

**2 April 2009**

**PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY HENNIE KLEYNHANS,  
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**Agri Inspec stops oil fraudster**

The agricultural monitoring service, Agri Inspec, has successfully investigated a case of fraud on instruction of the Oil Seeds Advisory Committee. The eight-year-long investigation concluded with the conviction and sentencing of one of the accused. Agri Inspec is a subsidiary company of the Milk Producers' Organisation (MPO).

The case against Salvatore Pollizi, owner of Ital Distributors, was finalised on 23 March at the Durban Special Commercial Crimes Court, where he was given a fine of R250 000 or sentenced to three years imprisonment after being found guilty on charges of fraud. Pollizi pleaded guilty on all charges after overwhelming evidence was brought before the court.

The Oil Seeds Advisory Committee instructed Agri Inspec in 2001 to launch an investigation into irregularities in the edible oil market. Agri Inspec investigated the case in conjunction with the committee's representatives, customs and excise officials, the Department of Health and Portnet.

The investigation uncovered fraudulent activities relating to the colouring and flavouring of sunflower oil to imitate olive oil and where a mix of olive and sunflower oil was sold as pure olive oil. The oil was packaged locally, but labelled as pure, imported olive oil.

This guilty verdict is the first of its kind in the local edible oil industry and the significance of the thoroughness of the investigation was lauded. According to legal experts, this groundbreaking case can unleash similar investigations in the food industry.

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