

Loss Prevention Bulletin

Ship Type: All Trade Area: All

Bulletin 145 - 06/00 - Illegal Importation of Bananas (ex Ecuador) to Catania - Italy

We have been made aware of recent arrests in Italy of people involved in the illegal importation of around 160,000 tonnes of bananas from Ecuador in the period 1998 to date.

We understand that a Mr Antonio Grasso the legal representative of Ortofrutticola Acese and a Mr Salvatore Di Bella representative and custom's forwarder for the company have been arrested accused of defrauding the EU.

Reportedly Ortofrutticola Acese benefited from a reduced import tax level (Euro 75/ton against Euro 850/ton as provided by law) by using forged import certificates. Allegedly customs duties of Lit 250 billion (US\$ 124,052,856) and VAT for Lit 10 billion (US\$ 4,962,114) have been evaded.

Investigations are continuing throughout Italy and other European countries. The court of Catania is further approaching the import export company Trinacrina France of Paris for further information.

In the most recent case where a member's vessel has been involved the court has acknowledged that the owner, master and crew are not involved, although the cargo has been confiscated and will be sold with the proceeds deposited with the Treasury Department.

Members who have been carrying bananas to Catania from Ecuador in the last two years should review any claims they have had, especially the amounts claimed, to see if customs dues/VAT have been fraudulently claimed.

Source of information Tagliavia & Co (Correspondent)
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