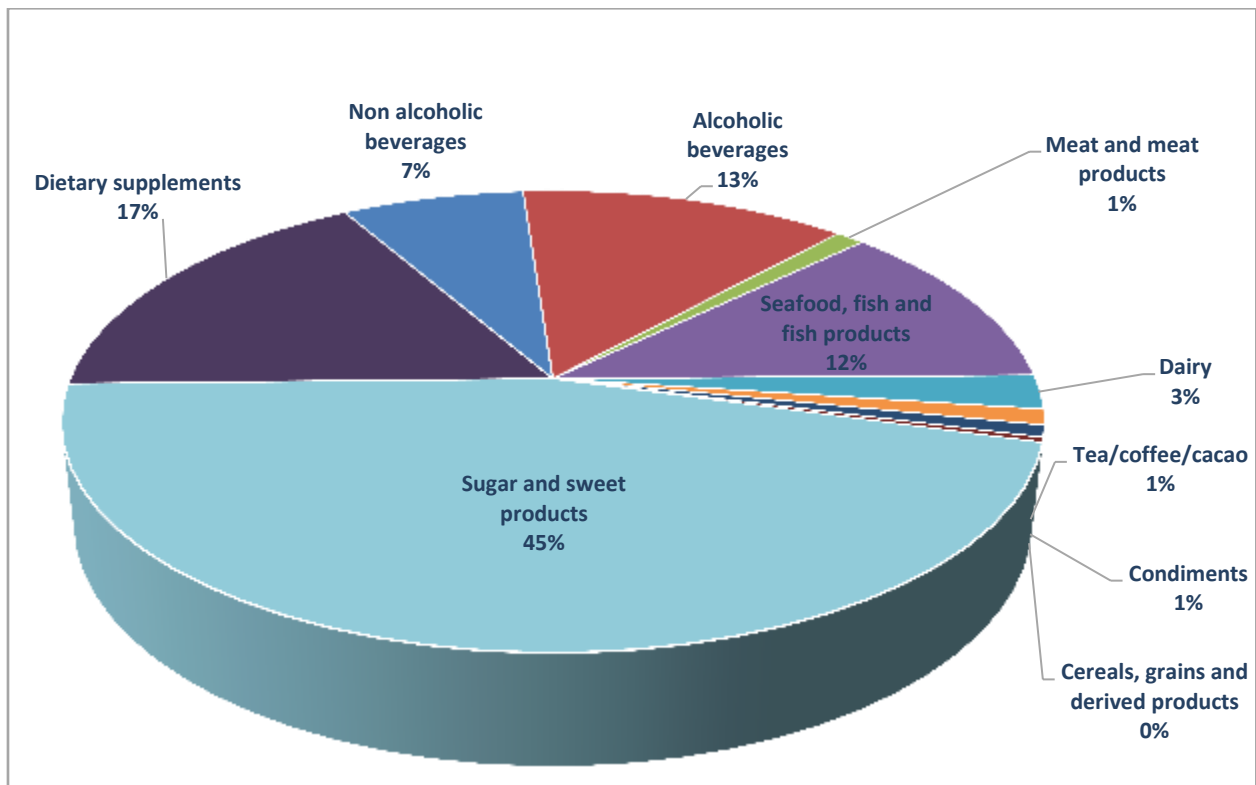


Chart 3

Types of seized products by unit

In order not to skew the results, this chart does not include two seizures amounting to 4,3 million of non-classified items (various categories of products encompassed in the same reporting). The category *Sugar and Sweet products* represents a large percentage of the seizures reported by unit and refers to seizures of confectionary and sweets. Lithuanian Customs reported a seizure of 57,600 units of candies infringing IP rights of famous brands of non-alcoholic beverages. Almost 230,000 chewing gums were seized on the basis of the European regulation 608/2013¹³. Clearly targeting children, they illegally bore trademarks of famous cartoon movies and characters.

Due to the lack of information, no analysis can be performed on the origin of the goods. The **types of infringements** are as follows:

¹³ Regulation (EU) No 608/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 concerning customs enforcement of intellectual property rights and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1383/2003

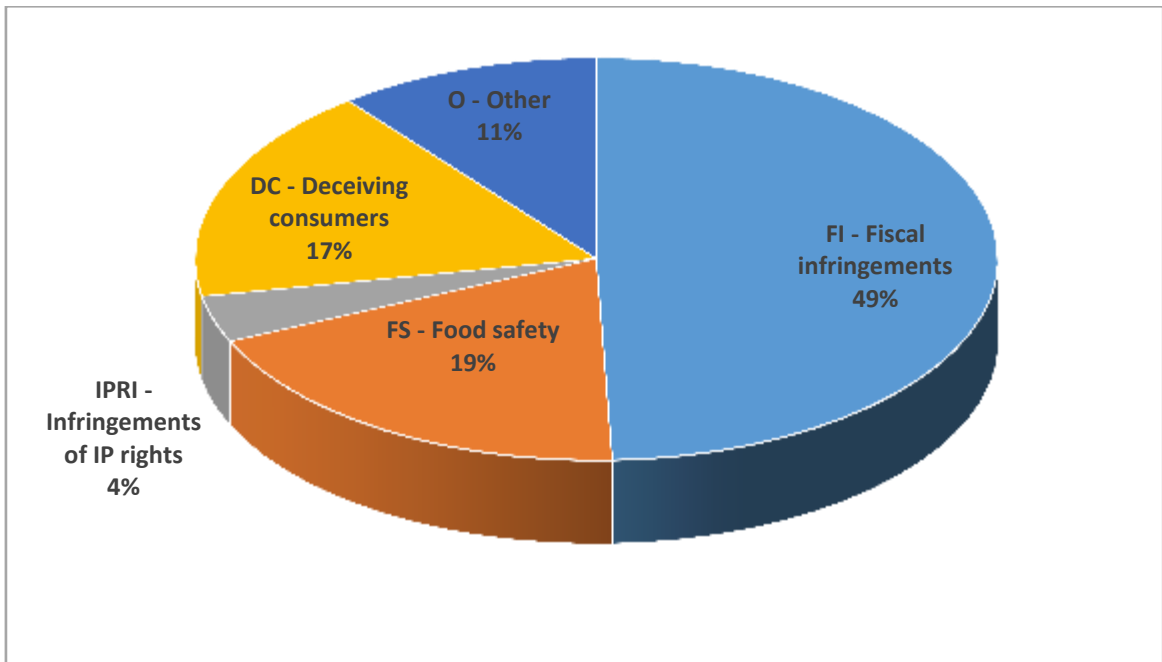


Chart 6

Types of infringements by number of cases¹⁴

- **Side seizures**

Fewer side seizures were reported compared to previous editions. As an example, Asian participating countries did not report any side seizure. Counterfeit commodities seized in the course of the operational phase of OPSON included pharmaceuticals for human use (Peru) and veterinary use (Rwanda, Colombia), cosmetics and shoes (Romania), toys (Romania), Pesticides (Rwanda). Of note is the seizure of 35 chainsaws and drills in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Like previous editions, tobacco was the most seized product in terms of quantity. In total, more than 86,000 items were seized.

- **Follow up of OPSON IV**

Unlike last year, where countries reported cases developed in the framework of OPSON III and continued in OPSON IV, no country reported any direct links with previous editions. However, cooperation established with private partners led to the development of investigations. As an example, Bulgaria reported to Europol - outside the timeframe of the operational phase - a seizure of 220 bottles of counterfeit whisky, as well as all material to prepare bottles (ethyl alcohol, empty bottles, caps, forged excise labels etc.). The information originated from the International Federation of Spirit Producers.

¹⁴ Cases were categorised in the following infringements

Infringements
FI = fiscal infringement Example: unpaid alcohol duties
DC = deceiving consumers Example: falsely labelled extra virgin olive oil
FS = food safety Example : infringement related to the storage conditions of the goods
IPRI = Intellectual Property Rights Infringement Example: all IPR, including appellations of origins

These examples demonstrate one of the objectives of OPSON, namely to develop investigations on food fraud, even outside the timeframe of the operational phase, and to act as a permanent network to offer support at any time.

4.1.2 Case examples

The following cases illustrate the diversity of food fraud and the different types of risks. They were chosen because they reflect the variety and the extent of food fraud, when it comes to the types of infringements, the products and modus operandi. They constitute only a small example of what has been developed during the operational phase.

Prohibited food additives

- *Case example Italy*

The State Forestry Corps seized more than 85 tons of olives coloured with copper sulphate, reported 19 people to the Judicial Authority and filed 26 crime reports as a result of operation "Painted Olives" within a campaign of extraordinary checks on green table olives. The alleged perpetrators face criminal charges of fraudulent use of banned additives, sale of non-genuine food items as if they were genuine, possession for malicious trade of foodstuff dangerous to public health, in addition to high administrative monetary penalties. A new modus operandi was identified: olives are immersed in copper sulphate concentrated solutions, i.e. they are "painted" (as fraudsters say in jargon) in order to get an intense green color making the product more attractive to consumers. The concentration of copper sulphate present in the samples was twice the legal limit. Copper sulphate can only be used for agricultural practices. The illicit treatment has two advantages for the fraudsters: to obtain a much more intense and uniform color on all fruits and to recycle olives produced in previous years which had lost their original color.



A comparison between "painted" and genuine olives

- *Case example Denmark*

The Flying Squad of the Veterinary and Food Administration performed tests on various samples of honey and at one company discovered 62 tons of adulterated honey. The final product, intended to be sold in Danish shops, resulted in a mix of honey of different origins, including Chinese, when labels stated EU origins. It also contained added sugar. Legal proceedings are on-going, but the goods have been seized. The company informed its customers that products already sold could not be qualified and resold as honey.



Honey seized in Denmark

- *Case example Australia*

A consignment of 450 kg of honey originating from Iran was inspected. The samples being tested revealed the product had been blended or adulterated with sugar or artificial honey and falsely labelled as natural honey. The importer had to relabel the products from honey to golden syrup, with honey listed as ingredient.

- *Case example Sudan*

Police in Sudan carried out a long-term investigation regarding criminal networks involved in sugar trafficking in the region. Thanks to surveillance measures, Police identified a warehouse in Khartoum where 8.6 tonnes of counterfeit sugar contaminated with fertilizers were stored. The sugar was previously smuggled from Eritrea to Sudan. Criminals used counterfeit branded sugar packages and filled them with low quality sugar and tasteless fertilizers. Adding fertilizers allowed to maximize profits by selling underweight sugar. The counterfeited brand is famous for its high quality standards and hence very popular in Sudan. In addition to the adulterated sugar, Police seized 1,000 empty branded packages.



Counterfeit sugar contaminated with fertilizers to be sold on the market

- *Case example Indonesia*

Indonesian authorities seized 70 kg of chicken intestines preserved with formalin. In Indonesia, it is prohibited to use Formalin as food additive.

Fish and seafood

- *Case example Germany*

For its first official participation in OPSON, Germany focused on the trade of fish and the risk of species substitution. The operation was coordinated by the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety. Food Safety Authorities of Bavaria, Hamburg, Hesse and Thuringia closely monitored imports and more generally trade of Asian fish. As an example, Red snapper (*Lutjanus malabaricus*) and Japanese eel (*Anguilla japonica*), both pricey species, can easily be replaced by cheaper fish, such as Ocean perch (*Sebastes norvegicus*) and European eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*) respectively. Moreover, the latter is a protected species according to the Convention on International Trade in endangered species (CITES convention). Possible infringements range therefore from consumers deception to environmental crimes. Checks done by German authorities did not uncover practices of misdeclaration or false labeling but led to the seizure of 2.3 tons of snapper containing high level of ciguatoxin (toxic substance) showing that consumers' health is also at stake.



A Lutjanus argentimaculatus, an expensive Snapper family species

- *Case example Togo*

Togolese authorities seized 24 tons of tilapia imported from China, unfit for consumption as it contained high level of residue dangerous for the health of consumers. The consignment was immediately sent for destruction.

Illicit spirits

385,164.40 litres of alcohol were seized during OPSON V, in addition to 127,990 units and 0,65 tonnes. Those figures represent 27% of all seized goods measured in litres (19% in OPSON IV). Since the start of the initiative, alcohol seizures have been heavily reported by all participating countries. Infringements range from tax evasion to trademark infringements. Countries often report dismantlement of illicit production sites, breaching all health and safety regulation, and using trademarks of the most famous producers.

- *Case example Greece*

After almost seven months of investigations, Police dismantled two illicit production sites of famous brands of alcohol (mainly whisky and vodka). The case started on the basis of intelligence provided by an informant and developed thanks to special investigative techniques authorised by judicial authorities. The fake bottles were sold in night clubs and bars in the Attica region. Wiretapping and surveillance quickly revealed that the main target ran an illicit production and distribution network. Substandard alcohol was produced in clandestine laboratories. Genuine empty bottles were smuggled from Bulgaria. Police also discovered a second organised criminal network led by the deputy director of a chain of liquor stores. Both criminal groups developed a business partnership to sell the illicit bottles. The action day involved several law enforcement agencies and included house searches in various places such as bars and discos, warehouses and laboratories. 16 persons were arrested, 19 others were under a search warrant. The labs and storage places were dismantled.



Illicit factories dismantled in Greece

- *Case example Italy*

Italian law enforcement authorities seized a large quantity of luxury wine and spirits. The counterfeiting of prestigious wines and high volume alcoholic beverages was detected also thanks to successful international cooperation and synergies with the relevant brand owners and product associations. In one case, the bottles of counterfeit wine bore fake labels of protected designation of Italian origin wine over the original ones, which indicated that the real origin of the lower quality wine was Spain.



Illicit wine production sites in Italy

- *United Kingdom*

In total, British authorities seized almost 10,000 liters of counterfeit and/or adulterated spirits, ranging from wines to whisky and vodka.

- *Case example Peru*

Peru Police identified two sites of production and one site of distribution of alcoholic beverages. The inspections revealed these sites were run by businessmen producing and selling alcoholic beverages not complying with health regulations. Tests of the samples carried out by the laboratories confirmed that the content did not match with labels and that the beverages were unfit for consumption. As a result of the inspection, the premises were shut until the owners can prove they comply with their required obligations.



Illegal production sites in Peru

- *Case example Zambia:*

Following complaints of consumers indicating that branded whisky had either no taste, bitter taste or looked contaminated with impurities, Zambia Police conducted a long-term investigation which led to the dismantlement of a criminal network composed of 5 individuals. Criminals robbed a warehouse where branded whisky material (boxes, bottle caps, sealing tapes) was stored. The criminals sold the stolen goods to illicit alcohol producers which used the stolen branded material to package illegally produced alcohol. In total, 35,500 bottle caps, 429,000 labels, 99 carton boxes, 2,250 litres of ethanol and 900 bottles of counterfeit whisky were seized during the searches.



Alcohol seized in Zambia

- *Case example Burundi*

During raids both in retail shops and production sites, more than 36,325 litres of prohibited alcohol have been seized. On the production site, maize flour (700 kg) and maize (1,350 kg) used to produce illicit alcohol were also seized.

Illegal importations

- *Case examples Belgium and France*

At airports in Belgium and in France, Customs and Food Safety Authorities seized illicit products, carried by international travelers. According to EU health regulation, importation of bushmeat is strictly prohibited in the EU, and the introduction of any other plant and food products follows strict regulations. In Belgium, Customs discovered monkey meat. In France, Customs seized and destroyed insects: 11kg of locusts and 20kg of caterpillar.



Monkey meat seized in Zaventem, Brussels' airport

- *Case example Thailand*

In October 2015, Thailand Police controlled an individual transporting 4 tons of meat illegally imported from India (no authorization permit). The follow up investigation led to the crackdown of a criminal network illegally importing food products. Thai Police carried out searches in 10 provinces where warehouses had been identified and seized more than 30 tons of beef and buffalo meat illegally imported and unfit for human consumption. The criminal gang intended to sell the meat to supermarkets. Authorities disposed of the meat in presence of the media in order to raise awareness about the illegal importation of meat and its nefarious consequences.



Seizures in Thailand

- *Case example Indonesia*

A joint intervention of NADFC (National Agency of Food and Control) Police and Customs led to the seizure of 317,290 packed food products following a search carried out in a warehouse. The owner of the premises did not have a sale license for food products. He hid the goods behind piles of tiles. The owner is suspected to have smuggled the products from Malaysia by transporting them on a private boat.



Joint intervention of the National Agency of Food and Control, Police and Customs at a warehouse storing illicit products

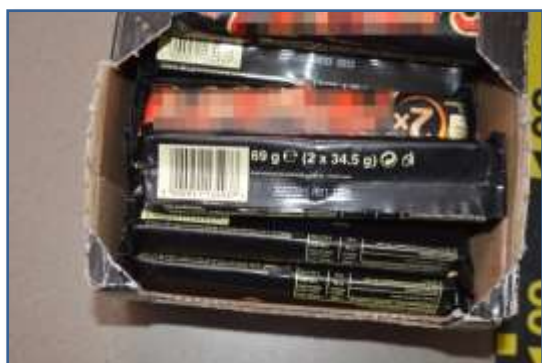
Food intended for children

- *Case examples Lithuania, Romania and Hungary*

Lithuania, Romania and Hungary, Customs and police discovered counterfeit chocolates and sweets. The products bore famous trademarks without permission of the right holders. In Hungary, a raid in a warehouse led to the seizure of more than 12,000 chocolates, and more than 253,000 pieces of wrapping paper bearing copied trademarks.



Lithuanian seizures



Romanian seizures

- *Case example Italy*

Synergies between Guardia di Finanza and Customs Agency at the port of La Spezia in Italy led to the detection of a shipment of 19,000 bottles of non-alcoholic sparkling wine in a container from Bulgaria on its way to West Africa. The labels showed different well known characters, very popular amongst children, with infringement of the relevant IP rights.



Guardia di Finanza and Italian Customs authority officers open a seized container in La Spezia

Consumers' deception

- *Case example Belgium*

The Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain in Belgium performed analysis on importations of dietary products, labeled as “sugar free” or “calorie free”. Chemical tests revealed those mentioned did not correspond to the content of the items. One particular case involved a whole container of mislabelled sauce intended for a Spanish company. Cooperation between Belgian and Spanish authorities is on-going.





Sauce cans seized by Belgian authorities

- *Case example Hungary*

The Office for the safety of the food chain discovered more than 2 tons of duck, destined to be sold as goose liver (“foie gras”). Retail price of goose liver is higher than for duck liver.



Seized duck to be sold as goose liver

- *Case examples France and Iceland*

Both countries seized more than 560 kg of irregular food supplement, transported by sea and by air Cargo. Two seizures in Roissy airport concerned Hoodia cactus powder, a substance used as an appetite suppressant, but protected by the CITES convention. The importer did not possess the necessary documentation (CITES certificate). In Iceland, Customs seized illicit food supplements in the harbor as they were transported by sea containers.

- *Case example Czech Republic*

The State Veterinary Administration seized 16.5 tons of counterfeit cheese allegedly originating from Poland. The cheese was presented as a very famous Dutch cheese (Edam). It contained vegetable fat instead of animal fat and in greater proportions than declared (45% against 30% announced). Legal proceedings are on-going.



Fake Edam cheese seized in Czech Republic

- *Case example Australia*

Two consignments of imported nut products were withdrawn from the markets, after the issue of allergen recalls due to undeclared presence of peanuts. Although one of the consignments imported from Turkey was correctly labeled at importation, the Australian distributor repackaged and relabelled the products as pine nuts. The second case relates to sliced almond product originating from Iran being contaminated with peanuts. The recalled nuts were destroyed.

Miscellaneous

- *Expired food*

825 kg of expired dates were seized in Eritrea and 10 tonnes of expired cooking oil were seized in Sudan. Food agencies and law enforcement authorities pay particular attention to expired food that is stored rather than sent for destruction. Several previous case examples showed that criminals repackage expired food, falsify the validity dates and resell it as a consumable product.

- *Olive oil*

Counterfeit or non-compliant olive oil continues to be a major occurrence within OPSON. Italian law enforcement authorities seized several tons of counterfeit olive oil and an ongoing investigation between FR and ES targets frauds on the geographical origin of the oil: obtained from Spain and labeled as French.



Carabinieri check seized oil labelling

- *Unlawful storage*

During Operation OPSON V various cases involved infringements regarding the storage of the food products.

In Italy, Carabinieri NAS discovered warehouses of 500 square meters with 120 tonnes of foodstuff for a commercial value of 1.3 million EUR. The food, destined for ethnic shops and restaurants, included vegetables, rice, cereals, frozen meat, and alcoholic beverages. Storage conditions infringed basic hygiene rules. Packages were damaged and rodents' excrements were found. All goods were seized.

5 COMMUNICATION POLICY

INTERPOL and Europol published a joint press release on 30th March 2016 (Annex 4). The document was available on both INTERPOL and Europol websites.

Participating countries started their national communication after 30th March 2016. Several countries communicated immediately after their operational phases or on specific cases.

Media coverage was good, with most participating countries ensuring national coverage. As an example, INTERPOL communication service counted 86 articles published in French, 108 in English and 104 in Spanish reflecting the global impact of this operation.

INTERPOL and Europol coordinated contact with the press and, when relevant, provided media with contact details for the relevant OPSON Contact points. Of note is that the operation was mentioned this year in international media such as the BBC and CNN¹⁵.

6 EVALUATION OF OPSON V

In the wake of what has been previously explained, reviewing OPSON V leads to operational comments and recommendations¹⁶.

¹⁵ See links in Annex 4.

6.1 Achievements

The accomplishments mentioned below were achieved in OPSON V, building upon experience gained in previous phases of OPSON. Achievements reported in previous editions' assessment still remain valid.

- **Removal from the market of significant quantities of products potentially dangerous for consumers**

Quantities of counterfeit or substandard food and beverages seized during OPSON V far exceeded the results obtained in previous editions. Beyond a statistical successful outcome, this operational exercise enables participating countries to secure the integrity and reliability of the food supply chain by removing significant quantities of products potentially dangerous for consumers from the market.

- **Variety of checks on all points of the supply chain and channels of distribution**

All channels of distribution have been targeted including online sales and more generally the use of the internet as a crime facilitator.

Participating countries also carried out long-term investigations which led to detecting production sites (Greece, UK, Vietnam, Zambia).

- **Confirmed involvement of law enforcement to fight against food fraud and enlargement of the OPSON network**

Elements reported within the framework of OPSON, as well as other cases made public, clearly proved the involvement of Organised Crime in Food fraud. As a consequence, law enforcement agencies have been more committed in the fight against food crime. OPSON V gathered 57 countries, the highest number since the beginning of the initiative. All geographical areas are involved. 21 private partners confirmed their commitment in OPSON and consider it as an efficient platform for a public-private partnership.

- **Increased cross-border investigations on food fraud**

The number of trans-national investigations on food products increased significantly between 2015 and 2016. They stem from previous operations or are developed outside of the operational phase. They are considered as regular requests for cooperation and they illustrate the fact that this crime area is now being more frequently investigated.

6.2 Remaining gaps and recommendations

In spite of some achievements, review of OPSON leads to the conclusion that areas for improvement remain and concern:

- **Geographical gaps**

Some countries still do not take part in the initiative when intelligence shows that they are affected by the threat. Europol and INTERPOL are working on the involvement of more countries in the initiative.

- **Cooperation among all stakeholders**

It appears communication between LEAs, Food Agencies and private companies remains challenging in some participating countries. Likewise, greater involvement of all private sector representatives in the operation would be beneficial. Europol and INTERPOL continue to develop initiatives to encourage the multi-disciplinary approach.

- **Identification of new actors**

¹⁶ Please refer to the report OPSON IV for a more global evaluation of the project.

Mutual knowledge and cooperation are vital in order to act efficiently, without duplication of efforts or even contradictory measures. In this regard, some potential partners still need to be identified and contacted. Europol and INTERPOL develop efforts to involve all relevant actors.

- **Exchange of information**

Transnational operational cooperation can still be deepened in order to fully dismantle the criminal groups involved, and tackle all aspects of their activities, including the financial side. Europol and INTERPOL promote the use of their operational centres and encourage information gathering.

7 CONCLUSION

The results of OPSON V confirmed the trends and patterns observed in previous editions. OPSON V showed that vegetable oil can easily be counterfeit or tampered and is therefore highly targeted by criminals. Cases reported by all participating countries illustrated the recurrence of certain infringements, such as mislabelling and the sales of expired products. They also shed light on some modus operandi of Organised Crime Groups potentially harmful for consumers like the use of illicit food additives or product substitutions, lethal in case of allergy. Alcohol remains a high risk product, with more than 385,000 litres seized in all areas and illicit factories being dismantled, illustrating the involvement of organised crime in this trafficking.

The OPSON Network continued to expand with newcomers from the private sector and new countries. This resulted in larger amounts of seized products but above all in more transnational investigations. For all those reasons, the general assessment of OPSON is above satisfactory, and leads to the conclusion that the initiative should be continued.

Annexes

Annex 1: Participating countries/agencies

Annex 2: Participation of the Private Sector

Annex 3: Detailed statistics

Annex 4: INTERPOL/EUROPOL Press release

Annex 5: Pictures library

Annex 6: Acronyms and Abbreviations

Annex 1: Participating countries/agencies

The following agencies/administrations of each country participated in OPSON V.

In total, this represented 57 countries.

Countries	Administrations/LEAs
European Member States (Exchange of information via Europol)	
Austria – AT	Federal Police
Belgium - BE	Customs Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC)
Bulgaria – BG	Ministry of Interior: General Directorate of the National Police Customs Bulgarian Food Safety Agency
Croatia – HR	Customs
Czech Republic – CZ	Customs Police State Veterinary Administration Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority
Denmark – DK	Veterinary and Food Administration Tax and Customs Administration (SKAT)
Estonia – EE	Customs
Finland - FI	Customs
France – FR	Customs Central Office for Coordinating Environment and Health Crime (OCLAESP – Police, Gendarmerie) Directorate for Competition, Consumption and Fraud Control (DGCCRF – Ministry of Finance) Food Directorate (Ministry of Agriculture)

Germany – DE	Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) Food Safety Authorities of the Federal States of Bavaria, Hamburg, Hesse and Thuringia
Greece – GR	Financial Police Division - Hellenic Police Economic and Financial Crime (SDOE)
Hungary – HU	National Tax and Customs Authorities (NAV) International Law Enforcement Cooperation Centre (NEBEK)
Ireland – IE	Food Safety Authority Customs Police (An Garda Síochána)
Italy – IT	Arma dei Carabinieri Guardia di Finanza Corpo Forestale dello Stato Guardia Costiera Customs (Agenzia delle Dogane)
Latvia – LV	Customs Food and Veterinary services
Lithuania – LT	Customs State Food and Veterinary Service
Luxembourg – LU	Customs
The Netherlands – NL	Food Safety Agency (NVWA)
Portugal – PT	Customs and Tax Authority Food and Economic Safety Agency (ASAE)
Romania – RO	Police

Spain – ES	Guardia Civil (Unidades de policía judicial, Servicio de protección de la naturaleza, costas y fronteras, Unidades de seguridad ciudadana) Regional Food Safety Agencies (Consejerías de Sanidad y de Alimentación de las Comunidades Autónomas) Customs
Sweden – SE	Customs National Food Agency (SLV)
United Kingdom – UK	Intellectual Property Office (IPO) Food Standards Agency (FSA) Trading Standards Authorities (TSA) Revenues and Customs (HMRC) Police National Crime Agency (NCA) Border Force (UKBF)
EU COM	DG Health (DG SANTÉ)
Third countries – Exchange of information via Europol (Operational agreement)	
Norway – NO	Customs
Iceland – IS	Customs
United States of America - USA	Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Third countries – Exchange of information via INTERPOL	
Albania – AL	Police
Argentina - AR	Police
Australia – AU	Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
Belarus – BY	Police Customs

Bolivia - BO	Police Customs Intendencia Municipal
Bosnia & Herzegovina – BA	Police Customs
Burundi – BI	Police Customs Public Health Bureau of Standards
Colombia – CO	Fiscal Police – National Police (Policía Nacional – Dirección de gestión de policía fiscal y aduanera)
Comoros – KM	Police
Côte d’Ivoire – CI	Police Customs Food Regulatory Authority
Ecuador – EC	Police Prosecution Office Ministry of Public Health and Agriculture
Eritrea – ER	Police Customs Directorate of Public Prosecutions
Fiji – FJ	Police
Indonesia – ID	Police Customs National Agency of Food and Drug Control (NAFDC)

Jordan - JO	Police Customs Jordan Food and Drug Administration
Kenya – KE	Police Customs Kenya Bureau of Standards Anti-counterfeiting Agency
Nigeria – NG	National Agency for Food and Drug Administration (NAFDAC)
Peru – PE	Police Customs, Tax Administration Immigration
Russia – RU	Police
Rwanda – RW	Police Customs Bureau of Standards Ministry of Health and Agriculture
Republic of Korea – KR	Korean National Police Agency Ministry of Food and Drug Safety
Seychelles – SC	Police National Drugs Enforcement Agency (NDEA) National Bureau of Standard, Health (Food Control Unit) Licensing Authority and Fair Trading Commission

South Sudan	Police Customs Ministry of Health Bureau of Standards Public Prosecution Office Juba City Council
Sudan – SD	Police Customs Public Prosecution Office Health and Safety Directorate
Tanzania – TZ	Police Customs Tanzania Food Drug Authority Tanzania Bureau of Standards Director of Public Prosecutions Fair Competition Commission
Thailand – TH	Police Customs Food Regulatory Authority
Togo – TG	Police Food
Turkey – TR	Police State Security
Uruguay – UY	Police
Vietnam – VN	Police Customs Ministry of Public Health

Zambia – ZM	Police Public Health Department of Lusaka City Council Food and Drug Laboratory, Ministry of Health Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
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Annex 2: Participation of the private sector

21 firms and associations participated in OPSON IV.

Name and type	Types of products
CIVB Comité Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bordeaux (Bordeaux Wines Bureau)	Bordeaux Wines, protected by a geographical indication and trademarks
CIVC Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (Association of Champagne producers) – producers association	Sparkling Wine, protected by a geographical indication and trademarks
The Coca Cola Company – firm	Non-alcoholic beverages, trademarks protected
Colgate-Palmolive Company – firm	Healthcare products, especially dental care, trademarks protected ¹⁷
Consorzio di tutela Gorgonzola DOP – producers association	Cheese, protected by a geographical indication
Consorzio di tutela Prosecco DOP – producers association	Sparkling wine, protected by a geographical indication
Unaprol Consorzio Olivicolo Italiano – producers association	Olive oil, especially extra virgin olive oil
Danone Group – firm	4 types of edible goods and beverages: fresh dairy products, waters, baby nutrition and medical nutrition, trademarks protected
Diageo plc – firm	Spirits and liquors, trademarks protected
Ferrero Spa – firm	Mainly confectionery, trademarks protected
GlaxoSmithKline – firm	Pharmaceutical products and oral care products, trademarks protected ¹⁸
IFSP International Federation of Spirits Producers – producers association	Spirits and liquors, trademarks protected
Mars – Firm	Various edible goods and drinks, ranging from chocolate, candies, pet food and rice, trademarks protected.

¹⁷ Seized products infringing the rights of the Colgate Palmolive Company were considered as side seizures, as they were neither food nor beverages.

¹⁸ Seized products infringing the rights of GSK were considered as side seizures, as they were neither food nor beverages. Pharmaceutical products are not included in the scope of OPSON. GSK provided intelligence on their oral care products only.

Moët Hennessy – firm	Champagnes, wines and spirits, trademarks and geographical indication protected
Mondelez International Inc. – firm	Confectionery and snacks, trademarks protected
Nestlé – firm	Mainly confectionery, trademarks protected
REACT – Association of right holders	Non-profit organisation defending the interests of more than 190 right holders, among them companies of the food industry
Red Bull – Firm	Energy drink, trademark protected
Scotch Whisky association – producers association	Scotch Whisky, trademark and geographical indication protected
Tequila Regulatory Council – producers association	Mexican liquor, geographical indication and trademarks protected
Unilever – Firm	Various edible goods ranging from ice creams to soups, tea, coffee and condiments, trademarks protected

Annex 3: Detailed statistics

The tables and charts below provide more information on previous editions as well as on the results of OPSON V. More information on the elaboration of the statistics is available at the end of the annex.

- **Seizures since 2012 (OPSON II to OPSON V)**

OPSON II - 29 countries	
<i>Unit of measurement</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Tonnes	262.86
Litres	35,702.48
Pieces	2,310,131
Bottles	394,763

OPSON III - 33 countries	
<i>Unit of measurement</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Tonnes	5,661.40
Litres	739,816.00
Pieces	255,082
Livestock	300
Pre-packaged items	170,175

OPSON IV - 47 countries	
<i>Unit of measurement</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Tonnes	11,591.77
Litres	814,563.19
Pieces	1,233,911
Livestock	6, 172

OPSON V – 57 countries	
<i>Unit of measurement</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Tonnes	11,131.18
Litres	1,449,056.4
Pieces	5,549,328

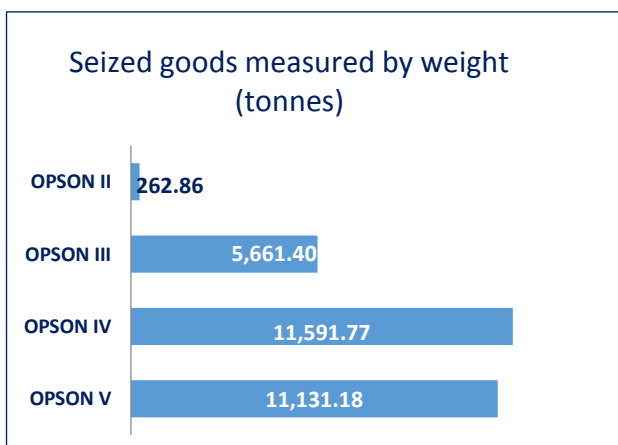


Chart 1

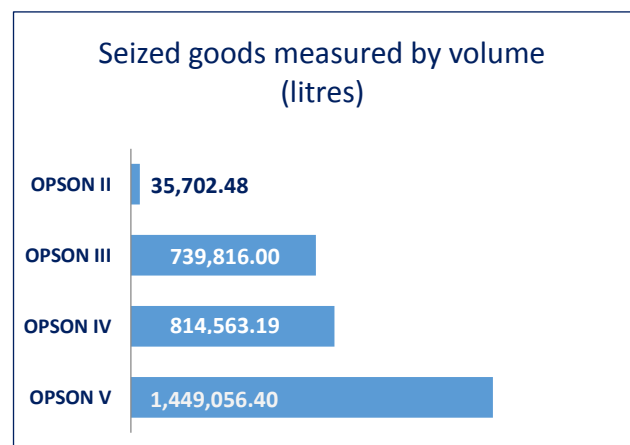


Chart 2

- **Types of products seized in the course of OPSON V**

OPSON V results differ significantly compared with OPSON IV. The highest seized commodity in OPSON V is products categorised as *Condiments*, mainly vegetable oil (66% of the seized goods reported by weight). *Fruits/Vegetables* count for 15% of the seizures, when it represented approximately one third in OPSON IV. *Flour & flour products* counted for 40% of the seized products when those types of food items are now included in the category *Cereals & derived products* amounting only to 2% of all seizures. This was due to a seizure of 4,360 tonnes of flour in Egypt. The proportion of *Fish and seafood* remains stable (8% in OPSON V; 7% in OPSON IV). As for the seized products measured in litres, the proportion of alcoholic drinks rose to 27%, against 19% in OPSON IV. However, with 54% of unidentified goods measured in litres, results of OPSON IV can be considered as less accurate. On the contrary, for OPSON V, only 2% of the goods measured in litres have been categorised as *Unidentified/Miscellaneous*. This noticeable improvement in the results reporting considerably enhances quality of the statistics. Non-alcoholic drinks range from fruit juices to mineral water and account for one quarter of all seizures.

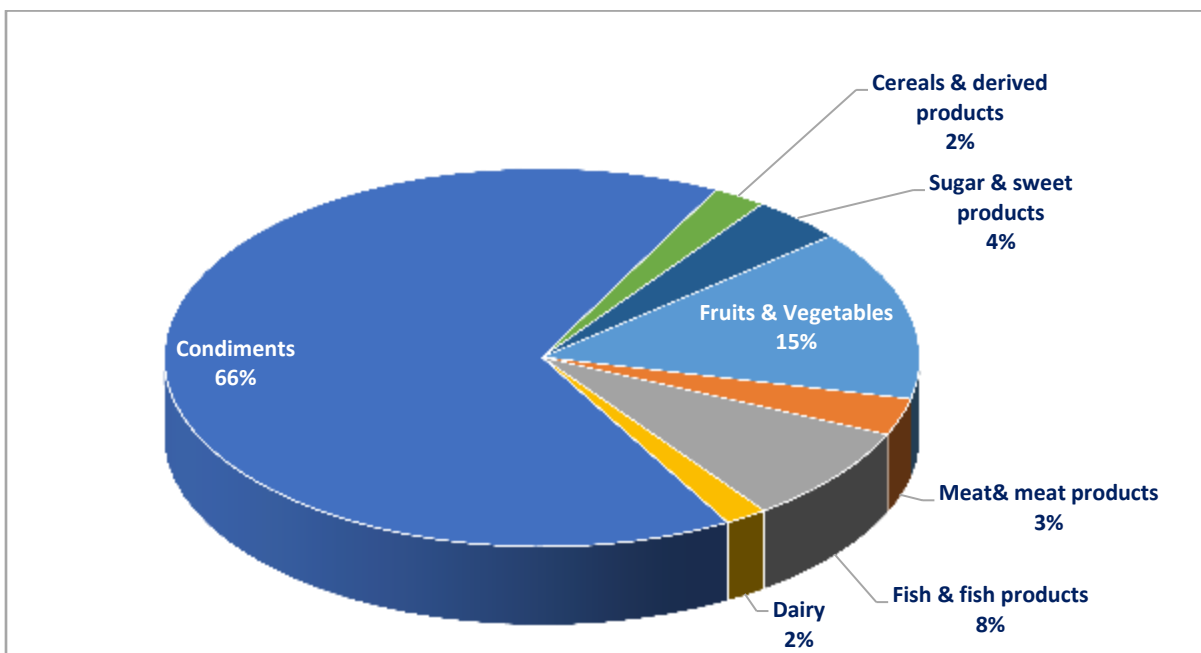


Chart 3

Proportion of goods seized by weight (kg)

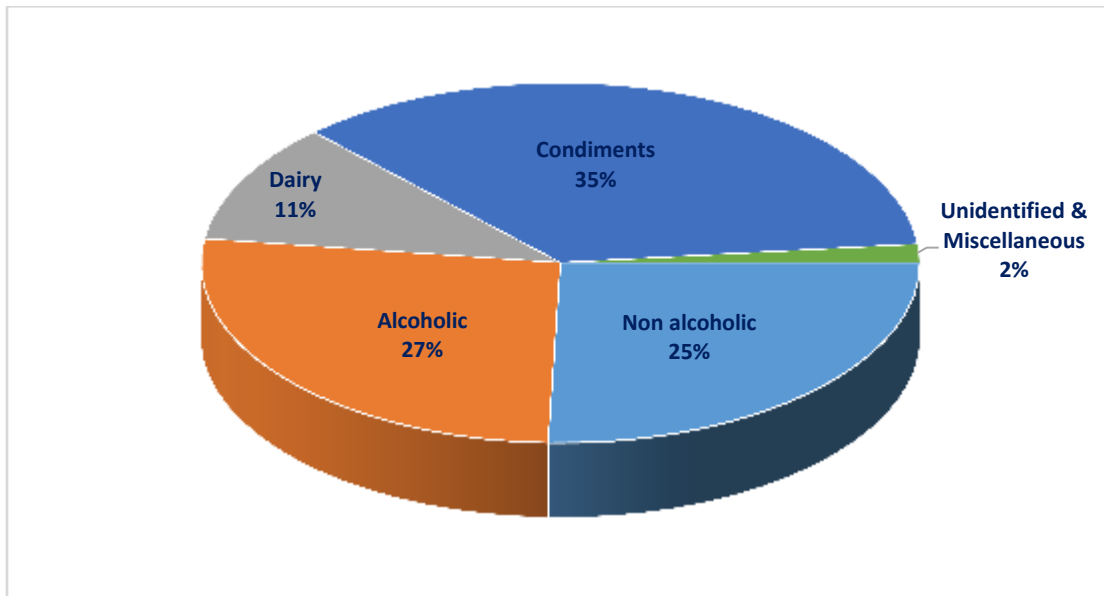


Chart 4

Proportion of goods seized by volume (litres)

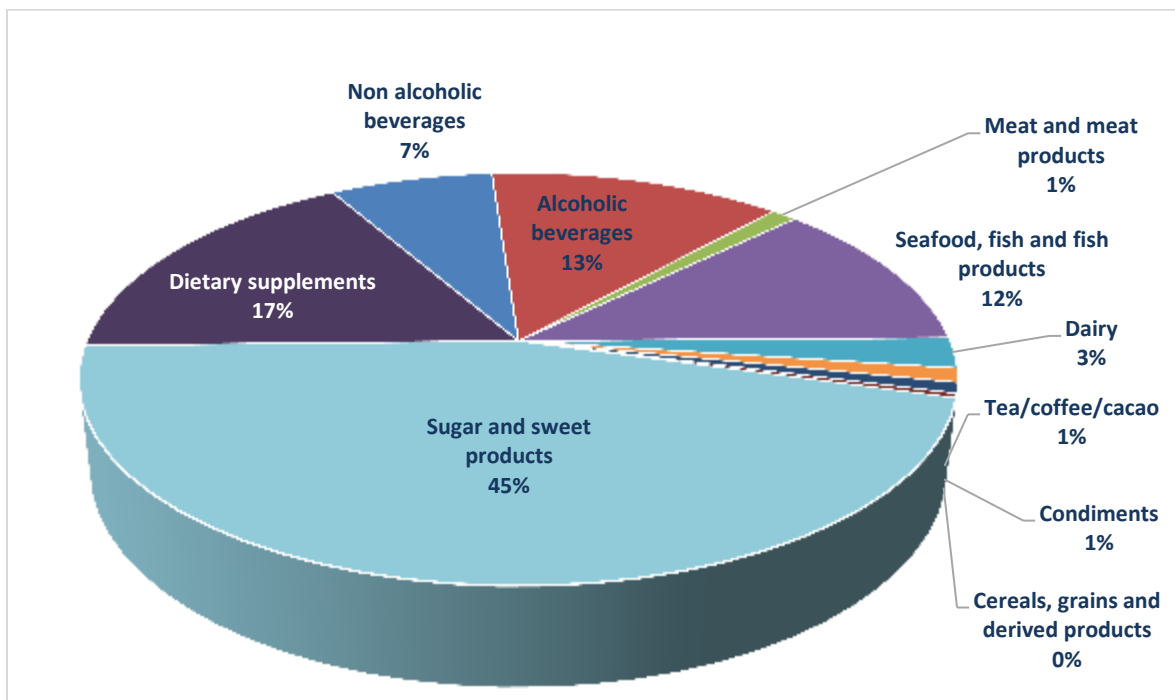


Chart 5

Proportion of goods seized by units

Compiling methodology OPSON V

Food products have been counted by weight (kg), volume (litres) and units.

All seizures were categorised into the following groups: Fruit and Vegetables; Snacks; Meat and meat products; Seafood, fish and fish products; Dairy products; Tea, coffee and cacao; Food supplements (dietary supplements); Condiments (except sugar); Cereals and derived products; Sugar and sweet products; Pet food. Beverages were categorised into alcoholic and non-alcoholic.

Latin American countries¹⁹ reported all seizures by weight (in kg), including liquids such as oil, milk, alcoholic beverages etc. This measurement impacted the global figures.

Of note this year is the small amount of side-seizures, *i.e.* non food products. In previous reports, results had been divided into two broad categories: foodstuff and side seizures. However, this year side-seizures have not been included in the statistical analysis.

When seizures were not clearly marked, *i.e.* '49 tonnes of food products seized', or when several categories of products were seized together without further specifications on quantities (*i.e.* 'seized 2000 kilograms of Condiments, Snacks, Milk, Chocolate, Oats, Seasonings, Soft drinks'), the food items have been labelled as 'unidentified and miscellaneous'.

Moreover, countries, especially Latin American participants, reported seizures of livestock. However, those seizures were reported in weight and not in units. They were therefore included in the Meat and meat products category.

- **Categories of food and beverages**

Drinks

Non alcoholic	juice
	mineral water
	energy drinks
	soft drinks (excluding juice)
Alcoholic	beer
	high volume alcohol
	wine
	sparkling wine

Foodstuff

Fruit and Vegetables	dried
	fresh
Snacks	<i>e.g.</i> pickles, chips, snacks
Meat and meat products	
Fish and fish products	fish
	seafood
	caviar
Dairy	eggs
	milk
	milk powder/baby food
	butter and substitutes
	cheese

¹⁹ Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay.

Tea, coffee and cacao	tea
	coffee
	cacao
Food supplements	<i>e.g.</i> vitamins, slimming pills
Condiments (except sugar)	vegetable oil (olive, sunflower, etc.)
	vinegar
	salt
	pepper
	sauce
Cereals and derived products	maize
	wheat
	cereals (ready to eat food: <i>i.e.</i> , muesli, cornflakes...)
	rice
	flour
	pasta, and noodles
	bread/pastries
Sugar and sweet products	sugar
	confectionery
	chocolate
	honey
Petfood	
Livestock	poultry
	cattle (mammals)

Annex 4: INTERPOL/Europol joint press release

Largest-ever seizures of fake food and drink in INTERPOL-Europol operation

30 March 2016

More than 10,000 tonnes and one million litres of hazardous fake food and drink have been seized in operations across 57 countries in an INTERPOL-Europol coordinated initiative to protect public health and safety.

Operation Opson V, resulted in seizures ranging from nearly nine tonnes of counterfeit sugar contaminated with fertilizer in Khartoum, Sudan to Italian officers recovering more than 85 tonnes of olives which had been 'painted' with copper sulphate solutions to enhance their colour.

Involving police, customs, national food regulatory bodies and partners from the private sector, checks were carried out at shops, markets, airports, seaports and industrial estates between November 2015 and February 2016.

A number of arrests were made worldwide throughout the operation and investigations are continuing. Among the aims of the operation is to identify and disrupt the organized crime networks behind the trafficking in fake goods and enhance cooperation between the involved law enforcement and regulatory authorities.

In Greece, officers discovered three illicit factories producing counterfeit alcohol. Police seized equipment used in the manufacturing process including labels, caps, empty bottles in addition to more than 7,400 bottles of fake alcohol and counterfeit labels.

In the UK, authorities recovered nearly 10,000 litres of fake or adulterated alcohol including wine, whisky and vodka. In Burundi, more than 36,000 litres of illicit alcohol were seized in addition to nine Kalashnikov rifles and ammunition along with three grenades which were recovered during the operation.

After police in Thailand carried out checks on an individual found to be transporting four tonnes of meat illegally imported from India, further investigations led to the discovery of an illicit network operating across 10 provinces. Officers recovered and destroyed more than 30 tonnes of illegal beef and buffalo meat unfit for human consumption which had been destined for sale in supermarkets.

In a number of cases, checks at airports identified international travellers importing illicit products. Customs officers at Zaventem airport in Belgium discovered several kilos of monkey meat and in France, officers seized and destroyed 11 kilos of locusts and 20 kilos of caterpillars.

Police in South Korea arrested a woman smuggling dietary supplements which were being sold online as natural product but in fact contained harmful ingredients. The sales of these fake weight loss products are estimated to have generated some USD 170,000 over a 10-month period.

False labelling again proved to be a common thread for all types of foodstuffs around the world. In Australia, testing of 450 kg of honey revealed it had been blended or adulterated, and a consignment of peanuts had been repackaged and relabelled as pine nuts, posing a significant threat to allergy sufferers.

"Fake and dangerous food and drink threaten the health and safety of people around the world who are often unsuspectingly buying these potentially very dangerous goods" said Michael Ellis, head of INTERPOL's Trafficking in Illicit Goods unit which coordinated activities between the world police body's participating countries across the globe.

“With Operation Opson V resulting in more seizures than ever before, we must continue to build on these efforts to identify the criminal networks behind this activity whose only concern is making a profit, no matter what the cost to the public.”

“Today’s rising food prices and the global nature of the food chain offer the opportunity for criminals to sell counterfeit and substandard food in a multi-billion criminal industry which can pose serious potential health risks to unsuspecting customers. The complexity and scale of this fraud means cooperation needs to happen across borders with a multi-agency approach,” said Chris Vansteenkiste, Cluster Manager of the Intellectual Property Crime Team at Europol.

“This year again, the results from Opson clearly reflect the threat that food fraud represents, as food adulterations cut across all kinds of categories and from all regions of the world. Sharing knowledge in one market may prevent food fraud in another and ultimately helps protect public health and safety worldwide.”

In Indonesia, officials seized 70 kilos of chicken intestines which had been preserved in formalin, which is prohibited as a food additive. In a joint National Agency of Food and Drug Control, police and customs intervention, more than 310,000 illegal food products were discovered hidden behind piles of tiles in a warehouse believed to have been smuggled in by boat from Malaysia.

Police in Bolivia discovered a warehouse containing thousands of cans of sardines, with fake labels of a famous Peruvian brand ready to be stuck on.

In Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, and Romania, customs and police authorities discovered counterfeit chocolates, sweets and non-alcoholic sparkling wine aimed at children and destined for export to West Africa.

Officials in Togo destroyed 24 tonnes of imported tilapia which was found to be unfit for human consumption and in Zambia, police discovered 1,300 bottles of fake whisky in original packaging which had previously been stolen from a warehouse. More than 3,200 cartons of diet powder drinks where the expiration dates had been modified were also seized.

First launched in 2011, the Opson operations have grown from involving just 10 countries across Europe, to involving nearly 60 countries in every region of the world resulting in the seizure of tens of thousands of tonnes of fake and substandard food and drink.

Source URL: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/print/content/largest-ever-seizures-fake-food-and-drink-interpol-europol-operation>

This year, OPSON was mentioned in several international media.

BBC [en]	Link : http://www.bbc.com/news/world-35929237
BILD [de]	Link: http://www.bild.de/wa/anleitungsseite/bild-de/ie-win-42925618.bild.html
CNN (video) [en]	Link: http://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2016/03/31/monkey-meat-world-record-food-drink-raids-europol-interpol-orig.cnn

Annex 5: Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms	
EU MS	European Union Member State
EMPACT	European Multi-disciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threat
IPR	Intellectual Property Right
LEA	Law Enforcement Agency
NCP	National Contact Point
OCG	Organised Criminal Group
Organisations and Institutions	
EU	European Union
EU COM	European Commission
DG SANTÉ	Directorate General Health & Consumers
IPSG	INTERPOL General Secretariat
INTERPOL IGGH	INTERPOL Illicit Goods and Global Health Programme