

Breeders Trust wins Italian lawsuit against illegal grass seed trader

Brussels, 29 April 2022. Breeders Trust has recently won a penal lawsuit against the CEO of the Italian trading company Mediterranea Sementi s.r.l. based in Teramo. This company is one of the top 3 Italian grass seed companies and operates worldwide. The Italian court states in its ruling that fraud had been committed by marketing grass seed that is not true to variety. Mediterranea Sementi has been ordered to pay a fine, legal costs and compensation for damages related to this market distortion. In addition, the court ordered the publication of this ruling in a regional newspaper.

Geert Staring, General Director of the Brussels-based Breeders Trust, is pleased with the ruling: "taking action against illegal trade in grass seeds is a core business and we have succeeded in exposing a major player that has disrupted the international grass seed market for years." The biggest result is not so much the amount of the fine imposed but the publication ordered by the court, which can be seen as 'naming and shaming'. This will seriously hamper Mediterranea Sementi's international operations for years to come, not to mention the additional damage to its image.

It all started in the autumn of 2015 when Breeders Trust bought grass seed of the Ceronte variety in a shop in central Italy. Independent investigations revealed that the grass seed was not true to variety and could not be the Ceronte seed stated on the certificate. Breeders Trust shared this information with the Italian fraud investigation agency ICQRF and with CREA, the Italian certification authority. The Italian authorities subsequently launched their own investigation and came to the same conclusion, that the batch in question could not be true to variety. The results of this investigation led to the initiation of criminal proceedings before the court in Teramo in 2016.

After a complex and deep technical and legal discussions, the judge finally ruled in favor of Breeders Trust, stating that the CEO of Mediterranea Sementi had acted illegally by marketing these grass seeds. Breeders Trust was represented in the Teramo court by its two lawyers Nicola Novaro and Rossella Pola. They argue that this ruling sends an important signal to the international grass seed trade. "Thanks to the persistence of Breeders Trust, this has finally led to the conviction of the company concerned".

Corné van Beers, projectmanager at Breeders Trust, is pleased with the result. "Mediterranea Sementi has been treated very hard by the Italian court. A conviction against a company of this size makes a big impression in the international grass seed trade. After all, it is a small world in which everyone knows each other and the deterrent effect of this conviction will certainly lead to more restraint among potential fraudsters, and that was exactly our goal."

