

## Hong Kong Customs combats sale of fruits with false origin claims and arrests four people (with photos)

â€‹Hong Kong Customs recently conducted territory-wide spot checks and test purchases at fruit retail shops and arrested four people for contravening the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO) by selling fruits with suspected false claims of origin. A batch of fruits with a total retail value of about \$2,500 was also seized.

During the operation, which started in late August, Customs officers inspected 188 fruit retail shops in various districts. Four fruit retailers located in To Kwa Wan, Kwun Tong, Tai Po and Fanling were found to have supplied fruits with suspected false claims of origin.

Among them, the fruit retailer in Tai Po sold watermelons that were marked as produced in Taiwan, but were tagged with labels of a fruit brand from the Mainland.

The other three fruit retailers in To Kwa Wan, Kwun Tong and Fanling sold grapes that were marked as being Australian grapes, but the packaging bags bore the marking "Product of USA".

Customs officers took immediate enforcement action and seized a batch of fruits with suspected false claims of origin from the four fruit retailers mentioned above, including 11 watermelons and 37 kilograms of grapes. The retail price was about \$2,500 in total. Four people, comprising a male shopkeeper and a female shopkeeper as well as two saleswomen, were arrested. The arrested persons, aged between 26 and 55, were released on bail pending further investigation.

Investigations are ongoing. With the Mid-Autumn Festival approaching, Customs will continue to step up spot checks and test purchase operations to protect consumer interests.

Customs reminds traders not to take advantage of the current situation and not to sell goods in a misleading manner or products with a false claim of origin. Immediate enforcement action will be taken against contravention of the TDO and prosecution will be made with sufficient evidence.

Under the TDO, any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Customs also reminds consumers to purchase products from reputable shops. Apart from paying attention to the information given by a salesperson,

they should also inspect the product descriptions carefully and keep the transaction receipts.

Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the TD0 to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)).

