

Horse sold as halaal beef: man fined €50k

THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS: A Dutch businessman under investigation in a Europe-wide probe into a horse-for-beef substitution scandal was on Thursday (3 May) given a suspended sentence and fined for selling horsemeat as Islamic halal beef in France.



Image: Wiki Images

A district court in Den Bosch on appeal ordered Jan Fasen, 63, to pay the €50,000 fine and also slapped him with a six-month sentence suspended for two years.

"The suspect for two years bought horsemeat in Brazil and Mexico after which it was sold on paper as halal beef," the court said in a statement.

"The meat was sold to French suppliers," it added but did not give specific names.

Based in the southern Dutch city of Breda, Fasen was originally handed a one-year prison sentence with three months suspended in January 2012, but prosecutors appealed for a longer jail term.

Judges in the appeals case however said it could not be proved that Fasen profited from the sales of the "halal meat" and that public health was not endangered by his actions.

"The fact that the suspect also admitted what he had done was wrong and that his actions deserved punishment was also taken into consideration," the court said.

Fasen is the director of the Cyprus-based meat trading company called Draap Trading, which several British and Dutch media reports in February fingered as a suspected link between Romanian abattoirs and a French supplier.

Criminal investigation

A broader criminal investigation against Fasen and his company in this regard "was still underway and could take several more weeks," a Public Prosecutor spokesman Marieke van der Molen said.

"Today's appeal related only to the period between 2007 and 2009," added another spokesman, Thea Tjeerdema.

Earlier this month the European Commission said thousands of DNA tests on European beef products have revealed extensive food fraud across the European Union, with almost one-in-20 meats marketed as beef likely to be tainted with horse.

More than 4,000 tests in recent weeks to detect the potential mislabelling of beef products showed 193 products containing traces of horsemeat DNA, equivalent to 4.55%.

The Netherlands' food watchdog earlier this month asked hundreds of European firms supplied by another Dutch wholesaler to check 50,000 tons of beef suspected to be contaminated with horse.

Since the scare erupted in Britain and France in early February, governments have scrambled to figure out how the mislabelling occurred. It resulted in thousands of meat products being pulled from shelves across the continent.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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