

OLAF & Europol Foil Smuggling of Dangerous Counterfeit Pesticides

Thomas Wahl

News

On 5 June 2020, OLAF reported on the meanwhile “fifth edition” of the [operation Silver Axe](#). It led to the seizure of 1346 tons of illicit and counterfeit pesticides. The operation was coordinated by Europol and OLAF and involved police, customs, and plant protection authorities from 32 countries, including, e.g., China, Columbia, Russia, and Ukraine. OLAF’s role was to share operational intelligence with EU Member States and third countries’ authorities and to alert customs authorities to suspicious shipments of pesticides that were recently deauthorised for use in the EU. The shipments of illegal pesticides were declared as being in transit through the EU or destined for re-export from the EU; in fact, however, the intention was illegal sale in the EU.

The Silver Axe operations have led to seizures of 2568 tons of illegal pesticides so far. OLAF stressed that the operations show the importance of the coordinating role of central authorities, such as OLAF and Europol, because it is impossible for national authorities in a single state to detect and decrypt the smuggling schemes. OLAF’s rapid alert system is particularly helpful in this respect, as it allows intelligence to be shared in real time with non-EU countries.

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