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Italy Toughens Penalties for Food Fraud

New law expands criminal liability for counterfeit wines and certified foods, with fines up to €50,000 and prison terms of four years

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Italy has tightened penalties for food fraud and counterfeit products in a move that could reshape enforcement across the country’s wine and agricultural sectors, with fines reaching €50,000 and prison terms of up to four years for some violations.

The new law, No. 75 of April 21, 2026, took effect on May 29 and expands legal protections for Italian agro-food products, including wines with protected designation of origin and protected geographical indication labels. It also targets organic products and other certified foods that are falsely presented to consumers as authentic.

The measure comes as Italy seeks to curb the sale of fake Made in Italy goods, a problem that has long affected wine, olive oil, cheese and other high-value exports. Under the law, fraud in food commerce, the use of misleading signs and the counterfeiting of DOP, IGP and organic products are now treated as specific criminal offenses. Authorities can act earlier in the supply chain, not only after a product reaches the final consumer but also during transport, storage or customs handling.

That change is significant for the wine industry, where counterfeit labels and misleading geographic claims can damage both producers and consumers. The law allows inspectors to seize goods that imitate Italian names, colors or symbols without any real connection to the country. Businesses found using protected labels or trademarks improperly may face criminal penalties and temporary shutdowns lasting from 5 days to 3 months.

The legislation also broadens corporate liability. Companies can now be held responsible when an employee commits an offense that benefits the business. That means wineries, distributors and food companies will need stronger internal controls, documentation systems and compliance procedures to reduce legal exposure.

Another major part of the law focuses on online sales. Italian authorities have increasingly warned that e-commerce platforms are being used to market counterfeit food and misleading products. The new rules strengthen oversight of digital sales channels and create a central coordination structure at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry. Carabinieri officers, the financial police and the coast guard will share information more closely in an effort to speed up inspections and enforcement.

The law also includes a provision aimed at reducing waste. Food seized by authorities will not automatically be destroyed if it is considered safe for consumption. After false or irregular labels are removed, those products may be redirected to food banks and

charitable organizations.

For wine producers with DOP and IGP certifications, the new framework raises the cost of fraud and may force a broader review of traceability systems, labeling practices and distribution controls at a time when Italian authorities are trying to protect one of the country’s most valuable agricultural brands.