



INTERPOL

Operation OPSON VII

Analysis Report

Public version

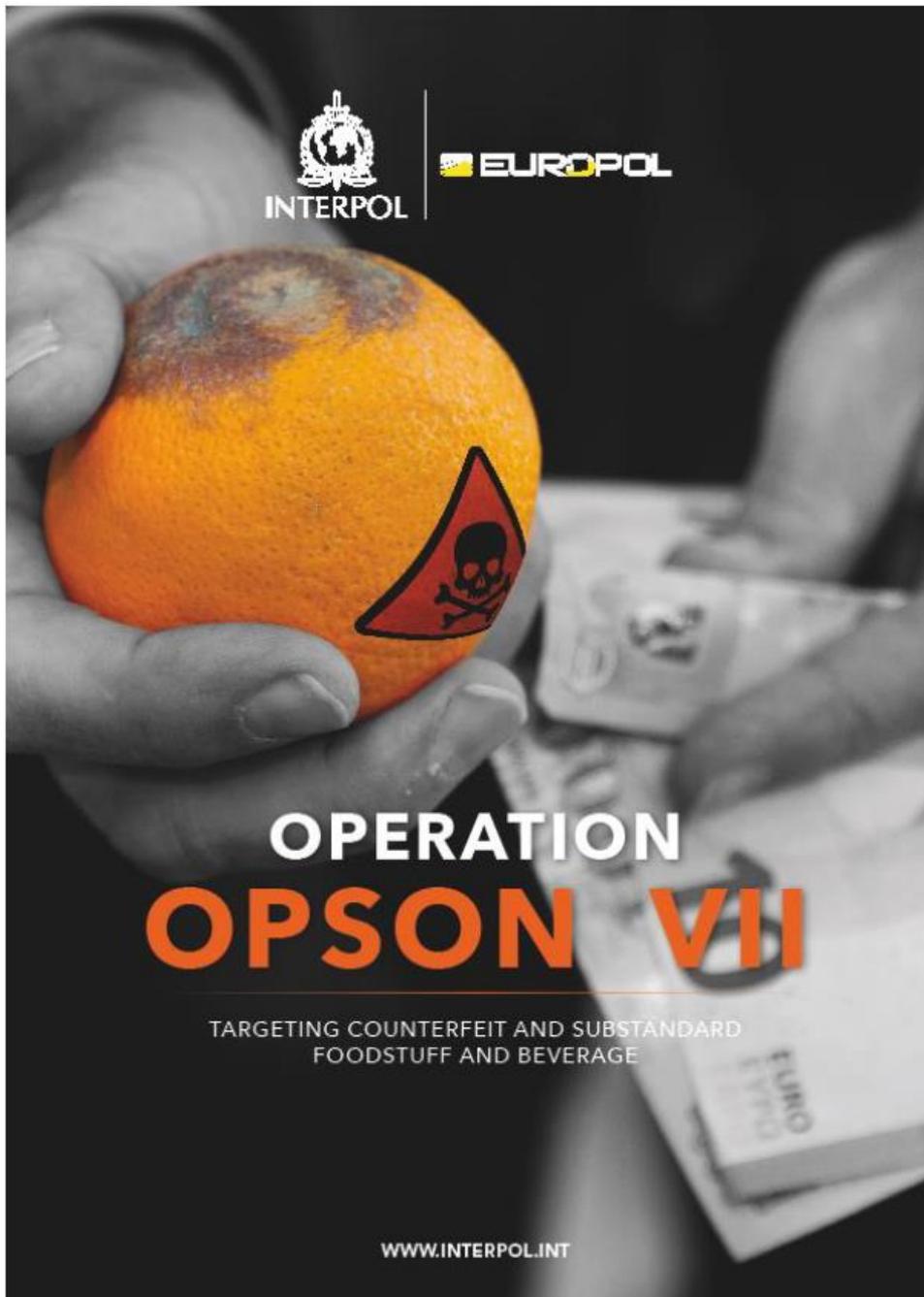


Table of Contents

KEY ELEMENTS.....	4
INTRODUCTION	6
1. SCOPE AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK	7
1.1 SCOPE	7
1.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK	7
2. PARTICIPANTS	7
2.1 PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES, EUROPOL AND INTERPOL.....	7
2.2 PRIVATE PARTNERS.....	9
3. SCHEDULE OF THE OPERATION	9
3.1 PREPARATORY PHASE.....	9
3.2 OPERATIONAL PHASE	10
3.2.1 ACTIONS AT EU LEVEL.....	11
3.2.2 ROLE OF INTERPOL AND EUROPOL.....	11
3.3 POST OPERATIONAL PHASE	11
4. RESULTS OF THE OPERATIONAL PHASE	12
4.1 RESULTS RECEIVED AND ELABORATION OF THE STATISTICS	12
4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE SEIZED PRODUCTS	12
4.2.1 SEIZED QUANTITIES OF ILLICIT GOODS AND PRODUCTS OVERVIEW	12
4.2.2 GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SEIZURES	13
4.2.3 BREAKDOWN OF SEIZED PRODUCTS PER CATEGORY	16
4.3 OVERALL FIGURES – INVESTIGATIONS, ARRESTS, INFRINGEMENTS	31
4.3.1 INVOLVEMENT OF ORGANIZED CRIME	34
4.3.2 TYPES OF INFRINGEMENTS	35
4.4 CASE EXAMPLES.....	36
5. ANALYTICAL CONCLUSIONS.....	45
6. COMMUNICATION POLICY	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

7. EVALUATION OF OPSON VII.....ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

 6.1 OPERATION EVALUATION **ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.**

 6.2 REMAINING GAPS..... **ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.**

8. RECOMMENDATIONS.....ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

9. THE OPSON FORMATERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

10. CLOSING POINTSERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

11. ANNEXES 47

KEY ELEMENTS

- **67** countries, among them **24** EU Member States (MS) participated in Operation OPSON VII. As a comparison, 65 countries took part in OPSON VI. This year, **22 private partners** supported OPSON VII.
- According to the results reported by countries, almost **3,950 tons, 9.7 million liters** and almost **14.5 million pieces¹** of potentially harmful food and beverages were withdrawn from the markets. Converted in tons, these quantities represent a total of **19,358 tons**.
- The value of the illicit food products seized is estimated at approximately **78.5 million USD (67.5 million EUR)**.
- Considering quantities of products seized, **alcohol** was **the most seized product** during OPSON VII.
- By value, **meat and meat products** represent the first category of seized goods, with seizures estimated at more than **32 million USD (27.5 million EUR)**.
- Participating countries reported **41,293 inspections and checks², 3,029 criminal cases, 3,201 administrative cases, 3,325 arrests warrants** and **713 search warrants** executed.
- **Sixty-six organized crime groups** involved in the production of illicit food, goods smuggling as well as other criminal deeds were disrupted.
- **Seventy-four illicit factories** have been dismantled, **71** of which **produced alcohol, two** manufactured substandard food supplements and medicines and **one** illegally produced in the same premises food products, cosmetics and pesticides.
- Regarding **side seizures³**, during OPSON VII, the participants seized around **10.6 million pieces** and more than 80 tons of illicit products, evaluated at approximately **10 million USD (8.6 million EUR)**. Amongst the most notable side seizures were: smuggled cigarettes, car spare parts and lubricants, pharmaceutical products, clothes and shoes, mobile phones, toys as well as fuel. Firearms and ammunitions were also seized.

¹ Exact numbers are mentioned in Section 4.

² See definition page 12.

³ Side seizures encompass illicit goods seized during the operation, which are neither food or drinks.

OPERATION OPSON VII

TARGETING COUNTERFEIT AND SUBSTANDARD FOODSTUFF AND BEVERAGE



67
countries
participated
in Operation
OPSON VII.



OPSON VII
Targeting
counterfeit and
sub-standard food
and drink



3,950 tons
tonnes of fake and
sub-standard food



9,7 million
litres of fake and
sub-standard drink



USD 78,5 million
total value of illicit
goods seized



14,5 million
units in total



Alcohol
is the most seized product



USD 32 million
Considering the value, meat and
meat products represent the first
category of seized goods



41,293
investigations
opened



66
organized crime
groups disrupted



74
illicit factories
dismantled



3,325
arrest warrants
713
search warrants
executed



3,029
criminal cases
3,201
administrative cases



INTRODUCTION

Operation OPSON⁴ started in in 2011 with 10 participating countries, exclusively European Member States. In 2018, OPSON VII saw the participation of 67 countries from all continents, and 22 private companies or associations.

Since its initiation, Operation OPSON has set clear objectives consisting of:

- protecting public health;
- fighting against organized crime groups involved in the trade of fake and substandard food;
- enhancing international cooperation;
- enhancing national cooperation between LEAs 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.

This report presents a detailed analysis of the results reported by the participating countries and corresponding to enforcement actions undertaken in the operational phase of OPSON VII. Thanks to an enhanced data-reporting framework and to increased efforts in reporting from all actors, the interpretation of the statistics elaborated by the dedicated INTERPOL analyst can be considered as much more in-depth and accurate compared to older reports. Information on the involvement of organized crime in food crime is also more developed and precise. Although the report does not intend to reflect precisely all activities carried out during the operational phase in all countries, it offers a clear-cut picture of the criminal phenomenon.

Conclusions drawn confirm some trends observed in previous editions and open new ways for actions, such as the online enforcement. Of note for OPSON VII is the establishment for the first time of joint actions on one specific commodity. This initiative carried out in Europe at this stage focused on tuna. It proved successful and was in line with the overarching principles of OPSON above mentioned, especially regarding the inter-agency and international cooperation.

⁴ OPSON (ὄψων) means food in ancient Greek.

1. SCOPE AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 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 defined⁵ 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 laws 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.

1.2 Legal Framework

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

The exchange of intelligence and information between INTERPOL and the participating countries was made in accordance with Resolution AG-2011-RES-07 approving the Rules of the Processing of Data.

The exchange of intelligence and information between Europol and the participating countries was carried out according to the Europol Regulation and all related Decisions concerning the exchange and handling of information⁶.

The exchange of intelligence and information between INTERPOL and Europol complied with the operational agreement signed on 5 November 2001 between the two organizations.

2. PARTICIPANTS

2.1 Participating countries, EUROPOL and INTERPOL

The following countries⁷ participated in OPSON VII:

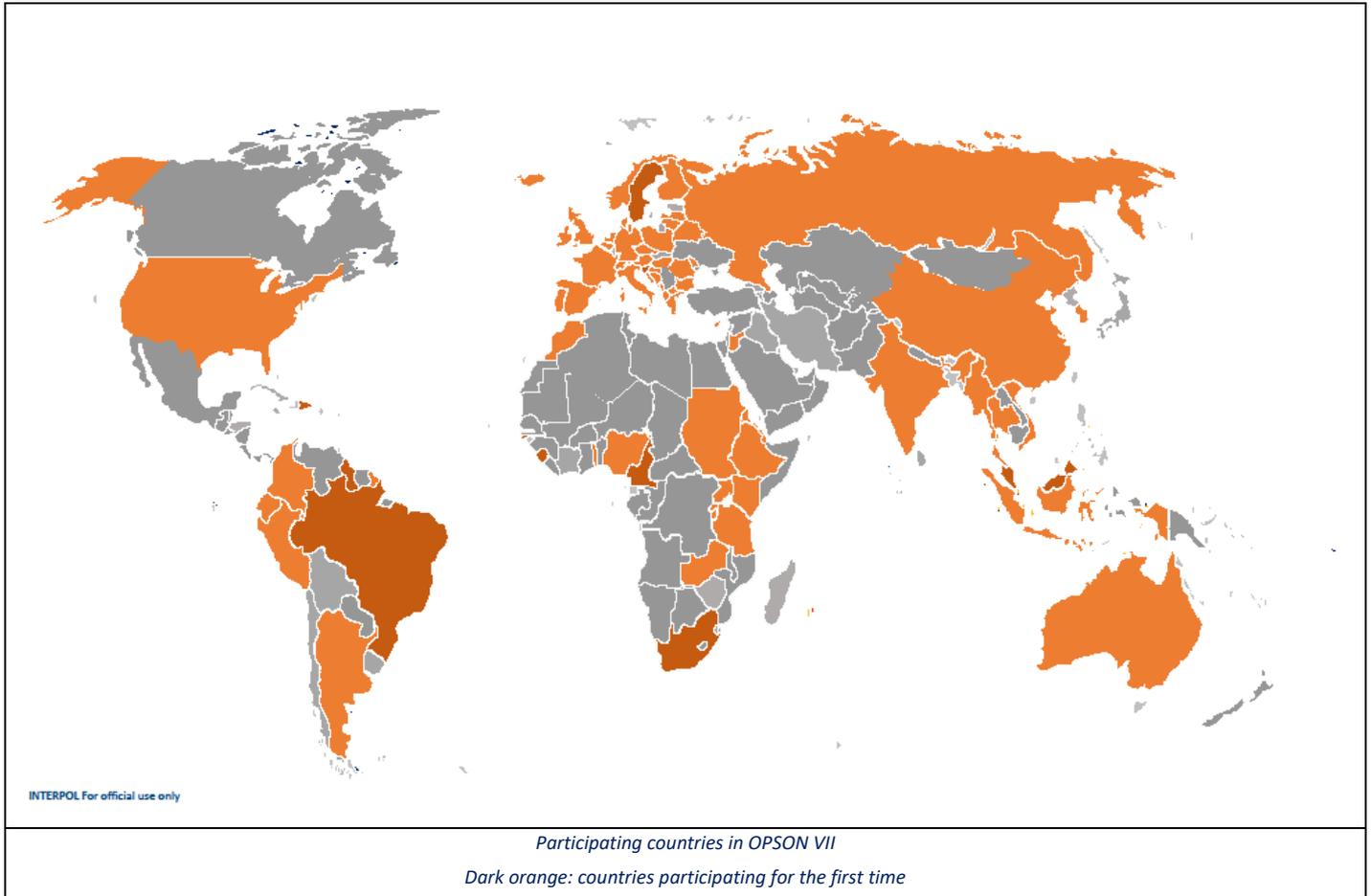
Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia&Herzegovina, **BRAZIL**, Bulgaria, Burundi, **CAMEROON**, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, **GUINEA BISSAU**, **GUYANA**, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, **LIECHTENSTEIN**, Lithuania, **MALAYSIA**, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, **SIERRA LEONE**, **SLOVENIA**, **SOUTH AFRICA**,

⁵ All definitions mentioned here have no legal value but are used in the framework of the operation.

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2016/794 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.

⁷ Please refer to Annex 1 for the list of participating countries and involved agencies. The countries in bold letters are countries participating for the first time.

South Korea, South Sudan, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Uganda, United Kingdom, USA, Vietnam, Zambia.



In total **67 countries among them 24 EU Member States (MS)** were involved in OPSON VII. This represents the highest number of participating countries since the beginning of the initiative. The participants only slightly differ compared to the previous edition. Overall, the OPSON network continued its expansion, from 65 countries to 67.

In Europe, the number of participating countries increased from 22 countries last year, to 24 EU MS for OPSON VII. Two newcomers joined OPSON VII: Slovenia, with the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection, and Liechtenstein, with the State Administration (Food Safety Division). Estonia, Luxembourg, Iceland, Malta and the Slovak Republic did not join OPSON VII. Of note this year is the absence of Iceland which did not join the initiative due to the lack of human resources, among them the OPSON National contact point. In the rest of the EU MS, the threat regarding food fraud is not considered to be significant enough to allocate resources for OPSON. However, when requested for cooperation on specific cases, these countries responded and provided intelligence. Europol will continue developing efforts to engage all EU MS in the future.

Underlining again that the OPSON initiative continued to grow globally, this year several countries from Africa, South America and Asia participated for the first time. These countries are Brazil, Cameroon, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Lichtenstein, Malaysia, Sierra Leone and South Africa.

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 the national level, or one point of contact per agency or administration. In most countries, contact points remained the same as for previous phases. This contributed to improve the 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. Analysis Project Copy⁸, 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 (IGGH) Programme promoted, developed and coordinated OPSON among third countries and was in charge of the analytical support for the operation.

2.2 Private partners

The following private companies and associations participated in operation OPSON VII (23 in total):

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, Food Industry Asia, The GB Foods SA, International Federation of Spirits Producers (IFSP), Lavazza, Mars, Moët Hennessy (LVMH), Mondelez International Inc., Nestlé, Red Bull, Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), the Tequila Regulatory Council (CRT), Unilever⁹.

Their participation consisted of:

- Providing intelligence and risk assessments on their products during the pre-operational phase, including during training sessions tailored for law enforcement services;
- Participating in preparatory meetings organized at the national level;
- Providing expertise in legal proceedings when needed.

Each private partner made available 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), prioritizing those most affected by the threat of counterfeiting;
- 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 the national level if deemed relevant.

3. SCHEDULE OF THE OPERATION

Similar to last years, the operation was divided into three phases, which are described below.

3.1 Preparatory phase

Operation OPSON VII was launched in October 2017, during a meeting hosted by the Food Safety Authority of

⁸ Previously Focal Point Copy. AP Copy is embedded in the Intellectual Property Crime Coordinated Coalition (IPCC3), created in 2016 through a partnership between Europol and the EU Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO).

⁹ For more information on the private partners, especially on their products, please refer to Annex 2: list of participating private companies/associations

Ireland (FSAI) in Dublin, Ireland. The event debriefed operation OPSON VI, by presenting the results and discussing the implementation of the operational phase. It also officially launched OPSON VII with a discussion on new challenges for this phase, and updated delegates on on-going projects against food fraud (e.g. EMPACT Policy Cycle). The meeting gathered more than 100 participants representing 41 countries, European Commission and 12 private partners.



Dublin – 2/3 October 2017

Debriefing meeting OPSON VI – Launch Meeting OPSON VII

The operational plan was disseminated via appropriate channels, SIENA and EPE (Europol channels) and the I24/7 system to the National Central Bureaus (INTERPOL channels), to all participants in November 2017.

The INTERPOL Illicit Goods and Global Health Unit, in order to create further OPSON contact points and widen the number of member countries from sensitive areas, set up a Food Fraud Workshop, held in Lyon from the 3rd till the 5th of May. During the 3 days event, 11 delegates from Law Enforcement Agencies from Africa, Asia and East Europe shared information and specialist knowledge on the domestic legal framework, the challenges facing in each country, the experiences and best practices they have dealt with. The private sector delegates, on the other hand, shared their supportive competences on legal and technical bases.

In January 2018, in spite of the beginning of the operational phase in December 2017, a two-day training was organized by Europol in order to prepare for the operational phase. The event aimed to enhance detection and enforcement actions on specific products, namely coffee, tea and alcohol (liquors and spirits). It gathered representatives of participating agencies in OPSON of 29 countries, among them 26 EU MS. Representatives of several stakeholders from the private sector provided information on their products and fraudulent *modi operandi*. Law enforcement agencies also exchanged experiences and best practices when presenting cases and investigations developed in their countries.

3.2 Operational phase

The operational phase spanned four months between 01 December 2017 and 31 March 2018.

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 and timing of controls established in a national operational plan.

It is worth to mention this year that several coordinated operational activities took place for the first time. These initiatives should be highlighted as they achieve the objectives of OPSON regarding the strengthening of international cooperation, and the establishment of synergies between all actors, especially at European level.

3.2.1 Actions at EU level

The first action focused on **the online sales of food products**. In September 2017, the Directorate General Health & Consumers of the European Commission¹⁰ (EU COM – DG Health) launched a coordinated control plan (CCP) to identify websites illegally selling food products. This plan results from the adoption of the new Regulation (EU) No 2017/625, which allows the use of online samples to perform official controls (art. 36). After study visits in seven EU MS and threats assessments, it was decided to focus on websites selling food supplements with medicinal claims for bone and joint diseases. In particular, products containing four different non-authorized novel foods were targeted (*Agmatine (4-aminobutyl) guanidine sulfate*, *Acacia rigidula*, *Epimedium grandiflorum*, *Hoodia gordonii*).

Twenty-five EU MS, Norway and Switzerland implemented the CCP. The competent national authorities checked nearly 1100 websites. They found 779 offers for the sale of products clearly not complying with the EU legislation, whether in terms of labelling, false claims or lack of authorization. Open source information stemming from the plan was crosschecked by Europol to establish any connection with ongoing criminal investigations. No hits were found.

The second action was also developed at EU level in close cooperation with EU COM DG Health (Unit E5 – Enforcement) upon request of Switzerland, Germany and Scotland. Those countries requested the support of Europol and EU COM – DG Health to coordinate **enforcement actions on tuna** at European level. Based on intelligence obtained by DG Health and countries, several fraudulent *modi operandi* were identified since 2016. One of them consists in injecting illegal additives in the fish in order to sell it as fresh tuna.

It was discovered as well that some operators did not use the legal storage method to sell fresh tuna: they used fishing boats not able to reach the necessary freezing temperature (the fish was frozen in brine after capture at temperatures of -9°C instead of -18°C). They would then treat the fish with nitrites/nitrates or carbon monoxide to give the appearance of fresh products. All fraudulent practices aimed to increase profitability and led to serious risk health, with serious allergic reactions (Scombroid Syndrome).

In total, 11 countries decided to join the project. The private industry, including the tuna industry provided intelligence. EU COM – DG Health was also fully committed. Two meetings were held at Europol to start and to conclude the initiative. Results of the project are described in section 4, below.

These two actions reinforced synergies between all actors and led to positive operational results. Similar projects should be undertaken in the framework of OPSON VIII.

3.2.2 Role of INTERPOL and Europol

During the operational phase, INTERPOL and Europol performed crosschecks against their databases and coordinated the dissemination of intelligence in order to support on-going actions.

At the end of the operational phase, participating countries sent all available results to INTERPOL and Europol for analysis.

3.3 Post operational phase

The results of the operational phase were to be sent to INTERPOL and Europol before 10 April 2018. Most of the participating countries respected this deadline. From April 2018 to September 2018, both organizations analyzed the data transmitted to assess the threat, and to identify best practices and areas of improvement.

A debriefing meeting was held on 7 November 2018, at the INTERPOL Headquarters in Lyon, France, to present the results and adopt the report. It was sent to all countries via the appropriate communication channels.

¹⁰ Unit G3 Official controls

4. RESULTS OF THE OPERATIONAL PHASE

4.1 Results received and elaboration of the statistics¹¹

A Criminal Intelligence Analyst of the INTERPOL Illicit Goods and Global Health Programme carried out data compiling and analysis of the results, which were sent in a formatted way, using the data collection template approved in the course of the pre-operational phase (Launch meeting, October 2017, Dublin).

Like previous years, thresholds for seizures to be reported were established at:

- 5 kilograms
- 5 liters
- 10 units

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

Compared to last year, inconsistencies in reporting the results decreased, and this can be partially explained by the fact that the template was slightly amended for OPSON VII. But it is worth mentioning that the quality of the information transmitted improved. However, some discrepancies and information gaps remained and compromised the ability to present highly reliable figures and analysis. The statistics presented below have been elaborated on the basis of available information.

As the information reported was structured in different ways, in some cases containing different categories or missing information, the closest approximation of the actual figures is presented below.

4.2 Analysis of the seized products

All participating countries carried out checks throughout their national territory. Of note is that the whole chain of supply received attention, seizures being made at production sites, during the transport phase or at the distribution and selling points of illicit foods and drinks. Law enforcement actions targeted all channels of distribution, including online sales.

4.2.1 Seized quantities of illicit goods and products overview

The seized quantities in the framework of OPSON VII are as follows¹²:

Global Results: Illicit Goods Seized	
OPSON VII	
Unit of measurement	Quantity
Tons	3,943.4
Liters	9,743,980.96
Units	14,475,398

In total, **3,943.4 metric tons, 9,743,980.96 liters and 14,475,398 pieces** of potentially harmful food and beverages have been seized and removed from the markets. The total estimated weight of all goods taken out of markets during OPSON VII raises to more than **19,358 tons**. The value of these illicit products is estimated at **78,594,145.46 USD, or 67,732,827.53 EUR¹³**.

¹¹ Please refer to Annex 3 Detailed statistics for more information on the results.

¹² Seized quantities in previous operations are mentioned in Annex 3. Please refer to it for more details on the statistics.

¹³ Exchange rate on 10/09/2018 (Source: www.xe.com)

Interventions and checks did not lead to any seizure in the following countries:

Cameroon, Croatia, Cyprus, Ecuador, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, India, Latvia, South Korea, Peru, Uganda, and United Kingdom¹⁴, although these countries implemented enforcement actions in the framework of the operation.

According to all combined measurement units (weight, liters, and pieces), **alcohol** was the **most seized product** during OPSON VII, followed respectively by **dairy products** and **meat and meat products**.

However, breaking down the reported data inside every category of measurements and keeping in mind the estimated value of the products seized, the situation is the following:

Regarding **seizures reported in tons**, the biggest quantity is represented by **dairy products** with **797.12** tons, followed by **fruits and vegetables** with **628.33** tons and **meat and meat products** with **551.61** tons. Alcoholic beverages represent the fourth category with seizures amounting to **547.48 tons**.

According to the **seizures expressed in liters**, alcohol was the most seized item with **9,434,316 liters** seized, followed by **cooking oil 155,589.3** liters and **non-alcoholic beverages** with **85,261.9** liters seized.

For the seizures expressed **in units/pieces**, the highest amount of food products seized was represented¹⁵ by **meat and meat products** with 689,831 units, closely followed by **sugar and sweet products** (686,909 pieces) and **cereals, grains and derived products** (204,335 pieces).

Nevertheless, **considering the value of the products seized**, by far the highest value was reported in relation to the seized **meat and meat products**, worth more than 32 million USD (27.6 million EUR). **Alcoholic beverages** were ranked second with a value of more than 12.9 million USD (11.12 million EUR) and **dairy products** third, totaling around 11 million USD (9.48 million EUR).

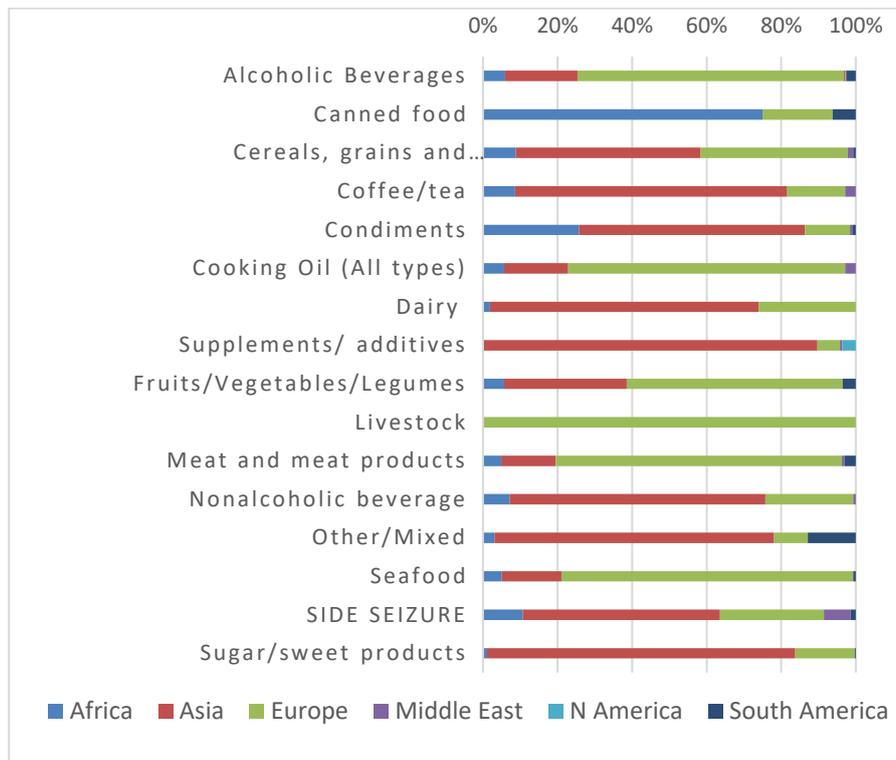
Regarding **side seizures**, countries reported about **10.6 million pieces, 80 tons and 70 liters of products**, evaluated at roughly **10.9 million USD (9.39 million EUR)**. Amongst the most notable side seizures were reported: fuel and raw materials for gold mining, car spare parts and lubricants, cigarettes, pharmaceuticals and homeopathic products, clothes, shoes and other textile products, mobile phones or toys.

4.2.2 Geographical analysis of the seizures

As expected, the seizures in OPSON VII were reported on all continents. However, a higher concentration is to be found in Europe and Asia. The side seizures also took place in all regions but more cases were reported in Asia. The reports from Africa showed a small but steady presence of almost all kinds of counterfeit food products, yet canned food products seemed to be more problematic in this region, (see Graph 1).

¹⁴ Seizures above the threshold set in the reporting template mentioned in page 10.

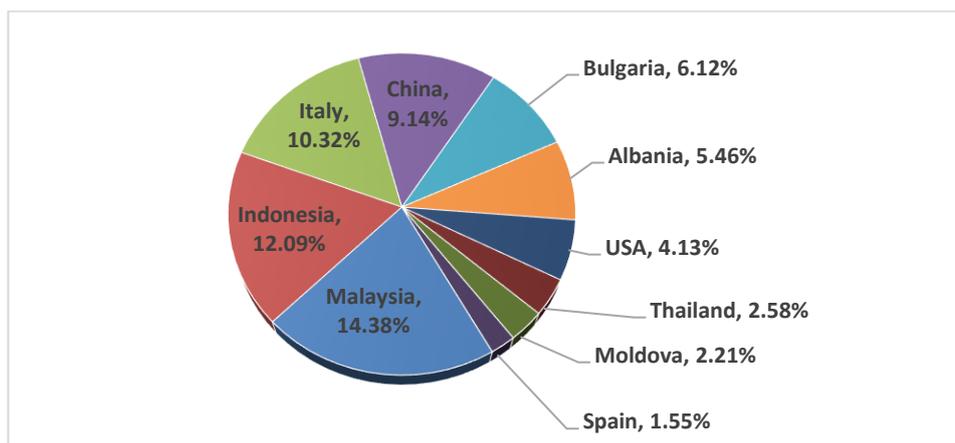
¹⁵ This excludes the side seizures (10.6 million pieces), the mixed products (1.19 million pieces) and the category of "other" (590,385 pieces) and looks only at the clearly individualized food products.



Graph 1 - Distribution of seizures, by category of products, and by continent

During OPSON VII, in 1,335¹⁶ instances, the origin country was clearly reported and illicit products were shipped from 92 different countries, from all continents. These aspects are detailed, in correlation of the category of products, in the chapter 4.5.6.

Based on the total number of reports¹⁷, Malaysia was indicated as origin country in the highest amount of cases, however the geographic spread of the products originated here was limited mostly to Asia. In addition, Indonesia, Italy, China, Bulgaria, Albania, USA, Thailand, Moldova and Spain were also mentioned as origin countries in higher number of cases. All other countries were reported as origin of illicit products in less than 1% each, (see Graph 2).



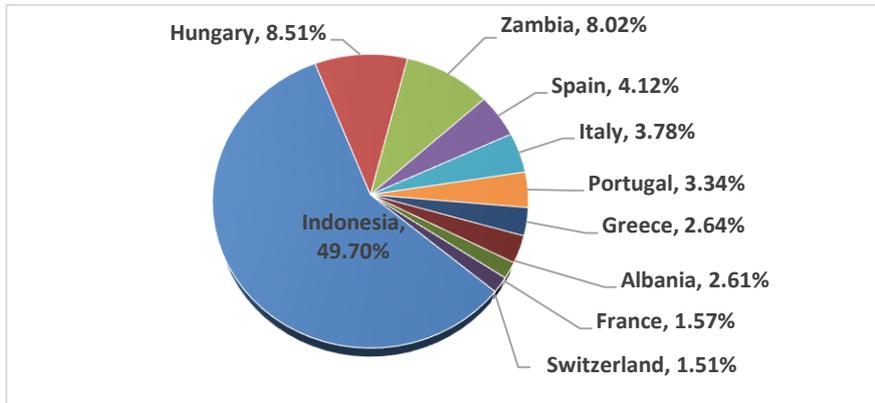
Graph 2 – Origin country by total number of reports – top 10 countries

Conversely, in terms of destination countries, also based on the total number of reports, Indonesia was a destination country in almost 50% of the cases, the data suggesting that the country was targeted more by criminal activity

¹⁶ Out of about 3,445 inputs.

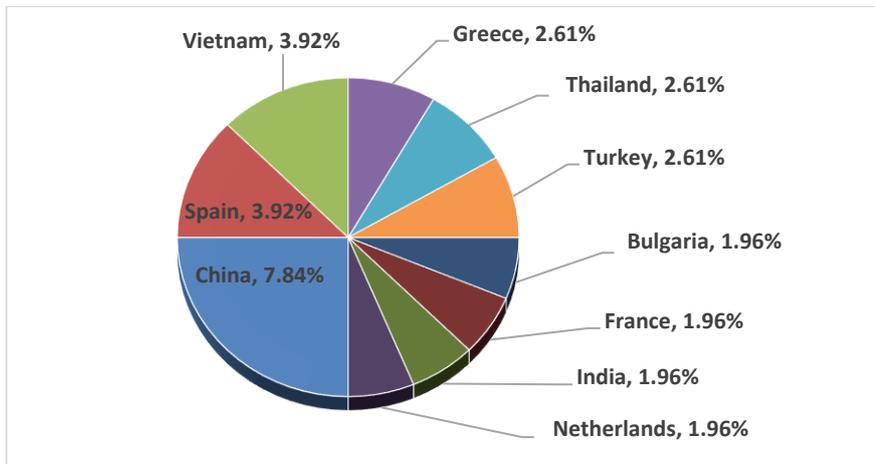
¹⁷ In essence, the data takes into account how many times a country was mentioned as origin country for illicit products by other countries participating in the operation, pointing out a higher frequency of shipments of illicit goods from that respective country.

related to food fraud. The following countries were also mentioned in higher number of cases: Hungary, Zambia, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Albania, France and Switzerland. The rest of the participating countries were indicated as destination for illicit goods in less than 1% each, (see graph 3).



Graph 3 - Destination by total number of reports top 10 countries

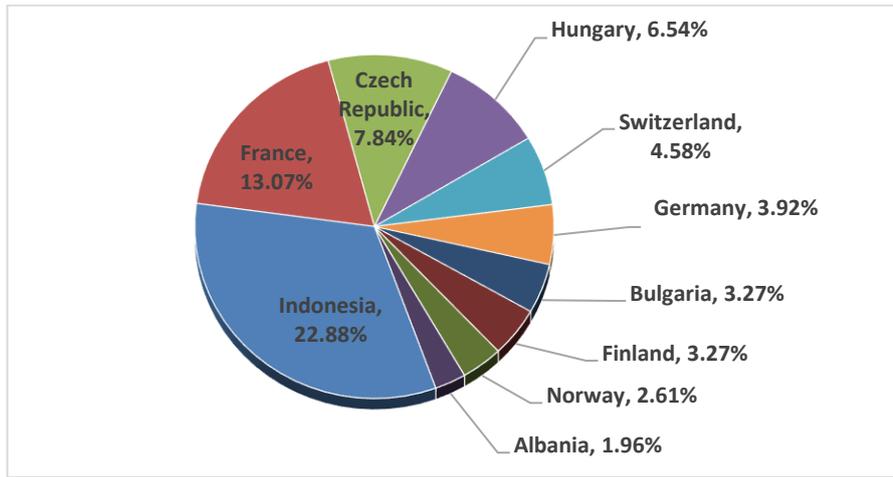
However, looking at the reported data from a different angle, based on the unique connections between origin and destination countries¹⁸, the highest number of routes are connected to China, thus, for OPSON VII illicit goods from China showed the highest exposure globally. In addition, a significant number of detected routes indicated also that illicit products coming from Spain, Vietnam, Greece, Thailand, Turkey, Bulgaria, France, India and Netherlands, had wider coverage in comparison with other participating countries, which reported fewer routes for illicit goods (see graph 4).



Graph 4 - Origin countries by unique routes to destination countries – top 10 countries

Concerning the destination countries and considering the unique connections with origin countries, Indonesia was linked with the highest number of routes (22% of the routes reported), followed by France, Czech Republic, Hungary, Switzerland, Germany, Bulgaria, Finland, Norway and Albania. This reinforces the assumption that Indonesia was targeted in more consistent way as a consumption market for illicit goods. All other countries were mentioned as destination for illicit goods in about 1% each, (see graph 5).

¹⁸ This part takes into account only the unique routes between origin and destination countries, pointing out the geographical spread of illicit goods coming from a certain country. For the purposes of this analysis, whenever the destination country was not mentioned specifically, the reporting country was considered as destination of the products, thus establishing at least a partial route for the illicit products.



Graph 5 - Destination countries by unique connections with origin countries – top 10 countries

Based on the information reported during OPSON VII, several observations can be made regarding the routes reported in connection with illicit food products flow.

Firstly, in several cases, the same route was indicated in relation with at least five different types of illicit food products shipped during the operation, especially by air and sea. These routes, as reported by the participants in OPSON VII are the following: China to Zambia, Malaysia to Indonesia, China to Indonesia, Thailand to Indonesia, Surinam to France and Bolivia to Argentina. Because of the complexity of the seizures, in the light of the OPSON VII findings, these itineraries can be considered of high risk for food related products.

In addition, and based on the reported transits¹⁹, Belgium was a transit hub towards France, United Kingdom, Germany and Netherlands for illicit fruits, condiments, cereals/grains, sugar and other sweet products coming mainly from USA, Cameroon, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.

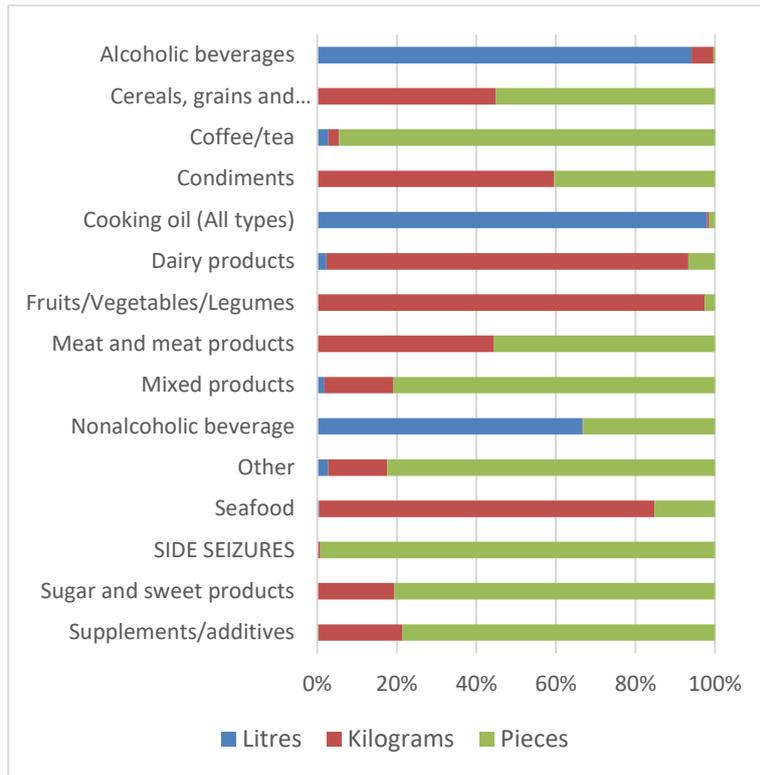
Netherlands was reported also as transit country for seafood, the products coming from Sri Lanka and Vietnam and heading towards Norway, Germany and Switzerland and for processed poultry products from Brazil to the Czech Republic. Condiments were reportedly coming through United Kingdom, from Spain and Turkey, with the final destination in Norway.

Furthermore, Germany was reported as a transit hub towards Belgium and the Czech Republic for meat coming from India and side seizures (textiles, mobile phones), coming from China and Hong Kong, while Malaysia was a transit country for meat coming from India and China and going towards Thailand and Indonesia respectively and for non-alcoholic beverages coming from Saudi Arabia.

4.2.3 Breakdown of seized products per category

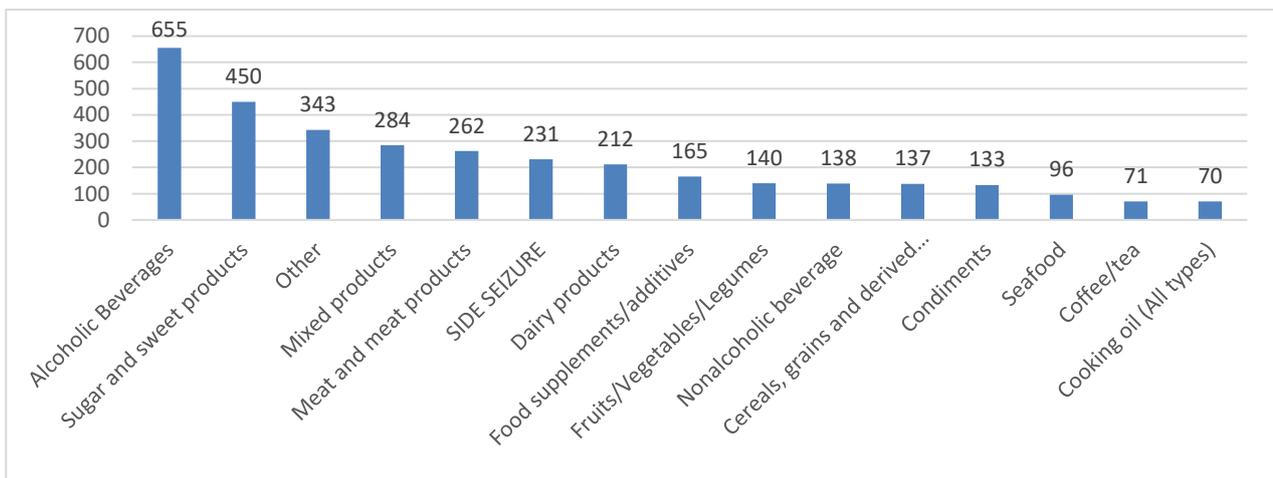
Generally, a higher number of countries reported alcohol, meat and meat products and sugar and sweet products confirming the counterfeiting of these product categories is a concern globally. Most of the seized goods were reported in pieces and kilograms, while the seizures in liters showed a minor spread throughout the categories of products, (see Graph 6).

¹⁹ The number of transit cases reported remained low; only 44 reports mentioning such information, therefore the real extent of the problem might be different from the situation presented above.



Graph 6 - Distribution of seizures by category, liters, kilograms and pieces

Regarding the elaboration of statistics by product category, it should be mentioned that the accuracy of the information was problematic in 627 instances. Seizures were described as “other” and “mixed products”, the latter category involving a variety of items²⁰. This aspect made categorization difficult in terms of type, quantity, origin and value of the goods, and affected the global results. However, both categories only represent around 18% of the seizures (see graph 7).



Graph 7 - Distribution of seizures by category and number of reports

The following paragraphs present an analysis per types of products, including their countries of origin. They are ranked by seized categories (biggest proportions seized to smallest proportions by number of cases)

Alcohol and alcoholic products

²⁰ For details, please see Annex 3.

Seizures of products in this category were reported in 655 cases, by 31 countries, with a total value of more than 12.9 million USD (11.1 million EUR).

Considering the number of reports, most of the information was submitted by Hungary (41% of the total), Indonesia (19%), Greece (13%), Belarus (4%), Burundi (3%), Moldova, Portugal and Zambia (2% each), while all reports from other participating countries indicate less than 2% each. However, considering the value of seizures, the highest value of seized goods was reported by Italy (64%), followed by Russian Federation (30%), and Belarus 2%, all other reports totaled 4%.

In 61.7% of the cases, the illicit deeds were related to fiscal infringements, yet 24.49% remained unspecified, while in 10.68% of the cases, reports indicate food safety problems and in 3.30% IPR issues. The rest of the cases were reported as mixed infringements.

In total, 71 illicit factories involved in the production of substandard or counterfeit alcohol were dismantled, 581 arrest warrants and 177 search warrants were carried out and 24 Organized Crime Groups (OCGs) were disrupted in relation with alcoholic products.

One of the most serious and tragic cases in this category was reported by Indonesia and refers to counterfeit production of bootleg²¹ alcoholic beverages, causing 64 deaths and many other injuries (details in chapter 4.4). Besides the loss of lives because of counterfeit alcohol, countries also mentioned in several cases other hazards for human health, amongst others severe mental problems or kidney disorders.

Regarding quantities, Italy reported the largest amount, with more than 7.5 million liters of illicit alcohol seized, mostly wine, allegedly of local production. The perpetrators reused original bottles, printed false labels and used false origin documents. They also blended cheaper wines from various regions impersonating expensive wines, coming from traditional protected geographical areas. In the regions of Lecce and Ragusa, Italian authorities closed two clandestine alcohol production sites. In this regard, 24 search warrants were issued and 16 persons presented to the prosecutor's office. Three OCGs were disrupted. In the region of Piacenza, authorities seized more than 29,000 liters of red wine, found in a wine cellar, without required documentation and labelled as a white wine. In addition, in a winery located in the region of Brescia, almost 3,000 bottles of wine were seized, falsely labelled as a famous local brand, together with 1,993 counterfeit labels.

In Greece, an OCG which counterfeited famous brands of alcoholic beverages was disrupted and an illicit alcohol production factory was dismantled, while Greek Authorities carried out 10 arrest warrants and a lot of searches in warehouses and seized 22,499 liters of illicit spirits, wine, beer and pure alcohol. The pure alcohol and a lot of illicit alcoholic beverages were imported from Bulgaria.

The Russian Federation reported approximately 1.9 million liters seized, including ethyl raw spirits and mixed alcoholic beverages, of which 99,000 liters posed serious danger to human health. 48 illicit alcohol production factories were dismantled and 552 criminal cases initiated. In one example from Rostov region, local authorities seized 50,000 bottles of alcohol and closed down an underground factory.

Belarus reported that in the region of Minsk, police dismantled an illicit factory and a distribution chain of technical alcohol²² used for producing alcohol for human consumption. Generally, alcohol seized in Belarus came from the Russian Federation, but was also locally produced.

²¹ Bootleg alcohol refers to alcohol produced clandestinely and sold illegally.

²² Also called denatured alcohol: ethyl alcohol made unfit for human consumption but suitable for industrial or domestic purposes. It should be mentioned that after the investigation, part of the technical alcohol seized, was reinserted to the legal circuit, to be used for its original purpose.

In Burundi, authorities carried out 113 arrest warrants and 45 search warrants, disrupting 14 OCGs, most of them involved in illicit deeds regarding alcohol. In several cases, for example the regions of Makmba and Gitega, the alcohol seized posed serious threats for human consumption, potentially leading to severe mental problems. The alcohol originated from Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa.

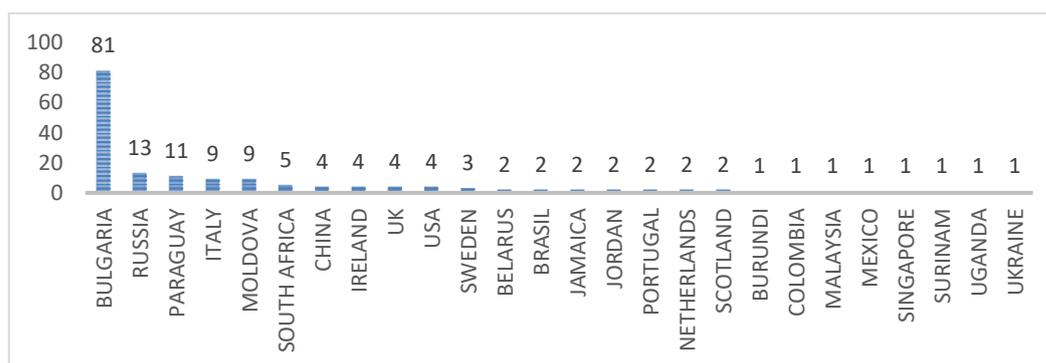
Significant quantities of alcohol were also seized in Portugal (34,558 liters), Morocco (31,155 liters), Spain (24,514 liters), Greece (22,499 liters) and Moldova (14,897 liters).

In Europe, like last year, alcohol seized in Hungary originated generally from Eastern Europe, especially Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Ukraine. This suggests that Hungary continues to be a hub for alcohol smuggling, in small quantities, from Eastern Europe.

Irish authorities reported in the region of Dundalk more than 585 cases of spirit labelled as vodka and seized additional 4,000 liters of denatured alcohol which had not been processed into vodka yet at the time of the seizure. A full illicit manufacturing plant was dismantled.

In Colombia, police dismantled an OCG which counterfeited brands of whiskey and local traditional alcoholic products, by using raw alcohol and caramel essence to colour the counterfeit drink. Using fake stamps and counterfeit labels of famous alcohol brands, they bottled the products and distributed them for sale.

The origin countries for this category (reported in 169 cases in connection with a product) are indicated in the graph 8 below.



Graph 8 – Origin countries, by number of reports

The geographic spread of the problem, the high volumes of illicit products seized, and the fact that several dozens of persons lost their lives indicate that this type of products are highly targeted by criminals. As reported in the previous OPSON report, counterfeit alcoholic beverages remain a serious threat especially regarding food safety, fiscal and IPR crime.

Sugar and sweet products

Seizures of products in this category were reported in 450 cases, by 16 countries, the goods being evaluated at roughly 1.8 million USD.

More than 82% of the reports came from Indonesia. Albania and Slovenia reported 4% of the seizures each, whereas the other 13 reporting countries have mentioned less than 2% of the cases in total. However, in terms of value of seized goods, Hungary reported the highest value which accounts for roughly 37% of the value seized, followed by Lithuania (29%), Sweden (22%), Indonesia (5%) and Albania (4%). All other countries reported less than 1% of the value seized.

Regarding infringements for this category, more than 74% of the cases remained “unspecified”, food safety was mentioned in 8%, fiscal infringements in 6%, “other” and deceiving consumers in 5% each and IPR in 1% of the cases.

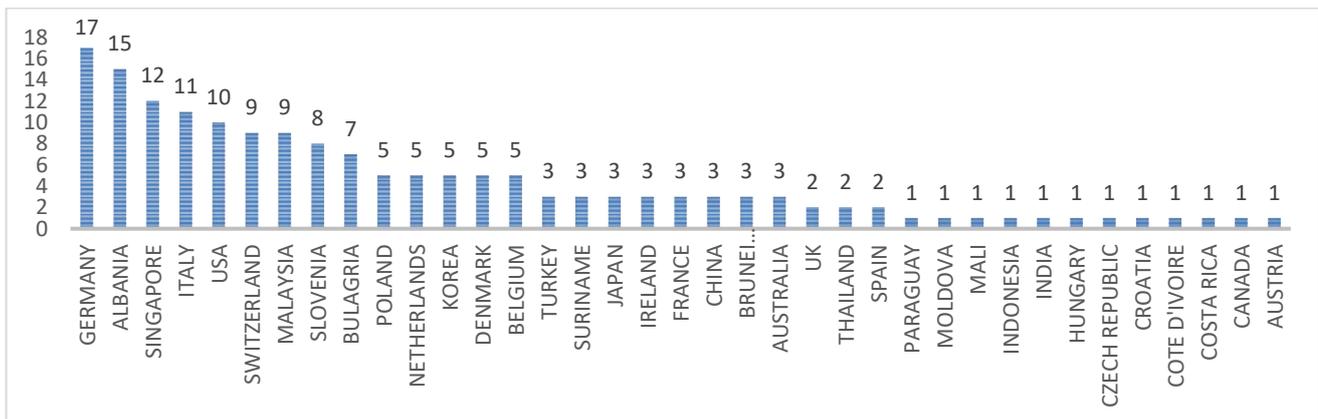
Moreover, authorities reported 34 search warrants and 10 arrest warrants for investigations involving sweet products.

Vis-à-vis the dangers for human health, amongst the mentioned factors were: lack of health certificate, unspecified adverse health consequences, expired products, containing forbidden additives, but most of the reports indicated lack of traceability as the main problem related to this category of products.

Hungary seized more than 337,000 pieces of chocolate products, transported on the motorway, reportedly coming from Bulgaria, with Czech Republic as final destination. The goods infringed a protected IPR. During an unannounced inspection of a warehouse Lithuania seized more than 225,000 candies coming from China, illegally bearing the trademark *Star Wars*®. In addition, Sweden reported the seizure of 148 tons of candies in Malmö, for infringements to food safety regulations.

In Italy, during an inspection of two food warehouses in the region of Caserta, authorities seized confectionery and chocolate eggs. The goods were expired and the involved OCG affixed new fake labels prolonging the expiration date. In another case, during an inspection in a pastry shop, besides 180 kg of semi-processed sweet products, partly expired and partly without traceability, authorities seized chocolate boxes labelled as homemade (artisan). The products were in reality industrially made and could not legally bear this mention on the packaging.

The origin countries for this category (reported in 165 cases in connection with a product) are indicated in the Graph 9 below.



Graph 9 – Origin countries, by number of reports

Based on the information reported during OPSON VII, this category of products seems to be targeted more by counterfeiters, thus creating risks especially in terms of IPR and fiscal crime.

Mixed food products

In some cases, reports indicated mixed seizures, without further specification on the type of food products. They were therefore gathered into one category called “Mixed food” containing generally described foods and drinks such as livestock and meat products, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, dairy, olive oil, powder milk, noodles, seafood, packed food, pickles, canned food, etc.

Seizures of products in this category were reported in 284 cases, by 24 countries, value of the goods being evaluated at more than 1.7 million USD (1,46 million EUR).

Most of the cases were reported by Indonesia (74%), Italy (5%), Nigeria (4%), Albania and Zambia (2%), all other countries reporting less than 2% of the total. In terms of value however, Italy reported roughly 48% of the total seized value, Sudan 32%, Indonesia 5%, Belarus and Albania 3%, Lithuania, Hungary and Morocco 2% each.

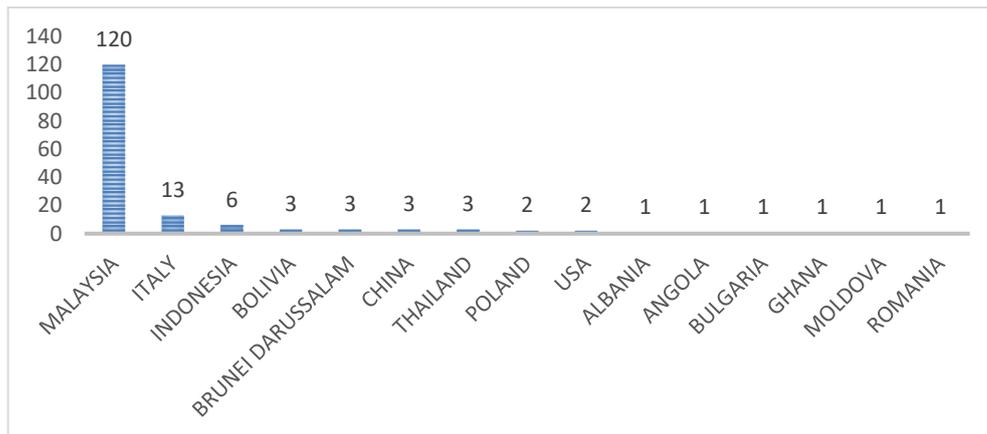
In terms of infringements, for this category 59% remained “unspecified”, 24% regarded food safety, 8% were categorized as “other”, 5% related to fiscal infringements, while IPR represented 4% of the reported infringements

and deceiving consumers less than 1%. In connection with this category of products, 14 OCGs, 112 arrests and 12 search warrants were reported.

The hazards for human health mentioned related to expired products, lack of sanitary conditions for food storage, lack of traceability or trichinellosis infections (for livestock and pork meat).

In one case reported by Sudan, authorities seized substandard food and beverages estimated at around 147,000 USD (126,230 EUR), which were produced in an illicit factory. Cosmetics and pesticides were produced together with food and drinks in the same location, subsequently shut down.

Origin countries for this category (reported in 161 cases in connection with a product) are indicated in the Graph 10 below.



Graph 10 – Origin countries “Mixed Food”, by number of reports

Meat and meat products

Seizures of products in this category were reported in 262 cases, by 20 countries, the value of the goods seized totaling more than 32.5 million USD (27.9 million EUR). This represents the highest value per category reported in OPSON VII.

By number of cases reported, Albania reported 17% of them, Portugal 15%, Indonesia 12%, Italy 8%, Moldova 8%, Hungary, Bulgaria, France, Spain and Zambia about 5% each and the Czech Republic 4%. An interesting observation in this category is that most of the seized value was reported by Italy (91%), followed by Spain (3%), Czech Republic and Indonesia (about 2%).

As expected, the highest number of infringements were related to food safety (around 66%), then to the category “unspecified/other” (around 14%) and to “deceiving consumers” (10%). Fiscal infringements were reported in roughly 5% and seizures infringing IPR were reported in about 4% of the cases.

With regard to this category, 123 search warrants carried out and nine OCGs disrupted were reported.

The hazards for human health mentioned in connection with this type of goods were mostly related to lack of sanitary/veterinary certificates. In several cases, it was reported that the products contained mixed hazard related to food safety or potential diseases that can cause adverse health consequences for the consumers. Inaccurately labelled and expired products were also taken out from the consumption markets.

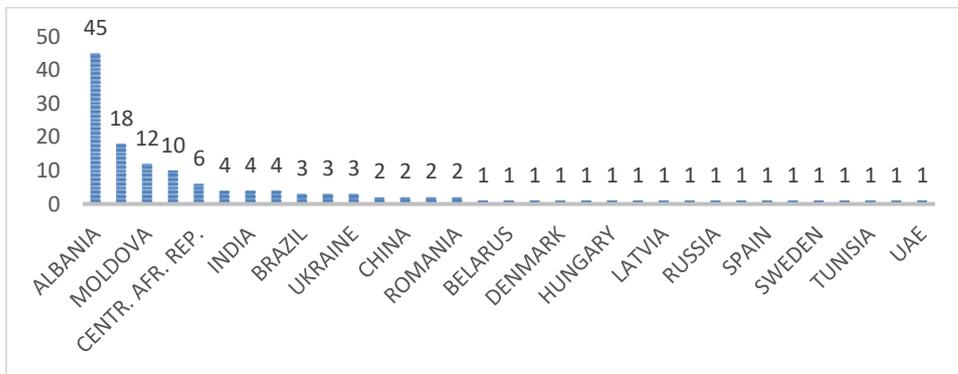
In a case reported by the Czech Republic, about 21 tons of poultry meat coming from Brazil were found to be contaminated with salmonella. The shipment reached the UE via The Netherlands and was transported by truck to the Czech Republic. Czech authorities also reported more than 16 tons of pork meat, coming from Spain and Slovakia, potentially dangerous for human health.

Indonesia reported seizures of more than 430,000 pieces of meat products containing nematode worms. The products were reported to originate from China, but transited via Malaysia. All products were taken out of the

markets. In addition, authorities also reported the detection of fraudulent meat products, such as corned beef, frozen beef and chicken meat which were sold using fictitious documents. Investigations were opened. Spain reported fraud involving lamb meat which was illegally sold under a protected geographical indication. The products were reported to come from France.

In Italy, after an inspection in a slaughterhouse pretending to sell local lamb meat products, authorities discovered that the meat actually originated from Hungary. In another case, Italian authorities confiscated an important quantity of ham (*prosciutto*), bearing labelling which deceived consumers about the geographical indication. In this case, authorities investigated an OCG involved in the fraudulent trade of counterfeit *prosciutto*, allegedly coming from Denmark. Criminals operated a slaughterhouse and used falsified documents of origins, fake stamps and industrial tattoos to pass pork meat from Denmark as local Italian bread. They also fed the animals with forbidden products such as industrial waste. In addition, using forged documents, the OCG managed to illegally obtain subsidies from the Italian State amounting to 900,000 EUR to renovate the slaughterhouse. Eight persons were arrested in this case.

Origin countries for this category (reported in 138 cases in connection with a product) are indicated in the in the Graph 11 below.



Graph 11 – Origin countries “Meat and meat products”, by number of reports

The high value and spread of these products makes them very attractive for counterfeiters, in this regard, the nine OCGs reported as involved in crimes related to this category of products suggesting that the threat posed by such counterfeited goods might be higher in terms of food safety, financial and IPR crime.

Dairy products

Seizures of products in this category were reported in 212 cases, by 14 countries, totaling more than 11 million USD (9.4 million EUR).

Considering the number of reports, Indonesia submitted more than 70% of them, followed by Portugal (8%) and Italy (6%). However, in terms of value of the products seized, more than 90% of the seizures (about 10 million USD – 8,5 million EUR) were reported by Italy, 6% by Belarus and 1 % by Spain.

During OPSON VII, this commodity was the second largest category seized considering the quantities. Most of the infringements related to this category remained unspecified (35.2%), however the majority of identified infringements relate to food safety (29%), fiscal issues (22.9%), deceiving consumers (3.8%) and IPR (0.9%). Roughly 8% of the reported infringements were categorized as “others”.

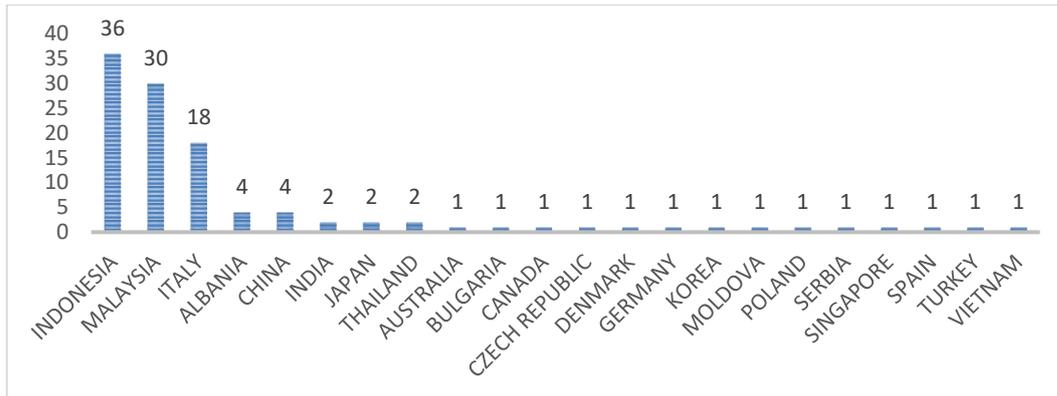
In addition, 38 search warrants were carried out and two OCGs were disrupted in Italy and Indonesia. The hazards for human health mostly indicated were lacking safety or origin certificates and related to inappropriate storage conditions.

Czech Republic reported seizures of local raw milk containing antibiotics. France prevented infant formula from being put on the markets due to risks of salmonella contamination.

In Italy, an OCG was found to be involved in counterfeiting a registered trademark of cheese. The products were found in a warehouse in Chiusanico (Imperia region), together with counterfeit labels. In another case, in Suzzara (Mantua region) during an inspection of a cheese farm, an important quantity of famous branded cheese was found. The products did not bear the protected geographical indication stamp. Italian authorities suspected that they were counterfeited items destined to be sold outside of the legal supply chains.

In Belarus, authorities of the Grodno region reported a seizure of approximately 19 tons of IPR protected cheese, transported by truck, with forged documents. In the region of Gomel, almost 40 tons of low fat cheese were also seized the attached documents were falsified.

Origin countries for this category (mentioned in 112 cases in connection with an identified product) are reported in the in the Graph 12 below.



Graph 12 – Origin countries, by number of reports

The risk regarding this category of products is higher in terms of food safety, however the involvement of criminal groups in counterfeiting registered trademarks (especially cheese) suggests that this domain should be given more attention in the future.

Food supplements/additives

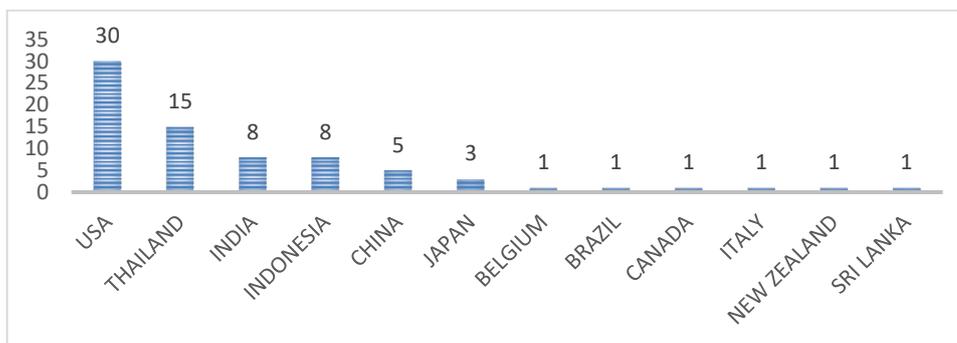
Seizures of products in this category were reported in 165 cases, by 9 countries, the goods being evaluated at roughly 53,000 USD (45.4 million EUR). Most of the reports pertaining to this category were submitted by Indonesia (88%), followed by Portugal and USA (4%), the other countries reporting 1% or less.

With regard to this category, most of the infringements remained “unspecified” (74% of the cases), while the other types reported were food safety (14%), mixed/other infringements (5%), deceiving consumers (4%), fiscal infringements (2%) and IPR (0.6%).

Indonesia reported that three search warrants related to this type of products were carried out.

In terms of origin for food supplements, USA was indicated in 37% of the cases as country of origin, followed by Thailand (20%), India and Indonesia (10%), China (6%) and Japan (4%), all other countries appearing in less than 2% of the reports.

The origin countries for this category (reported in 75 cases in connection with a product) are indicated in the in the Graph 13 below.



Graph 13 – Origin countries, by number of reports

Fruits, vegetables and legumes

Seizures of products in this category were reported in 140 cases, by 17 countries, the goods being evaluated at roughly 868,000 USD (742,456 EUR).

Considering the number of cases, most of the information here came from Indonesia (32%), Belgium and France (12%), Belarus (7%), Spain (6%), Zambia, Portugal Italy and Finland reporting each about 5% of the total. All other countries reported less than 5% of the total number of cases. In terms of value of seized goods, Belarus reported 41% of the total, Indonesia 21%, Spain 16%, Finland 8%, France and Hungary about 4%, each.

In this category, the highest number of infringements was related to food safety regulations (46%), followed by the category “unspecified/other” (31%), fiscal infringements (15%), deceiving consumers (6%) and the category “IPR” less than 2%. Four OCGs were dismantled and 12 warrants were issued.

Amongst the hazards for human health reported, most of the information related to the lack of safety/origin/traceability certificates, frozen conditions not meeting requirements, improper/no labelling or to the fact that products were not suitable for human consumption. Most of the illicit food products were smuggled.

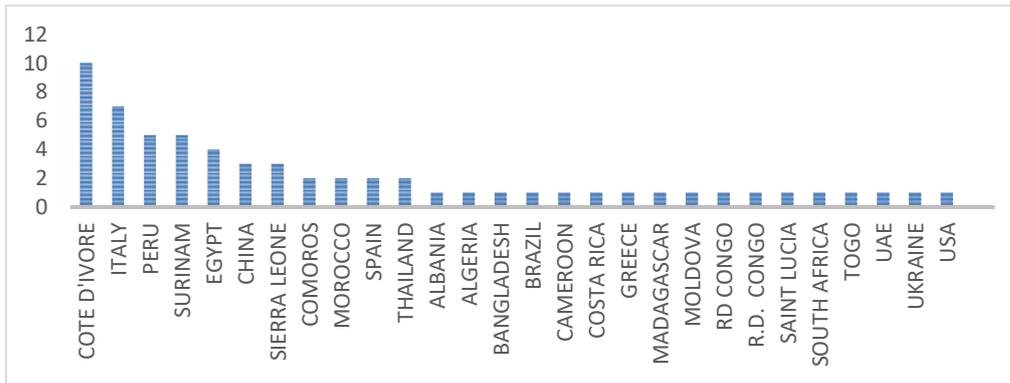
Belgian authorities reported a case regarding leaves of a plant known as “krain-krain”²³. The leaves were stored in packaging materials previously used which also bore misleading labelling. The products were seized and destroyed. France reported seizures of dates, declared from United Arab Emirates, without health certificate. Due to the risks of aflatoxins contamination, they were seized and destroyed.

Many of the cases reported false claims or forged accompanying documents. In Italy, authorities seized potatoes with excessive phytosanitary residues in a farm presenting and selling its products as organic. In Belarus, during checks on the road, authorities found about 17 tons of vegetables accompanied by counterfeit transport documents. Moldova reported the seizure of 1.2 tons of walnuts, illegally originated from Ukraine (lack of mandatory documents).

In Ecuador, authorities seized onion and black grapes falsely declared as coming from Peru. Thailand reported the seizures of oranges because of lack of traceability.

Origin countries for this category (reported in 62 cases in connection with a product) are mentioned in the in the Graph 14 below.

²³ Flowering plant whose leaves are used as a vegetable, also known as mallow-leaves. It belongs to the genus *Corchorus* (*Malvaceae* family). The fibres of the plant are called Jute, when *Corchorus* leaves are consumed in the cuisines of various countries. The plant is called *krain-krain* or *crain-crain* in Sierra Leone.



Graph 14 – Origin countries for “Fruits, vegetables and legumes”, by number of reports

Non-alcoholic beverages

Seizures of products in this category were reported in 138 cases, by 11 countries, the goods being evaluated at more than 169,000 USD (144,717 EUR).

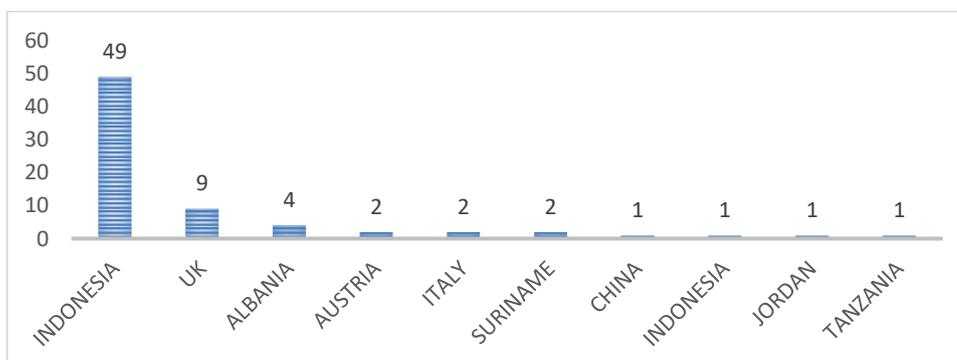
Cases involving this category of goods were mostly reported by Indonesia (67%), Spain (7%), Albania (6%), Burundi (5%), Portugal (4%), France and Zambia (3% each). All other participants reported seizures in this category for less than 2% each. In terms of value of the reported seizures, Spain reported 73% of the global value and Indonesia 20%.

Infringements associated with this type of products remained “unspecified” in 54% of the cases, related to food safety in 27%, fiscal infringements in 10%, deceiving consumers in 4%, “other” 3% and IPR less than 2% of the reported cases. One arrest, one OCG and 13 search warrants were reported in connection with this category of products.

Persons responsible for the seized products in many cases could not provide sanitary or health certificates, and accompanying documents especially concerning traceability. Some products contained forbidden substances or were substandard.

Indonesian authorities seized a water sealer machine, evaluated at approximately 15,000 USD (12,845 EUR), used illegally for producing and selling packed water. They also reported two cases leading to the seizure of more than 32,000 bottles of mineral water and over 5,600 items of energy drinks, illegally sold. Spain reported more than 67,000 liters of non-alcoholic beverages removed from the consumption market in a case in Cataluña. Albania prevented the sale of more than 4,400 liters of mineral water due to food safety infringements and lack of proper labelling. In addition, Zambia seized 2,800 liters of illicit mineral water due to IP infringements.

Origin countries for this category (reported in 71 cases in connection with a product) are reported in the Graph 15 below.



Graph 15 – Origin countries for Non Alcoholic Beverages, by number of reports

Cereals, grains and derived products

Seizures of products in this category were reported in 137 cases, by 16 countries, the goods being evaluated at roughly 800,000 USD (685,052 EUR).

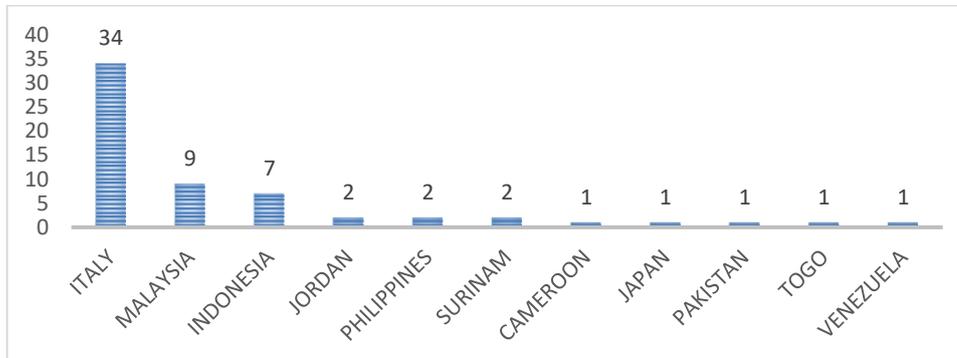
Most of the cases were reported by Indonesia (48%), Italy (26%), Zambia (8%), Spain, Portugal (4% each), and France (2%), all the other countries reporting less than 2%. In terms of value seized, seizures reported by Jordan account for 35% of the total value, whereas Indonesia reported 34%, Italy 22% and Finland 4%, the rest of 5% being shared by all other reporting countries.

With regard to the infringements mentioned for this category, “unspecified” remains the highest proportion of reported infringements (33%), followed by food safety (31%), fiscal infringements (20%) deceiving consumers (8%), IPR (4%) and “other” (3%). Furthermore, for this category of products, 22 search warrants were reported and six OCGs disrupted.

Jordan reported the destruction of 91 tons of flour infested with weevils. Indonesian authorities found cereals and derived products containing formalin²⁴, a substance highly toxic for humans. In addition, they also discover products contaminated with (unspecified) hazardous materials causing liver and kidney disorders if ingested.

Italy reported inspections in places such as restaurant, warehouses, bakeries, pasta factories where expired products, items without traceability or counterfeit labels were found. Two bakeries were shut down because of poor hygienic conditions. In another case, resulting from an inspection in a farm, authorities seized 135 kg of flour. Laboratory analysis revealed the flour contained dangerous amounts of lead and cadmium. Italian authorities dismantled an OCG involved counterfeiting protected trademark of pasta. The merchandise was sold via two companies located in the regions of Bari and Salento. It was exported to Venezuela.

Origin countries for this category (reported in 61 cases in connection with a product) are indicated in the in the Graph 16 below.



Graph 16 – Origin countries, by number of reports

Similar to meat, the wide consumption of cereals, grains and derived products and the attention given to it by organized crime groups (six OCGs reported as involved in crime related to this category), might indicate that this type of products poses a higher risk in terms of food safety, IPR and fiscal infringements.

Condiments/sauces

Seizures of products in this category were reported in 133 cases, by 14 countries, the goods being evaluated at more than 683,000 USD (584,863 EUR).

²⁴ A clear aqueous solution of formaldehyde and methanol used especially as a preservative. (Def Merriam-Webster dictionary).

The seizures of these products were reported mostly by Indonesia (60%), Nigeria (14%), Zambia (12%), France (4%) and Albania (2%). In terms of value of the seized goods, Indonesia reported 95% of the overall value, Albania 2% and Denmark 1%.

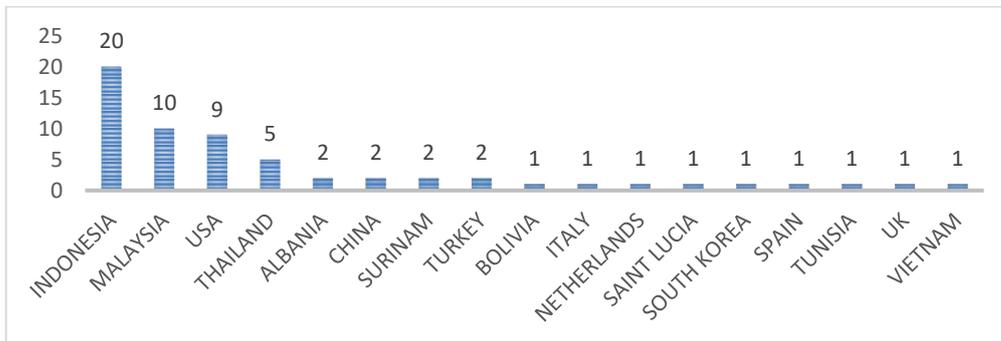
Infringements reported in relation to this category were described as “unspecified” in 60% of the cases, in 17% were described as food safety infringements, 14% were fiscal infringements, 5% were categorized as “other”, deceiving consumers represented 3% of the cases and IPR less than 1%. Six persons were arrested, 21 search warrants carried out and two OCGs involved in food crimes related to this category of goods were disrupted.

The hazards for human health associated with these products included kidney disorders and decreased nutrition level. Some seized products contained free radicals and germs, and forbidden additives. In most of the cases, products were expired or unauthorized.

As an example, Bosnia and Herzegovina reported a seizure of 700 kg of Himalayan salt, with inadequate iodine level. Nigeria reported around 451 kg of expired canned mayonnaise seized in several cases in the area of Lagos. In one occurrence, products were relabelled and bore fake expiration dates. Additionally, Nigerian authorities found plain cans of sauces (mayonnaise, ketchup, sweetcorn...) together with printed labels, apparently ready to be placed on the tins.

Indonesia reported that more than 235 tons of harmful condiments were taken out of the market. In two cases, developed in Johor Baru and Cengkareng, more than 124,500 pieces of expired products and raw materials were seized. Goods originated from Indonesia and the USA. Criminals repackaged the products and tampered expiration dates before distributing them on the legal market.

Origin countries for this category (reported in 61 cases in connection with a product) are mentioned in the in the Graph 17 below



Graph 17 – Origin countries “Condiments/sauces”, by number of reports

Seafood

Products in this category were reported in 96 cases, by 15 countries, the goods being evaluated at roughly 2,1 million USD (1,8.million EUR).

In this category, most of the information was provided by Switzerland²⁵ (31% of the cases), Indonesia (15%), Portugal (14%), Germany (10%), and Brazil, Italy and Zambia (5% each) while Moldova reported around 3% of the cases. Other participating countries reported less than 3% each. However, in relation to the estimated value of the seized products, Portugal reported 54% of the whole value in this category, followed by Spain (18%), Switzerland (13%), Italy and Brazil (5%) and Indonesia (3%).

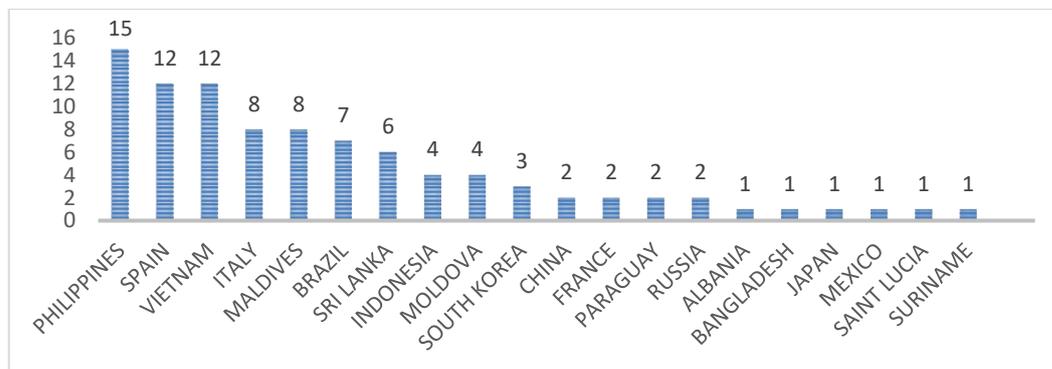
²⁵ Switzerland actually reported controls regarding tuna. Results were compliant, except in two occurrences where notifications were sent to companies. Nevertheless, all information from Switzerland was taken into account in order to give a general overview of the actions taken during the operation.

Besides 44% of “unspecified” infringements, for this category, countries mentioned breaches regarding food safety regulations in 37% of the cases. These types of infringements, such as the absence of sanitary inspections, or the processing of products without respect for legal requirements put the safety of consumers at risk. Infringements aimed to deceive consumers represented 10% of the cases, other infringements amounted to 4%, whereas IPR infringements totalled around 3% and fiscal infringements represented approximately 2% of reported cases.

Among some of the most noteworthy cases, Moldovan authorities reported a seizure of 5 kilograms of red caviar, discovered at the northern part of the border with Ukraine in a train coming from Moscow to Chisinau and lacking the mandatory certificates of origin. Caviar was also seized in two cases reported by Belarusian authorities and found in a shopping mall in Minsk. More than 2,600 pieces of packed products were seized because of the absence of mandatory documentation. In Italy, authorities found and seized bivalve molluscs unsuitable for human consumption, as the legal requirements for storage and cleaning of the seafood were not met. Brazil reported the seizures of almost 15 tons of fish without sanitary authorizations across several regions. Fish originated from illegal fishing activities. Value of the products was estimated at more than 100,000 USD (85,850 EUR). In Indonesia, in the region of Palu city, authorities seized more than 460 pieces of canned mackerel in tomato sauce, infested with parasites.

For this category, one search warrant was carried out by Indonesia, while Brazil reported 8 persons being detained.

Origin countries (reported in 93 cases in connection with a product) are indicated in the in the Graph 18 below.



Graph 18 – Origin countries for seizures of “seafood”, by number of reports

As explained in section 3.2.1, a specific project was developed at EU level on tuna. Results are presented in a different report, disseminated via the Europol channel. However, they were also integrated in the global OPSON statistics, as reported by participating countries.

Coffee/tea

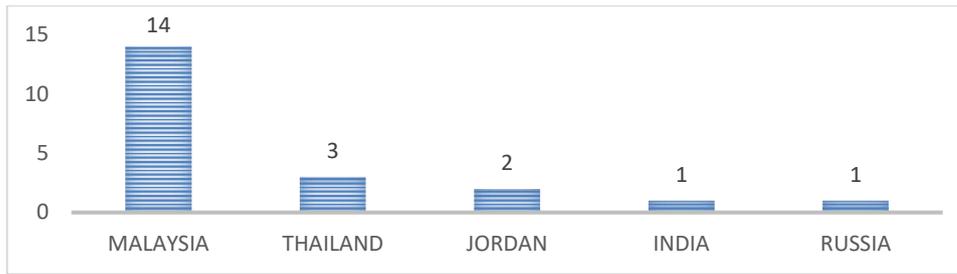
Seizures of products in this category were reported in 71 cases, by 6 countries, the goods being evaluated at over 331,000 USD (284,163 EUR).

Indonesia reported 70% of the cases, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina (10%), Zambia (8%), Belarus (7%), Jordan (3%) and Vietnam (about 2%). Considering the estimated value of the products, cases reported by Indonesia represent 98% of the total, followed by Belarus (1%), and other countries (less than 1%).

Fiscal infringements represented the first category with 48% of the cases, while 38% of the reported infringements remained “unspecified”. IPR breaches represent 7% of the cases, which the highest proportions among all categories of products considered. This increase could also stem from the training organized in January 2017 in order to raise awareness of the OPSON Contact points on this specific commodity. This could have led to a better detection of the issue on the field. The category “other infringements” amounts for 5% of the reported cases, and food safety offences count for less than 2%.

In relation to this category of products, Indonesia reported 14 arrests and 20 search warrants.

Origin countries for this category (reported in 21 cases in connection with a product) are reported in the in the Graph 19 below.



Graph 19 – Origin countries for seizures of “coffee and tea”, by number of reports

Cooking oil

Seizures of products in this category were reported in 70 cases, by 13 countries, the goods being evaluated at over 900,000 USD (772,650 EUR).

The biggest proportions of cases related to cooking oil come from Italy (approximately 27%), Indonesia (17%), Greece (13%), Czech Republic and Portugal (9% each), Spain (7%), Albania and Zambia (4% each), France and Jordan (3% each). In terms of value of the seizures, Italy reported 84% of the total value, Greece 9% and Indonesia 5%. All the other participants in OPSON VII reported about 2% of the total value.

The infringements associated with this category of products belonged to the category “deceiving consumers” in 47% of the cases, “food safety” in 21%, “unspecified” in 18%, “fiscal infringements” in 7% and lastly “IPR infringements” and “other” for respectively 3% of the cases each. In addition, four search warrants were issued and five OCGs were disrupted, all of them involved in illicit activities concerning olive oil. This commodity was reported in 41% of the cases and represent 87% of the total value of seized goods in this category.

Most products were found to be dangerous for human health, for example containing high levels of peroxide and having no labels or health authorization for sale.

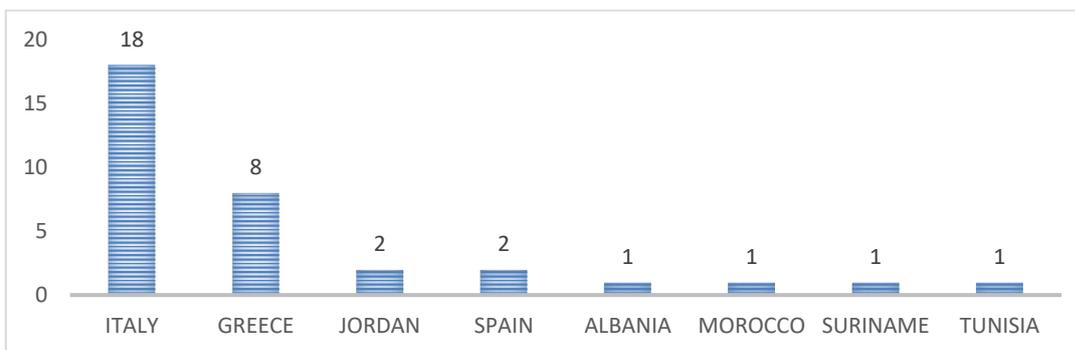
In Spain, 582 liters of oil marketed as “extra virgin” were actually a mixture of sunflower oil, olive-pomace oil and olive oil. In Italy, authorities seized in two distinct locations cans of oily substances labelled as “extra virgin olive oil”. Laboratory analysis revealed that the liquid was made with seed oil and natural dyes in one case and in the other with chlorophyll and beta carotene. In a different seizure, resulting from an investigation targeting a transnational OCG, Italian authorities seized 110,000 liters of oil falsely labelled as olive oil. The bottles bore the name of a fictitious olive oil mill.

An important aspect reported by Italy and Greece is that falsely labelled olive oil was distributing in several grocery stores, mini markets and in a supermarket, which shows the vulnerability of the legal distribution chain put in danger an uncountable number of consumers.

In Greece, a transnational OCG which was exporting large quantities of artificially colored sunflower oil, as extra virgin olive oil, dangerous for human health, in Germany, Belgium and Netherlands, was disrupted by Financial Police Division. During the police operation 7 members of the OCG were arrested, a factory for the production and packaging of the adulterated olive oil was dismantled and 19.270 liters of oil falsely labelled as “extra virgin olive oil” were seized.

The total amount of adulterated olive oil that was seized by Greek Authorities during OPSON VII operation is more than 40.600 liters.

Origin countries for this category (reported in 35 cases in connection with a product) are mentioned in the Graph 20 below.



Graph 20 – Origin countries for seizures of “cooking oil”, by number of reports

The involvement of five OCGs in illegal deeds connected with this type of goods and the penetration of counterfeit products into grocery stores and supermarkets might be an indication of a wider spread of this problem and a need to pay more attention to it in the future.

On line sales

One of the new approaches taken by OPSON VII was to specifically target counterfeit/substandard food sold on line. In this regards, 66 cases were reported by Indonesia, Italy, Ecuador, Hungary, Spain and China. Ecuador reported illicit alcoholic beverages being sold on a local online market place, Hungary reported dietary food supplements containing illegal substances which were sold on several websites. Spain reported adulterated olive oil offered for sale on two websites, while Italy reported water not suitable for human consumption. Most of the information in this category was reported by Indonesia and relates to illicit non-alcoholic beverages, such as flavoured tea, fruit smoothies and hot chocolate offered online.

See section 3.2.1 for more information regarding activities targeting the online sales of food products.

Side seizures

Side seizures are neither food products nor beverages. They are all other types of illicit products found by authorities during actions undertaken in the course of OPSON VII.

Side seizures were reported in 231 cases, by 23 countries, the goods being evaluated at more than 10.8 million USD (9.3 million EUR).

Reported side seizures included cigarettes and other tobacco products, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, tooth paste, clothing and shoes, handbags, vehicle spare parts, mobile phones and accessories, electronic products, toys among other things.

In this category, 60 arrest warrants and 83 search warrants were carried out and three OCGs were dismantled.

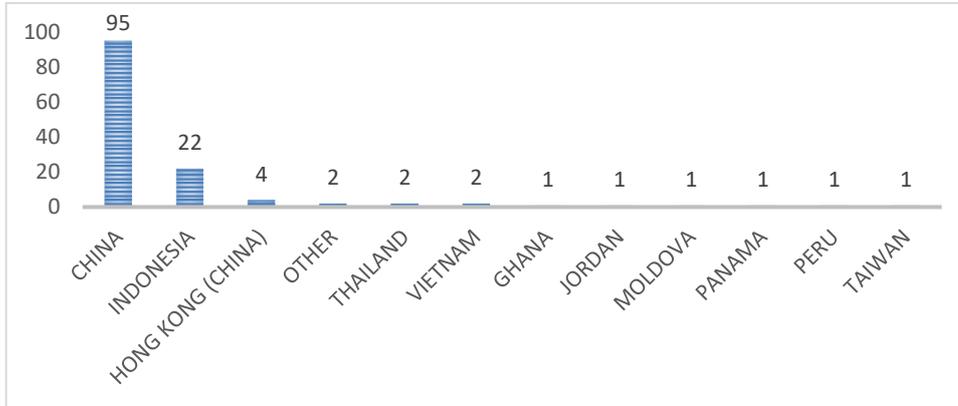
This type of seizures were reported by Ecuador (36% of the total), Indonesia (32%), Czech Republic (11%), Jordan (4%), Bosnia, Burundi, Romania, Spain and Zambia (2% each), and Kenya (1%).

Considering the value of seized goods, Russian Federation reported about 80% of the total value, South Africa 8%, Uganda 6%, Sudan 2%, Czech Republic 1%, all other seizures totalling about 4% altogether.

Russian Federation reported more than 6.8 million pieces of cigarettes, Ecuador 1.9 million pieces of cigarettes, Colombia around 1.2 million pieces of medicines and 300,000 cigarettes, Romania more than 152,000 pieces of cigarettes, Sudan more than 86,000 pieces of counterfeit pharmaceuticals, Czech Republic almost 80,000 pieces of cigarettes, while South Africa reported a seizure of varied products such as counterfeit mattresses, tooth pastes, oils and lubricants.

France reported a case developed in the frame of a joint interagency operation in French Guyana, during which approximately 9.5 tons of perishable goods, a truck, fuel and raw materials used for illegal gold mining (e.g. pump, motor, pipes...) were discovered and seized.²⁶

Origin countries for this category (reported in 133 cases) are indicated in the in the Graph 21 below.



Graph 21 – Origin countries “Side seizures”, by number of reports

4.3 Overall figures – investigations, arrests, infringements

In the framework of OPSON VII, participating countries reported **41,293 inspections and checks**²⁷, **3,029 criminal cases**, **3,201 administrative cases**, **3,325 arrests** warrants and **713 search** warrants executed.

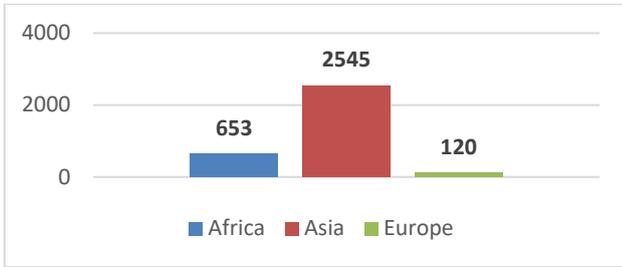
As a comparison, in OPSON VI, 65 countries reported 50,128 inspections and checks, 6,282 criminal and administrative cases, and 13,711 persons arrested or investigated, whereas in OPSON V, 57 countries reported 4,054 inspections, 3,567 administrative and criminal cases, 1,793 suspects and 41 arrests.

Moreover, actions of national authorities during OPSON VII led to the disruption of **66 organized crime groups**, qualified as such by the participating countries, involved in the production of illicit food, goods smuggling as well as other criminal deeds. **74 illicit factories have been dismantled**, of which **71 were producing alcohol**, **two** were manufacturing **substandard food supplements** and medicines and **one** was producing, in the same premises, **food products, cosmetics and pesticides**.

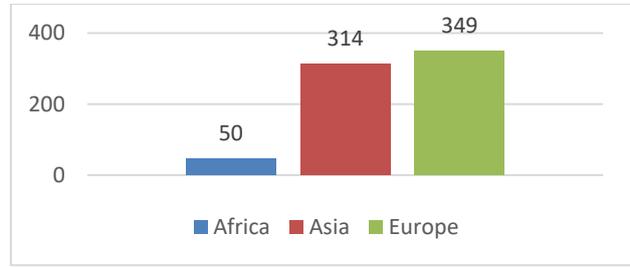
The highest number of arrests was reported in Asia, mainly by China. Nonetheless, African countries also reported a significant number of detentions. With regard to the distribution of search warrants, the numbers show slightly higher values in Europe, but the figures are comparable to the ones reported by Asian participating countries (Details in graphs below).

²⁶ French Guyana is an overseas French Territory. Its soil contains gold and many criminal groups illegally exploit unauthorized gold mines. They also smuggle goods, including food products from neighbouring countries.

²⁷ 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. Unfortunately, the number of cases reported is not completely accurate as some inconsistencies remained in the reported results not all countries reporting the global number of checks done at national level or the number of arrested/involved persons.



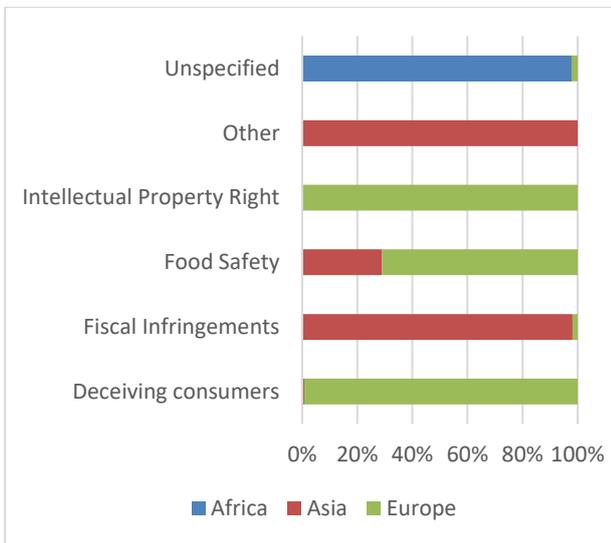
Graph 22 - Distribution of arrest warrants by number, geographically



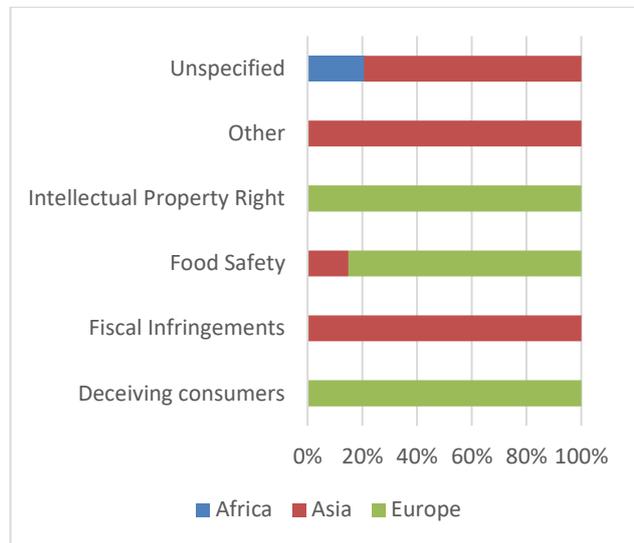
Graph 23 - Distribution of search warrants by number, geographically

Combining the number of arrest warrants with the reported categories of infringements in every region, one can notice that in Asia grounds for arrests were mainly related to fiscal infringements, “other” infringements, and food safety regulations (some infringements remained “unspecified”). In Europe, deceiving consumers, breaches of food safety regulations but also IPR infringements were mostly connected to arrests and search warrants, whereas in Africa, most of the arrests were reported to be related to “unspecified” reasons.

Regarding search warrants, in Africa, grounds to perform searches remain mostly “unspecified”. In Asia, they are related mainly to fiscal offences, food safety and “other” infringements. In Europe, they are linked with food safety and fiscal regulations, IPR infringements as well as illegal practices aimed to deceive consumers. Few cases remain



Graph 24 - Distribution of search warrants by infringement, geographically

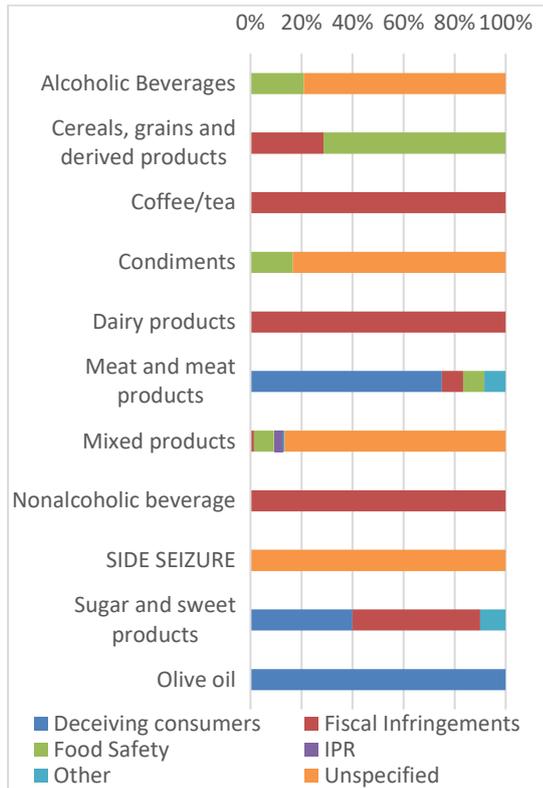


Graph 25 - Distribution of arrest warrants by infringement, geographically

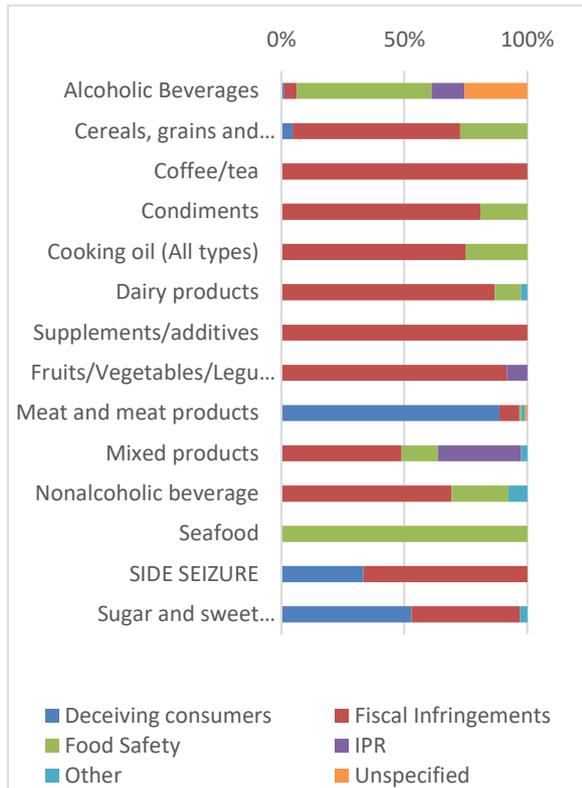
“unspecified” (details in graphs below)."

The graphs below present the number of search and arrest warrants in relation with the category of product.

In a general side-by-side comparison of arrests, searches and infringements based on the categories of goods, it seems that the arrests and search warrants issued were mainly connected with fiscal infringements rather than other category. Besides the fiscal infringements, another type of infringements that are recurrent are the ones concerning “food safety”. (Details in Graph 26 and 27, below).

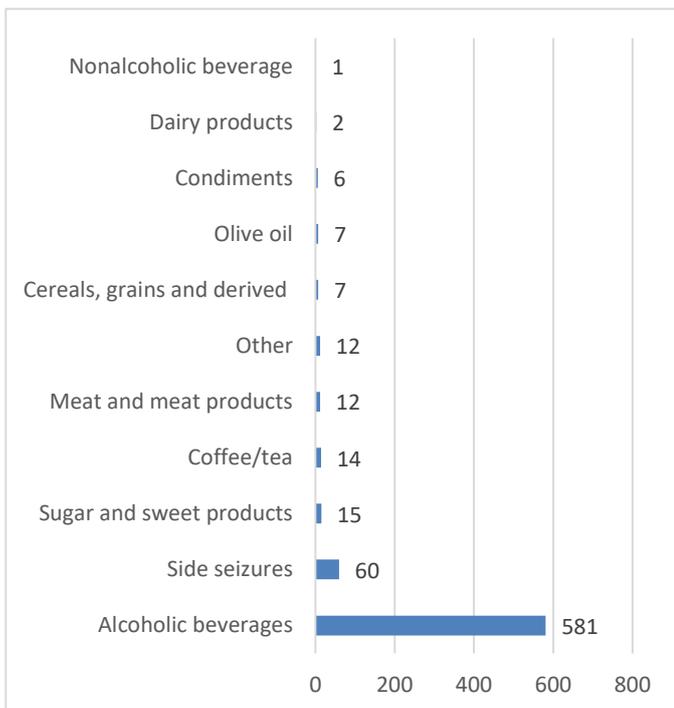


Graph 26 - Distribution of arrest warrants by category of product and by infringement

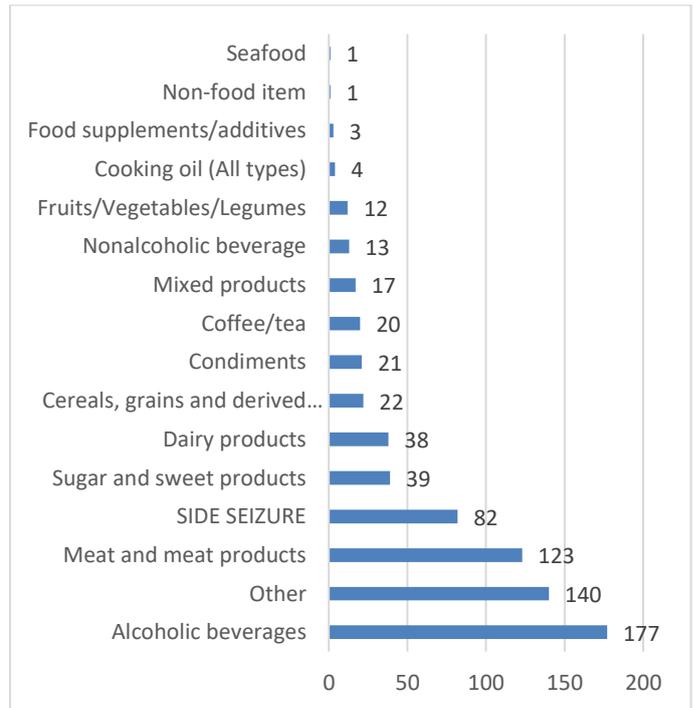


Graph 27 - Distribution of search warrants by category of product and by infringement

In terms of arrests, the highest numbers were reported regarding mixed products (2,608 – not included in graph), but the peak in arrests regarding an identified category of products was reported in relation with alcoholic beverages. Also the most search warrants reported relate to alcoholic beverages, followed closely by meat and meat products (details in Graph 28 and 29, below).



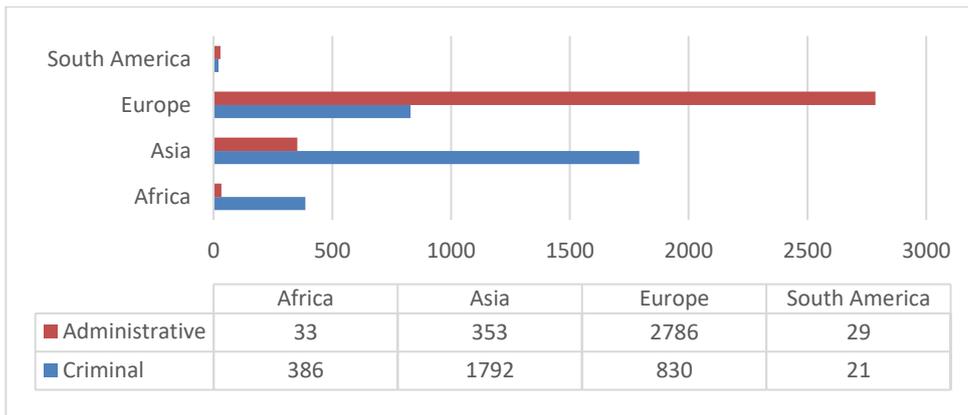
Graph 28 – Number of arrest warrants by category of product



Graph 29 - Number of search warrants by category of product

Regarding the number of cases opened in participating countries, it is interesting to consider the type of file opened

during OPSON: administrative case or criminal case. The highest number of administrative cases was reported by European countries, whereas the highest number of criminal cases was reported by Asian countries (details in graph below).



Graph 30 - Distribution of administrative and criminal cases, per geographical area

4.3.1 Involvement of organized crime

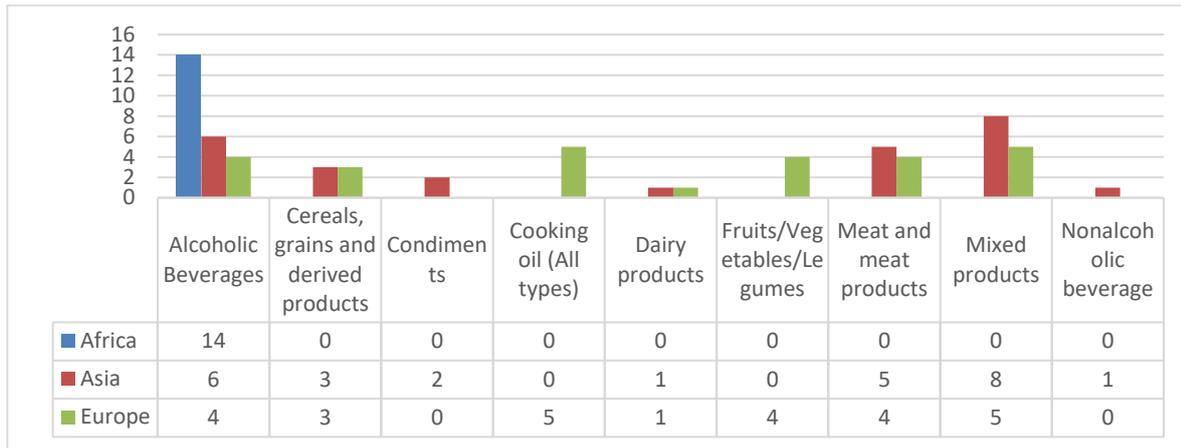
Following up on lessons learnt from previous editions and according to the changes implemented in the data collection template, more information on OCGs was reported by the countries. This allowed a more detailed analysis on the links between organized crime and food crime.

The transmitted information showed that organized crime is mostly involved in illicit activities concerning alcoholic beverages. The dismantlement of 24 groups was reported by the countries. Moreover, the majority of products targeted for adulteration or counterfeiting during OPSON VII were wine and spirits. This trend was already noticeable during OPSON VI when more than 26 million liters of illicit alcohol were seized. These illegal activities are highly dangerous for consumers, as demonstrated by the reports of Indonesia mentioning the death of 60 persons due to adulterated alcohol.

Regarding other types of food products, it is worth mentioning that nine OCGs were reported to be involved in food crime related to meat and meat products. Six OCGs were involved in illegal deeds relating to cereals, grains and derived products, while five OCGs dealt with counterfeit/substandard olive oil. Regarding the products reported as mixed, 13 OCGs were disrupted for being involved in smuggling or counterfeiting a variety of food products.

As for olive oil, even though seizures of olive oil represent a small number compared to other products, five OCGs were reported (and dismantled) in relation with this commodity. This proportion is relatively high in comparison with other commodities and the reported cases. This result might demonstrate that OCGs are also particularly involved with this type of commodity, which is usually sold for an expensive price. Illicit profits are substantial and this may explain the appetite of criminal groups for this particular product.

In conclusion, in the light of the findings of OPSON VII, alcohol, meat, cereals and derived products remain the highest risk categories in terms of involvement of organized crime (details in the graph below).



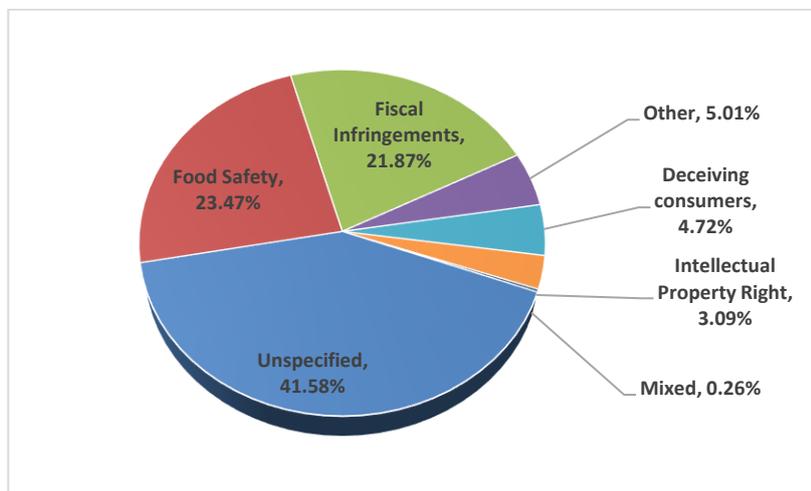
Graph 31 - OCGs disrupted by category of products, and geographical areas

4.3.2 Types of infringements

In OPSON VI, in approximately 15% of the cases the type of infringement remained undetermined, while for OPSON VII, in 41% of the cases, the countries reported “unspecified infringements”. As a consequence, reality might be different than illustrated with the statistic below.

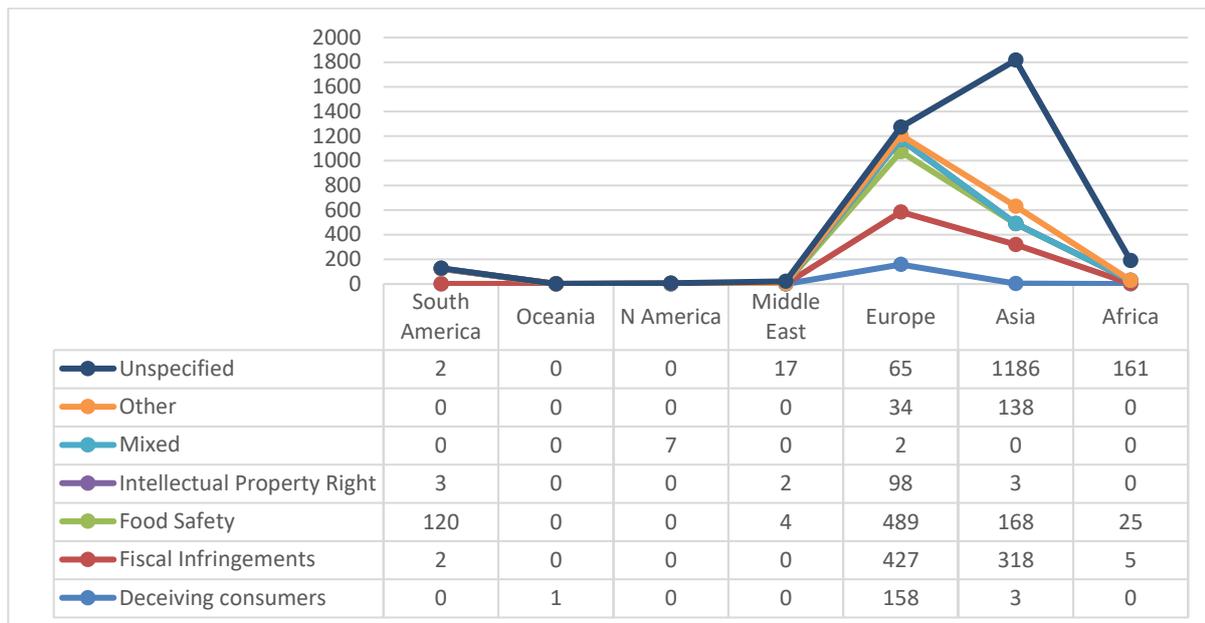
Besides the category “unspecified infringements”, participants reported in more than 23% of the cases infringements related to food safety regulations. The offences ranged from the sales of expired products and the use of improper storage conditions to the presence of trichinellosis, salmonella and other contaminants in food.

Fiscal infringements were notified in almost 22% of the cases and relate mostly to smuggling. In 5% of the cases, authorities reported “other” types of infringements, while deceiving consumers was almost equally represented (4.7%) amongst the seizures. IPR related situations were reported in about 3% (details in graph below).



Graph 32 - Infringements, by number of cases

The geographic distribution of infringements shows that both in Europe and in Asia food safety and fiscal related infringements are higher than other categories of infringements. IPR related infringements were reported mostly by Europe. However, this category was reported in smaller numbers also by countries in the Middle East, Asia and South America. “Deceiving consumers” was mostly indicated by European countries. (details in graph below).



Graph 33 - Distribution of infringements, by number, geographically

4.4 Case examples

The following cases were reported by the participating countries and illustrate new aspects of the illicit modus operandi discovered during OPSON VII. They also underlined the efforts of the participating law enforcement agencies in the fight against food fraud. The examples are presented by regional zones, and alphabetical order.

Cases supported by the Europol Mobile Office in USA and Hungary

One Mobile Office was deployed upon request of the USA Food and Drugs Administration²⁸ (FDA) to support a mail blitz, targeting the imports of illicit food supplements via postal freight. The emphasis was more particularly put on dietary supplements entering the USA whose labelling reflect disease claims, and/or whose labelling identify New Dietary Ingredients (NDI), or which are suspected of containing weight loss or erectile dysfunction Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API).



²⁸ Office of Criminal Investigations OCI



Operation OPSON VII in the USA – IMF Miami

The Europol Mobile Office also supported action days in Hungary organized by the National Tax and Customs Authority (NTCA) like previous years. Europol staff members first participated in an awareness session for Customs officers where they presented Europol’s capabilities to support their work. Around 100 officers attended the presentation. On the following day, the Europol Mobile Office was used to cross-check data obtained from checks on the road.



MO deployment – Hungary

Europe

- Albania

In the area of Shkoder, authorities inspected a food production facility, where they found amongst others cheese, canned vegetables, various jams, vegetable oil, honey, tomatoes sauces which were produced in very poor hygiene conditions, in an environment with high risk of contamination by foreign substances or from deteriorated ingredients. The products were packed and sold via legal channels. Five persons were involved in this illegal enterprise. Authorities confiscated more than 41,000 liters, 93 tons and 147,000 pieces of illicit and potential harmful products.



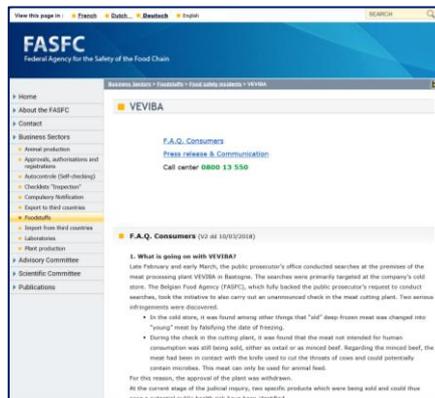
Illicit storage location – Albania

• **Belgium**

In the framework of a nation-wide investigation, Belgium closed a major meat processing plant, and supermarkets took meat products off their shelves by precaution. The incriminated company saw its license revoked by the federal government, after spot checks revealed a potential health risk in two products: minced beef and oxtail.

In February and March 2018, the public prosecutor’s office conducted searches at the premises of a meat processing plant. Searches were primarily targeted at the company’s cold store. The Belgian Food Agency (FASFC) also carried out unannounced checks in the meat cutting plant. Two serious infringements were discovered. In the cold store, it was found among other things that the date of freezing of the deep-frozen meat products was tampered. During the inspection in the cutting plant, authorities discovered that the meat not intended for human consumption was being sold either as oxtail or as minced beef.

Regarding the minced beef, the meat had been in contact with the knife used to cut the throats of cows and could potentially contain microbes. This meat can only be used for animal feed. The license of the company was immediately suspended and Belgian authorities implemented all appropriate measures to recall the products.



Information page on the case to consumers – FASFC website

• **Bosnia & Herzegovina**

Amongst other goods seized, the authorities reported in Novi Grad area, the seizure of 1,407 packages of a product sold as pink salt, for food safety reasons. The analysis of the product showed that the levels of iodine were clearly inadequate for human consumption. The investigation revealed that the salt was bought from a company in Serbia.



Sample of pink salt seized for food security reasons - Bosnia & Herzegovina

- **Greece**

Financial Police Subdivision of Northern Greece dismantled a criminal organization selling artificially coloured sunflower oil as extra virgin olive oil. The criminal network, with the factory based in Larissa, was extended also abroad (Germany, Belgium and Netherlands). The fake olive oil was being packaged in plastic or metallic containers of various sizes, labelled as "Extra virgin olive oil" and with geographical indications of reputed Greek's olive oil production areas.

The distribution of the product was carried out by an extensive network which supplied stores (usually restaurants, grocery shops, mini-markets, supermarkets, etc.), retailers, final consumers, or professional truck drivers in Germany, where members and partners of the OCG promoted the fake oil to customers living in the aforementioned countries. The payments were made in cash, or sending money via a money transfer company or through third parties.

During the large-scale operation, seven (7) persons were arrested and fifty three (53) were prosecuted. In addition, more than 19.000 liters of fake oil were seized, as well as various raw materials and special equipment for the adulteration of the oil, 5 vehicles, 1 truck, 2 forklift trucks, falsified documents, handwritten notes and money, related to the illicit activity.



- **Italy**

NAS Carabinieri carried out a criminal investigation involving a winery in Trento. In order to mask non-existent or unsuitable grapes to be processed for the production of PDO wines, the documentation relating to the movement of grapes and wine, in the production and marketing phases, was constantly falsified. The criminals used wine containers filled with water to evade the inspections.

During the action day, 7 people were reported to the Judicial Authority and 22 search warrants were executed. In addition, 70,000 hectoliters of wine were seized, worth € 30,000,000.



Inspections in wine processing facility – Italy

- **Spain**

Spanish police seized 8 tons of forged baby milk powder and arrested four individuals in the area of Barcelona. The investigation started thanks to an exchange of intelligence with the legitimate brand manufacturer. Intelligence sharing was supported by Europol. Exchanged data was operational and allowed Spanish authorities to quickly localise the storage warehouse of the counterfeit milk powder. The involved OCG manufactured the powder in Poland and advertised it online. The milk powder was not harmful but it lacked the nutrients needed by infants (0 – 3 years). A previous investigation led by Polish authorities and supported by Europol revealed the *modus operandi* without achieving to dismantle the OCG whose members were mainly Polish nationals.

In this particular case, the route of the illicit goods is worth being mentioned. The milk powder was produced in Poland and sold to end-consumers in China, via intermediaries located in various EU MS (The Netherlands, Spain...) and belonging to Asian migrant communities established on the European continent. The milk powder was advertised as genuine and sold for a slightly lower price than the original. In China, demand for baby milk powder originating from Europe is high and stems from several food safety incidents due to milk contaminated with melamine for instance.



Counterfeit baby milk powder seized in a warehouse in the area of Barcelona - Spain

Africa

- Burundi

The Authorities in Burundi have seized 1007 dozens of juice, valued at approximately 13,000 USD. The merchandise found in a storage facility close to the quay of Bujumbura Port, apparently originated in Tanzania. Police raided also several illegal underground beverage factories, dismantling the related distribution networks.



Seizure of fake juices – Burundi

- South Africa

In the area of Gauteng, the South African authorities arrested 10 persons and seized approximately 80 tons of condiments produced illegally in a manufacturing location. Besides the quantity of spicy chicken powder and instant yeast, the authorities found manufacturing equipment such as machines used to produce the counterfeit spices, but also for packaging and affixing labels.



Machineries, tools and materials found to be used in the packaging of the fake products together with a partial view of the raided warehouse - South Africa

- Sudan

Sudanese authorities found a factory dealing with the manufacture of pesticides, food additives for human consumption and cosmetics in the same premises. The company, registered in Syria, was operating in Sudan without authorization. Upon further forensic tests, materials used for manufacture of the various products were found to be expired. Investigation is ongoing in order to clarify all further aspects of the crime.



Illicit production of food and cosmetics - Sudan

- Togo

In an investigation targeting the underground distilleries around the city of Lomé, the authorities have dismantled an establishment specializing in the manufacture of syrups and spirits, situated in a peripheral district of Lomé. The alcoholic products were made from imported ethanol and other chemical products and flavors of dubious origin.



Illicit production and storage location - Togo

Asia

- China

In Chongqing region, during a complex operation against selling substandard food supplements more than 20 suspects were arrested, 6 of whom were charged with criminal offenses. Two factories and three warehouses were dismantled. In addition, 10 computers, 30 mobile phones, and more than 20,000 boxes of 100 kinds of substandard food supplements and falsified medicines were confiscated. One internet server was seized. The total value of items seized, including the equipment, is estimated at around 1 million euros, of which 12,500 euros were substandard food supplements and falsified medicines.



Recognition of the criminal scene: Warehouse and Substandard and counterfeited products - China

- Indonesia

In Bandung, West Java, Indonesian authorities, after inspecting a food production facility seized more than 94,000 pieces of shrimp paste. After the analysis of the product it was revealed that the paste contained Rhodamin B, a chemical compound which is forbidden under Indonesian legislation because of its harmful effect on the human body, in high doses causing death²⁹.



Seizure of 94.466 pcs of shrimp paste containing Rhodamin B - Indonesia

In Jakarta area, in an inspection to a food production company, the authorities seized 1,795 food items, evaluated at around 116,000 USD, which were expired and repackaged and were destined for the illegal distribution to the

²⁹ According to the Department of Food Security and Livestock West Java: <http://dkpp.jabarprov.go.id/pentingnya-keamanan-pangan-bagi-masyarakat-2/> (Indonesian language, translation to English available). Accessed 26.07.2018.

consumption market. The perpetrators were using an impulse sealer machine, fake labels and counterfeit stamps in order to market illegally the products as valid.



Seizure of 1.795 Pcs of finished, repackaged and expired products re-labelled and distributed - Indonesia

In another case, and possibly the most serious one reported so far in OPSON, the authorities have seized illicit production of bootleg alcoholic beverages containing methanol, dye, essence fragrance, mineral water, instant energy drink and soft drinks. This type of liquor was sold in several areas of the country (amongst which Cicalengka Sub-district, Bandung City and Sukabumi District), where 64 out of the 82 victims hospitalized in several medical centres died after consuming the drinks. At the moment of the reporting, the person believed to have organized the whole distribution network, was still wanted.



Multiple seizures of counterfeit alcohol, in several locations in Indonesia

- **Thailand**

During a search of a local store in Udon Thani Province, the authorities seized and destroyed because of food safety reasons more than 32 tons of meat products reportedly coming through illegal channels from India. The goods, valued at approximately 200,000 USD, were transported using a truck and a van via Malaysia to Thailand.



Meat products seized and destroyed because of food safety reasons - Thailand

Americas

- **Colombia**

In Maicao region, the Colombian authorities seized more than 46,000 bottles of beer, which were transported by Venezuelan trucks. The illicit products were unloaded in a warehouse, from where they were distributed further and the reason for seizure was connected with fiscal infringements.



46,728 smuggled bottles of beer (Side seizure) - Colombia

5. ANALYTICAL CONCLUSIONS

Considering the information reported during OPSON VI and VII, cross-referencing data from police, customs and food regulatory agencies, studying the food-related crime form a complex perspective³⁰ allows several conclusions, which are presented below.

³⁰ Cross-referencing statistical data, measuring the geographic distribution of the phenomenon, looking at the problem from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, paying attention to the organized crime element, to the harmful effects of food crime and to the arrests and search warrants reported in relation with each category of product or region.

OPSON VII confirms trends observed in previous editions regarding the involvement of organized crime in illegal deeds related to alcohol, meat and dairy, especially when talking about branded products; considering the amounts seized and the complexity of the seizures, these commodities should be considered as high-risk products.

Olive oil, although in smaller quantities should be considered a high risk too, especially because there are signals that OCGs are consistently targeting this category; the risk is even higher considering the fact that adulterated olive oil is often distributed via the legal supply chain and that the costumers have little or no means of identifying counterfeit products.

A series of other trends observed last year are confirmed by OPSON VII: mislabelling products, repackaging expired food, smuggling food items for tax evasion, and using unauthorized machinery for illicit food production were recurrent practices.

This year, IPR infringements are lower in comparison to food safety offences; this might reflect the increasing involvement of Food Safety Agencies in the operation, leading to a better understanding of the threat posed by such products.

Criminal groups possibly acting together with OCGs, continue to be international threat actors that constitute a high risk to the integrity of the food chain, especially in terms of food safety and IPR crime.

In South East Asia, Indonesia proved to be the main destination of illicit foodstuff coming from Asia region, but also from Europe and North America, which raises the possibility of Indonesia being not only a destination, but also an important transit hub in the region for illicit foodstuff.

In Africa, Zambia proved to have a strong connection with illicit foodstuff coming from China, as this year Zambian authorities seized almost all categories of goods targeted by OPSON, all coming from China. This raises the possibility of foreigners being involved in criminal activities in Zambia and that illicit foodstuff coming from China might be distributed in the neighbouring countries.

In Europe, during OPSON VII Belgium, Netherlands and Germany seemed to have been the main entry points for illicit foodstuff, which was reportedly distributed further into Europe. In addition, Hungary remains an entry point for illicit food products, mostly coming by land routes, from Eastern Europe.

In the Americas, although the region seems underreported, based on the data sent, seafood, vegetables and food supplements were the main concern this year. Side seizures, especially cigarettes, but also equipment for gold mining underline once again the complex crime activities carried out by local OCGs.

Challenges remain, particularly in terms of a detailed approach of transnational crime from both origin and destination ends, through increased international cooperation.

11. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Participating countries/agencies

Annex 2: Participation of the Private Sector

Annex 3: Categories of products

Annex 4: INTERPOL/Europol Press release

Annex 5: Acronyms and Abbreviations

Annex 1: Participating countries/agencies

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

In total, this represented 67 countries.

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Administrations/LEAs</i>
European Member States (Exchange of information via Europol)	
Austria – AT	Federal Police; Customs; Food Administration Vienna
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
Cyprus – CY	Health Services; Police
Czech Republic – CZ	Police; Customs, State Veterinary Administration; Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority
Denmark – DK	Veterinary and Food Administration
Finland - FI	Customs; Finish Food Safety Authority (EVIRA)
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	Food Control Authorities of the Federal States of Bavaria, Hamburg, Hesse, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, North Rhine-Westphalia and Saxony. Food Control Authorities of the Federal States Bremen, Lower Saxony and Rhineland-Palatinate as observers. Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut (FLI) as national TRACES administrator and the Max Rubner-Institut (MRI) supported the action
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 of Ireland; Customs; Police (An Garda Síochána)

Italy – IT	Arma dei Carabinieri; Guardia di Finanza; Guardia Costiera; Customs (Agenzia delle Dogane)
Latvia – LV	Customs; Food and Veterinary services
Lithuania – LT	Customs; State Food and Veterinary Service
The Netherlands – NL	Dutch Food and Product Authority (NVWA)
Poland – PL	Police; National Food Safety Agency
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); Policía Nacional; DAVA (Customs Unit); Regional Food Safety Agencies (Consejerías de Sanidad y de Alimentación de las Comunidades Autónomas).
United Kingdom – UK	Intellectual Property Office (IPO); Food Standards Agency (FSA) – National Food Crime Unit; Food Standards Scotland – Food Crime and Incidents Unit; Welsh Food Fraud Coordination Unit; UK Port Health Authorities; Trading Standards Authorities (TSA); Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC); Police and Police Scotland; National Crime Agency (NCA); Border Force (UKBF); Scottish Local Authority Environmental Health; Marine Scotland; Scottish Public Analysts; Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority; Immigration Enforcement
EU COM	DG Health
Countries exchanging information via Europol (Operational agreements)	
Iceland – IS	Customs; Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority
Norway – NO	Customs; Norwegian Food Safety Authority
Switzerland – CH	Customs; Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO)
United States of America - USA	Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Countries exchanging of information via INTERPOL	
Albania – AL	Police
Argentina - AR	Police

Australia – AU	Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
Belarus – BY	Police; Customs
Bosnia & Herzegovina – BA	Police; Customs
BRAZIL - BR	Police Environnement Protection Public Institute (IBAMA)
Burundi – BI	Police; Customs; Public Health; Bureau of Standards
CAMEROON - CM	UNSPECIFIED
China – CN	Police
Colombia – CO	Fiscal Police – National Police (Policía Nacional – Dirección de gestión de policía fiscal y aduanera)
DJIBOUTI - DJ	Police
Ecuador – EC	Police; Prosecution Office; Ministry of Public Health and Agriculture
Eritrea – ER	Police; Customs; Directorate of Public Prosecutions
ETHIOPIA - ET	UNSPECIFIED
GUINEA BISSAU - GW	UNSPECIFIED
GUYANA - GY	UNSPECIFIED
India	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; Pharmacy and poison board; Office of the director of public prosecution; National Authority for the Campaign against Alcohol and Drugs Abuse
MALAYSIA - MY	UNSPECIFIED
	International Police Cooperation Centre, General Police Inspectorate; Directorate no. 3 (Combating Economic Fraud) of the National Investigation Inspectorate, General Police Inspectorate; 44 Regional Police Inspectorates of the General

Moldova	Police Inspectorate; General Inspectorate of Border Police; Customs Service; National Food Safety Agency of the Republic of Moldova
Montenegro – ME	Police; Customs
Morocco – MA	Police
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
SIERRA LEONE – SL	Ministry of Health and Sanitation; National Central Bureau of INTERPOL; National Revenue Authority (NRA); Standard Bureau (SL); Sierra Leone Police (Intelligence Unit)
SOUTH AFRICA - ZA	UNSPECIFIED
Republic of Korea – KR	Korean National Police Agency; Ministry of Food and Drug Safety
South Sudan - SS	UNSPECIFIED
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; Customs; Ministry of Agriculture department
Uganda	UNSPECIFIED
Vietnam – VN	Police; Customs; Ministry of Public Health; Local Police forces (according to their provincial plan)
Zambia – ZM	Police; Public Health Department of Lusaka City Council; Food and Drug Laboratory, Ministry of Health; Zambia Bureau of Standard

Annex 2: Participation of the private sector

22 firms and associations participated in OPSON VI.

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 ³¹
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
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
FOOD INDUSTRY ASIA	A group of leading food and beverage companies
IFSP International Federation of Spirits Producers – producers association	Spirits and liquors, trademarks protected
LAVAZZA	Coffee
Mars – Firm	Various edible goods and drinks, ranging from chocolate, candies, pet food and rice, trademarks protected.
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
Red Bull – Firm	Energy drink, trademark protected
Scotch Whisky association – producers association	Scotch Whisky, trademark and geographical indication protected

³¹ Seized products infringing the rights of the Colgate Palmolive Company were considered as side seizures, as they were neither food nor beverages.

Tequila Regulatory Council – producers association	Mexican liquor, geographical indication and trademarks protected
The GB Foods, SA	Daily meal products
Unilever – Firm	Various edible goods ranging from ice creams to soups, tea, coffee and condiments, trademarks protected
Unaprol Consorzio Olivicolo Italiano – producers' association	Olive oil, especially extra virgin olive oil

Annex 3: Categories of products

Name of Category	Examples of contents reported
Alcoholic beverages	Raw/ethyl alcohol, champagne, whiskey, vodka, rum, wine, cognac, beer, brandy, home/locally made brews, and unspecified alcohol/spirits
Cereals, grains and derived products	Bread, various types of flour, wheat, rice, pastries, noodle, unspecified cereals and pasta
Coffee/tea	Various types of coffee and mixed minced coffee, black tea, green tea, flower and herbal tea.
Condiments	Unspecified sauces, bamboo spice mixtures, marinated spices, various types of sault, oregano chili, pepper, mayonnaise, spice mixtures for fish, chicken, unspecified spices and condiments, excluding cooking oil.
Cooking oil	Olive oil, vegetal oil, sunflower oil, palm oil, peanut oil, pomace oil, soybean oil, unspecified cooking oil
Dairy	Butter, different types of cheese, cheese cream, milk, milk cream, milk powder, flavoured milk beverages, yogurt, unspecified dairy products
Food Supplements/additives	Cassava leaves, unspecified dietary supplements, unspecified food additives, food, colorants, natural plants and fruits extracts, sodium bicarbonate, spirulina mixtures, soybeans, nutrition products, monosodium glutamate.
Fruits/Vegetables/Legumes	Apples, bananas, bamboo shoots and roots, beans, unspecified bulbs and tubers, citrus fruits, dates, ginger, raisins, durians, hazelnuts, kola nuts, radishes, onions, oranges, grapes, passion fruits, potatoes, various types of nuts, mushrooms, unspecified vegetables, legumes and fruits
Meat and meat products	Chicken, duck, various frozen meat, ham, turkey, lamb, pork, lamb, larvae, internal organs, mixed minced/cured meat, meat for kebab, unspecified meat and meat products.
Non-alcoholic beverages	Juice, energy drinks, mineral water, soda, fruit juices, drinkable fruit syrup, fruit tea, honey drinks and unspecified juice.
Seafood	All types of fish (salmon, pirarucu, tuna, mackerel), red caviar, silver fish, shrimp paste, unspecified fish and seafood
Mixed products/Other	Mixed packed food products, unidentified finished products and raw materials for food production, fermented products for sauces, various canned food, unspecified finished food products, unspecified white powder, livestock, meat products, non/alcoholic drinks, dairy, olive oil, powder milk, noodles, seafood, packed food, pickles.
SIDE SEIZURES	Assorted bricks, various boxes, buckets, car spare parts, cigarettes, cosmetics, clothing, electric cables, formalin, printing equipment, documents, pharmaceuticals, stamps, shavers, soap, labels, mobile phones, accessories, various equipment's for food production grinder, gas stove, water sealer, water packaging equipment, mattresses, oils and lubricants, tooth paste and tooth brushes, pirated books, various textiles, raw tobacco, UV water sterilizer, and other unspecified no-food products.
Sugar and sweet products	Biscuits, various fruit based/candies, chewing gum, chocolate, various fruit jams, chocolate spread, confectionary, sweet syrups, honey, hazelnut paste, sugar.

Annex 4: Press releases

a. Europol press release

25 April 2018

Trafficking in fake and substandard food is big business, and efforts to stop this global phenomenon are ongoing

Rotten meat, chemically coloured tuna and fake baby milk powder - these are just a small sampling of the products seized as part of the latest OPSON investigation into the presence of counterfeit and substandard food and beverage products on the market in Europe and beyond.

Run over the course of 4 months (December 2017 - March 2018) across 67 countries*, OPSON VII resulted in the total seizure of more than 3 620 tons and 9.7 million liters of either counterfeit or substandard food and beverages as a results of more than 41 000 checks carried out at shops, markets, airports, seaports and industrial estates. In total some 749 people were arrested or detained with investigations continuing in many countries.

“The results of OPSON demonstrate what can be achieved to protect consumers worldwide when law enforcement agencies join their efforts and perform coordinated actions”, said Jari Liukku, Head of Europol’s European Serious and Organized Crime Centre, “It is a threat which requires such cooperation across borders, taking into account the increased integration and globalization of supply chains. All countries face this threat and it is the duty of law enforcement agencies to make sure what consumers get in their plate is genuine and safe”.

“The dismantling of nearly 50 criminal networks involved in the production of fake food and drink is an important result in stemming the flow of potentially lethal products into the marketplace,” said Daoming Zhang, Head of INTERPOL’s Illicit Markets unit. “The volume of counterfeit and substandard products seized is a reminder to the public that they need to remain careful about what they buy and from where.”

The annual operation coordinated by Europol and INTERPOL is supported by customs, police and national food regulatory bodies in addition to partners from the private sector. Since its first edition in 2011, the number of countries taking part in OPSON has grown every year, reflecting the growing commitment to tackle this issue.

In Europe the close cooperation established between Europol and the EU Commission coordinating the EU Food Fraud Network led to the implementation of a specific project targeting the fraudulent trade of tuna. A comprehensive approach involving all stakeholders allowed the phenomenon to be tackled in an innovative and more effective manner via the simultaneous use of administrative and criminal enforcement tools. Europol will continue to support this multiagency approach in the upcoming editions of OPSON.

Case studies

Belgium – sale of rotten meat unfit for consumption

Belgium closed a major meat processing plant in the country, and supermarkets have taken meat products off their shelves in a scandal over rotten meat. The incriminated company saw its license revoked by the federal government, after spot checks revealed a potential health risk in two products: minced beef and oxtail. Officials found traces of so-called meat waste, pieces of the carcass, intended for animal feed which are prohibited for human consumption.

- FAQ of the Belgian Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain: <http://www.favv-afsca.fgov.be/businesssectors/foodstuffs/incidents/veviba/default.asp>

Spain – fake baby milk powder

Four people have been arrested and a factory that packaged counterfeit baby milk mostly destined for China dismantled in Spain. Eight tons of the forged product were seized. The powder bought in bulk in Poland for one

euro per kilo and delivered to Barcelona was not harmful but it lacked the nutrients needed by infants. It was also made in an environment that did not comply with food health and safety standards.

➤ Press release of Spanish National Police: https://www.policia.es/prensa/20180421_1.html

European wide-action - fraudulent practices in the tuna fish industry

During OPSON VII, an EU coordinated action was run with the support of the EU Food Fraud Network across 11 European countries** in order to detect fraudulent practices pertaining to tuna fish. This was the first time that such an action was carried out on a specific product. The illicit practices included species substitution and fraudulently selling tuna intended for canning as fresh. In this case, the tuna intended for canning was illegally treated with chemical substances that altered its colour to give the misleading impression of its freshness. In total, more than 51 tons of tuna were seized and more than 380 samples were taken.

➤ E-article of EU Commission – DG Health: https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/health-and-food-safety_en

France- smuggling of perishable goods

In a joint operation, The French Gendarmerie, Customs, Police and Ministry of Agriculture seized in its overseas territories over 9.5 tons of smuggled perishable goods and 60 liters of fuel and raw material intended for illegal gold mining.

Training in the detection of food fraud

Throughout the year, representatives from a variety of agencies and sectors – police and customs officers, prosecutors, investigative experts – attend training courses and workshops in advance of the operational activity. These hands-on workshops equip participants with the knowledge they need for the raids and follow-up investigations, in particular, enabling them to better distinguish fake products from genuine ones. In Hungary, the National Tax and Customs Administration in cooperation with the National Food Chain Safety Office and the National Board Against Counterfeiting produced a short video to explain the operation to law enforcement officers and a general audience.

A final and detailed report on the results of the operation OPSON VII will be published in the upcoming months.

* Participating 24 EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

** France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

b. INTERPOL press release

25 April 2018

“Deadly and dangerous fake food and drink seized in global operation

Nearly 50 criminal networks have been dismantled, with weevil-infested flour and shrimp paste laced with pesticide among the seizures in the latest Operation Opson targeting fake food and drink. Methanol added to alcoholic drinks, expired products for sale and unhygienic storage conditions were among the offences detected during the operation. Police in Indonesia seized large quantities of illicit alcohol following the deaths of more than 60 people who had drunk the bootleg booze. Investigations are ongoing to identify those involved in the supply chain.

Counterfeit alcohol was again the most seized product in the seventh Opson operation coordinated by INTERPOL and Europol, which ran from 1 December 2017 to 31 March 2018, involving police, customs, national food regulatory authorities and partners from the private sector in 67 countries.

Opson in numbers

In total more than 3,620 tons and 9.7 million liters of hazardous fake food and drink worth an estimated EUR 55 million were recovered.

41,283	Checks carried out
14,474,091	Items seized
749	Arrests
705	Search warrants executed
49	Criminal networks dismantled
66	Illegal factories shut down

Case studies

In Jordan, 90 tons of flour infested with weevils due to poor storage were seized, and in Bulgaria, officers confiscated pork meat which carried trichinosis – a parasitic disease caused by roundworms. Investigations later revealed 12 people tested positive for the disease after eating the infected meat.

Vietnamese authorities seized nearly 1.5 tons of Monosodium glutamate (MSG) which was either fake or of unknown origin, together with packaging machines. Officials also seized more than 10,000 kg of noodles containing borax and 6.7 tons of bamboo shoots and roots which had been soaked in unidentified chemicals to make them appear fresh.

In addition to 113 arrests, Burundi officials dismantled 24 criminal groups mainly connected to the production or distribution of fake alcohol. A Kalashnikov rifle, 42 rounds of ammunition and a hand grenade were also seized.

Sudanese officials seized 5.5 tons of fake food and drink including yoghurt, tomato sauce and cooking oil. Police also discovered a Syrian-registered firm operating illegally in Sudan which was manufacturing pesticides, food additives and cosmetics in the same premises.

In Russia, officials identified and shut down 48 underground factories. In total more than 1.6 million liters of illegally produced alcohol were seized and criminal proceedings have been launched against 282 people. Officials also seized smuggled tobacco products worth an estimated EUR 7 million which had been hidden in bran and sawdust in nine train wagons.

An intelligence-led investigation by police in South Africa resulted in the disruption and dismantling of an illicit factory manufacturing counterfeit spices and the arrest of 10 people.

Dismantling criminal networks

“The dismantling of nearly 50 criminal networks involved in the production of fake food and drink is an important result in stemming the flow of potentially lethal products into the marketplace,” said Daoming Zhang, Head of INTERPOL’s Illicit Markets unit.

“The volume of counterfeit and substandard products seized is a reminder to the public that they need to remain careful about what they buy and from where.”

“The results of Opson demonstrate what can be achieved to protect consumers worldwide when law enforcement agencies join their efforts and perform coordinated actions,” said Jari Liukku, Head of Europol’s European Serious and Organized Crime Centre. “It is a threat which requires such cooperation across borders, taking into account the increased integration and globalization of supply chains. All countries face this threat and it is the duty of law enforcement agencies to make sure what consumers get in their plate is genuine and safe.”

Organized crime groups involved in the production and distribution of fake food and drink often use the same networks for other types of crime. Thousands of counterfeit or expired medicines, which pose a significant risk to public health, were seized in Rwanda, Sudan and Tanzania.

In China, an intelligence-led operation targeting substandard food supplements and falsified medicines being sold online resulted in the arrest of more than 20 suspects. Two factories and three warehouses were dismantled, with more than 20,000 boxes of illicit supplements and medicines confiscated. Ten computers, 30 mobile phones and an Internet server were seized, bringing the total value of the items confiscated to around EUR 1 million.

So far, 58 countries have provided results and a full report on Operation Opson VII results will be published later this year.

Operation Opson VII was supported by funding from the United Arab Emirates via the INTERPOL Foundation for a Safer World.”

Annex 5: Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms	
CCP	Coordinated Control Plan
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	Organized Criminal Group
Organizations and Institutions	
EU	European Union
EU COM	European Commission
DG SANTÉ	Directorate General Health & Consumers
INTERPOL IGGH	INTERPOL Illicit Goods and Global Health Programme