

Food tampering remains persistent problem

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Three years after the horsemeat scandal, new research conducted by Dutch consumers' association Consumentenbond reveals many authenticity problems in food. Consumentenbond tested over 150 products from higher risk categories and found out that 1 in 5 samples was not what it was sold for.

Consumentenbond's research revealed deviations in Manuka honey (50%*), lamb (47%*), extra virgin olive oil (31%*), oregano (11%*) and codfish (3%*). Regarding lamb: 10 lamb curries, 10 portions of minced lamb and 10 portions of shoarma or kebab from lamb were tested. 14 out of 30 lamb samples showed not to be pure lamb. In 6 cases no lamb was found at all; beef or turkey were found instead. In 8 other portions lamb was present, but at least 40% of each sample consisted of other meat.

Bart Combée, director general of Consumentenbond: 'It is worrying that beef and turkey are regularly sold as lamb. And that you assume to buy oregano and it's actually olive leaves you're flavouring your meal with. Or you pay for extra virgin olive oil or Manuka honey, but are put off with products of inferior quality. Our research shows that the food industry and government should do more to end these practices'.

In 2013 Consumentenbond presented 7 measures against food fraud. Combée: 'Some of these recommendations have been followed, but there is a lot left to improve. We think food business operators should be obliged to test the (semi-finished) food products they buy from their suppliers and to report deviations to the authorities.

Consumer survey

Besides laboratory testing, Consumentenbond asked over a 1000 consumers for their opinion about food fraud. Two thirds of the respondents indicate to be worried about food fraud. Consumers also indicate that better and more frequent checks in combination with stricter legislation could help to tackle food fraud.

**Percentage deviations found in the samples tested*